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CABINET STATEMENT

# Written Statement: School term dates 2022/23

**Kirsty Williams MS, Minister for Education**

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Local authorities and the governing bodies of voluntary aided (VA) and foundation schools retain the right to set term dates for their schools. However, they are under a duty to co-operate and co-ordinate with each other to ensure that term dates are the same or as similar as possible (section 32A of the Education Act 2002).

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The arrangements respond to concerns about problems parents of siblings face in finding and financing childcare where their children attend schools with different term dates.

Local authorities are required to notify the Welsh Government of the term dates they propose to set by the last working day of August, two full years in advance of the dates in question. The deadline for the current process was extended to the end of December 2020 in recognition of the additional pressures on the sector brought about by the pandemic and associated restrictions.

All 22 local authorities have submitted notifications of the term dates they propose to set for 2022/23, including on behalf of VA and foundation schools.

Whilst there are some differences, I was encouraged to see that there is broad harmonisation across Wales.

Where consensus is not achieved the law provides that Welsh Ministers may direct local authorities and voluntary aided and foundation schools on what the dates will be (section 32B of the 2002 Act). Before deciding to use these powers Welsh Ministers are under a duty to consult.

In light of the work undertaken by local authorities to seek to harmonise their term dates, I have decided not to use my powers to direct local authorities and the governing bodies of VA and foundation schools as to what their term dates must be.

My expectation therefore is that local authorities and VA and foundation schools set their term dates for 2022/23 in line with those they have notified to the Welsh Ministers.

My decision not to issue a direction on term dates for 2022/23 will not affect future term date setting arrangements. Local authorities and relevant schools remain under a statutory duty to co-ordinate and co-operate with each other to ensure that term dates are the same or as similar as possible.

My officials will shortly be writing out to LAs and schools reminding them to submit notifications of the term dates they propose to set for 2023/24 to the Welsh Government by the last working day of August 2021.

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