

Dear Parents/Carers

## **New School Holiday Pattern for the 2021/22 Academic Year**

From September 2021, the Brighter Futures Learning Partnership Trust and all its schools, including Doncaster UTC, will adopt a new holiday pattern following the LA's recent consultation with schools, parents/carers and other local community groups. Although Academies and Free Schools are able to set their own holiday patterns, we have changed our calendar to align to the majority of schools in Doncaster. We have done so based on the feedback from the consultation. The new pattern will have a fixed Easter break with a two-week October half term and a five-week summer holiday, breaking up a week later than usual in July (Please see the attached school calendar). Each school will continue to set its own INSET days which can be found on their website.

**Please note the information from the LA consultation below.**

### **What will the new school holiday pattern look like?**

**We are introducing a fixed Easter break with a two-week October half term and a five-week summer holiday, breaking up a week later than usual in July**

With this, we will introduce the following dates for school closures:

- ***October half term - 2 weeks***
- *Christmas break - 2 weeks*
- *February half term - 1 week*
- ***Easter break - 2 weeks - this would always fall in the first full two weeks of April regardless of where the Easter holiday falls***
- *May half term - 1 week*
- ***Summer break - 5 weeks - schools would break up a week later than usual in July***

*The full dates and calendar for the new pattern are available to view and download on the school holiday and term dates webpage at*

<https://www.doncaster.gov.uk/services/schools/schoolholidays-and-term-dates>

### **When will this new school holiday pattern come into effect?**

The new school holiday pattern will come in effect for the 2021-22 academic year, meaning the changes will take place from September 2021. You can download the new 2021-22 academic calendar to find specific dates on the school holidays and term dates webpage at <https://www.doncaster.gov.uk/services/schools/school-holidays-and-term-dates> in the 'downloads' section.

### **Why are we changing the pattern?**

As a council, we are required to set the school holiday pattern for the schools we are responsible for, which is currently 31 community schools of the 128 schools in Doncaster (Academies and Church Schools who set their own patterns, are encouraged to use the same one but are not required to do so). Every year, more academies and surrounding councils have changed their school holidays and we had become out of sync with many of these.

### **How was this new school holiday pattern decided?**

In early 2020, we held a consultation that was open to all Doncaster residents, parents, schools, trade unions and other representative groups. This consultation gave all respondents the opportunity to feed back their views on the existing holiday pattern, and whether they wanted to retain the existing school holiday pattern, or potentially adopt a new school holiday pattern from a list of alternative options. These options were decided upon following positive feedback from our neighbouring local authorities including Sheffield, Leeds and Nottinghamshire who have all successfully changed their school holidays patterns, and these proposed options have been drafted after working closely with representatives from a range of Primary Schools, Secondary Schools and Multi Academy Trusts.

The consultation was promoted on various channels including the council's social media channels, and directly to all schools and staff, as well as other representative groups.

The consultation saw a huge number of responses – over 7,000, and there was a clear preferred choice that arose from this consultation exercise. You can find more information about the consultation outcome at <https://www.doncaster.gov.uk/services/schools/school-holidays-and-term-dates> by downloading the '2021-22 Consultation Responses' document available there.

### **What is the benefit to having a 'Fixed Easter Break'?**

This will resolve issues that schools face when the Easter holiday falls later in the calendar which creates a long half term, and can affect SATs preparation. Changing this would allow for more 'even' spring half terms, more preparation time for SATs and consistent lengths for curriculum planning.

## **What is the benefit of having a ‘two-week October’?**

This is the longest of the three terms. Other schools in Doncaster and other local authority areas who have adopted a two-week autumn half term have reported positive impacts on school planning and attendance and has been well received. It also means that children will be away from school one week less in the summer which can help with the retention of skills and knowledge they may have gained in the previous school year, and reduces the amount of childcare parents/guardians need to arrange in the summer.

### ***Impact upon Attendance***

In terms of attendance, which is one of the main drivers for change, this is a primary focus in the new Ofsted framework and the Health and Well Being of school staff. As such, it is incumbent on the employer, in this case the Local Authority for community schools, to consider the positive impact that a two week in October would have on staff welfare. Providing a two week break, in what is the longest term, will allow staff to have genuine downtime and so have a positive impact on staff absence due to illness during the long term.

Pupils, whose attendance and sickness have been shown to improve with a longer break over the longer term, will also feel the benefits to staff. It is expected that the productivity of both staff and pupils may be positively impacted by a two week break.

The two week break is also a positive step for parents by allowing them to take a longer holiday at what is often a cheaper time of year thus potentially reducing the number of unauthorised holidays taken at other times in the year.

## **What were the other options that were consulted on?**

There were a total of four options presented as part of the consultation (more detail below), one being to retain the existing schools holidays pattern, and three alternative options. Option ‘3’ was deemed the preferred choice of consultation respondents, and is the one we will be taking forward.

### **OPTION 1 - We keep the existing school holiday pattern**

With this option, the existing school holiday pattern would stay the same with the following school closures:

*October half term - 1 week*

*Christmas break - 2 weeks*

*February half term - 1 week*

*Easter break - 2 weeks*

*May half term - 1 week*

*Summer break - 6 weeks*

- **OPTION 2 - We introduce a fixed Easter break**

With this option, we would introduce the following dates for school closures:

*October half term - 1 week*

*Christmas break - 2 weeks*

*February half term - 1 week*

*Easter break - 2 weeks - **this would always fall on the first two full weeks of April regardless of where the Easter holiday falls***

*May half term - 1 week*

*Summer break - 6 weeks*

- **OPTION 3 - We introduce a fixed Easter break with a two-week October half term and a five-week summer holiday, breaking up a week later than usual in July**

With this option, we would introduce the following dates for school closures:

***October half term - 2 weeks***

*Christmas break - 2 weeks*

*February half term - 1 week*

*Easter break - 2 weeks - **this would always fall in the first full two weeks of April regardless of where the Easter holiday falls***

*May half term - 1 week*

*Summer break - 5 weeks - **schools would break up a week later than usual in July***

- **OPTION 4 - We introduce a fixed Easter break with a two-week October half term and a five-week summer holiday, with pupils returning to school a week earlier, in August** With this option, we would introduce the following dates for school closures:

***October half term - 2 weeks***

*Christmas break - 2 weeks*

*February half term - 1 week*

*Easter break - 2 weeks - **this would always fall in the first full two weeks of April regardless of where the Easter holiday falls***

*May half term - 1 week*

*Summer break - 5 weeks - **schools would return in the new academic year a week earlier in August***

Should you require any further information, please contact your child's school.

Yours sincerely

*H Redford-Hernandez*

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**CEO Brighter Futures Learning Partnership Trust**