

DELEGATED DECISION BY CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN, EDUCATION & YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICES

19 March 2025

School Term Dates 2026/27 and 2027/28

Report by Director of Children's Services

RECOMMENDATION

1. The Cabinet Member is RECOMMENDED to:

Approve the proposed school term dates for Oxfordshire schools in 2026/27 and 2027/28.

Executive Summary

2. Under section 32 of the Education Act 2002, it is the responsibility of a local authority to schedule a school year which provides the statutory 190 pupil days and 195 teacher days in voluntary controlled and community schools. The county council has consulted on proposed school term dates for 2026/27 and 2027/28. These dates now require determination.

Background

3. It is the responsibility of a local authority to schedule a school year which provides the statutory 190 pupil days and 195 teacher days in voluntary controlled and community schools. Although Voluntary Aided, Foundation and academies are not legally required to use the same term dates, in practice most academies closely align their dates with those set for maintained schools.
4. The county council has consulted on proposed school term dates for 2026/27 and 2027/28. These term dates following the pattern previously applied in Oxfordshire, of autumn, spring and summer terms divided into two halves, with half-term holidays of one week, Easter and Christmas holidays of approximately two weeks, and a summer holiday of approximately six weeks. Term lengths are kept as similar as possible, within the constraints of the timing of bank holidays.
5. These proposed term dates were informed by liaison with neighbouring authorities, to keep term dates broadly aligned across county boundaries, for the convenience of families with children in different authorities' schools.

6. There is a long-standing agreement with schools that one of their non-teaching days for training (INSET) is taken on the first day of the autumn term; the remaining four are determined and allocated by the schools as they wish.

Corporate Policies and Priorities

7. The recommendation in this report links to the OCC Strategic Plan 2023-25 Priority 7, to create opportunities for children and young people to reach their full potential. Children benefit from good attendance in school: it supports educational achievement and lays the foundation for a positive contribution to society and economic well-being. Properly structured periods of learning and rest help children to remain healthy, enjoy their school time and achieve more. The standardisation of dates as much as possible across schools helps them to plan effectively and supports good attendance. The publication of dates well in advance enables families to plan holidays and arrange childcare so that school attendance need not be compromised.
8. This report also links to Priority 8, to play our part in a vibrant and participatory local democracy, by engaging schools and local residents in the setting of school term dates.

Financial Implications

9. The school year decides the term and holiday dates calendar. It has no budget implications.

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Legal Implications

10. Under section 32 of the Education Act 2002, the local authority shall determine the dates when the school terms and holidays are to begin and end for community, voluntary controlled or community special schools. There are no legal implications.

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Staff Implications

11. This report has no staff implications.

Equality & Inclusion Implications

12. The proposed calendars for term dates apply to all community, voluntary controlled schools, including community special schools. Academies, Foundation and Voluntary Aided schools are free to set their own term dates, but are recommended to align with the authority's calendars. The proposed calendar is applied across all schools using it in the same way and therefore does not have any impact on any of the protected characteristics.

Sustainability Implications

13. This report has no sustainability implications.

Risk Management

14. It is a requirement for the local authority to set school term and holiday dates for all its maintained schools, other than Voluntary aided, Foundation and Academy schools, to whom the dates are recommended. If the council fails to agree term dates, it is failing in its statutory duty to comply with section 32 of the Education Act 2002. There is a risk that schools not under local authority control self-determine term dates creating inconsistency with school holiday patterns. This is out of the local authority control.

Consultations

15. Schools and stake holders were invited to comment on the proposed pattern of term dates via the Let's Talk consultation platform (<https://letstalk.oxfordshire.gov.uk/term-dates-consultation-2026-2028>) and Schools News communications.
16. The consultation period ran from 12 November 2024 to 20 December 2024. The consultation webpage was visited by 97 participants, of whom 81 downloaded the term date documents.
17. One response was received, from a secondary school. This suggested moving the start of the autumn term 2026 from Wednesday 2 September to Tuesday 1 September. The reason for this was that the first day would be INSET, and many secondary schools typically then only have Year 7 and Year 12 in school on the following day, so that many secondary students would have their first school day on a Friday which may not be beneficial for attendance.
18. Based on the consultation response, the term dates have been adjusted as suggested, as this provided a better match with neighbouring authorities.

Lisa Lyons, Director of Children Services

Annex: Proposed school term dates for 2026/27 and 2027/28

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