



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

OPEN CONSULTATION, DOCUMENT

# School term dates 2026 to 2027: integrated impact assessment

An assessment of ministerial direction setting out school term dates for 2026 to 2027.

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# What action is the Welsh Government considering and why?

## Legislative background

The Education (Wales) Act 2014 made changes to term date setting in Wales by inserting Wales-only legislation into the Education Act 2002 (“the 2002 Act”). As a result, while local authorities and the governing bodies of maintained schools (“relevant governing bodies”) retain the right to set term dates for their schools, they are also under a duty to work together when setting term dates so that those dates are the same or as similar as possible. If, despite best efforts, term dates are not agreed then the 2002 Act gives Welsh Ministers the powers to direct local authorities and relevant governing bodies on what their term dates must be, so that term date harmonisation across Wales is achieved.

The Education (Notification of School Term Dates) (Wales) Regulations 2014 provide that local authorities must inform Welsh Ministers of the term dates set for all maintained schools within their areas by the final working day in August two years prior to the school year to which they relate.

The term dates submitted for 2026 to 2027 are not fully harmonised. Therefore, the Welsh Ministers wish to consider using their powers of direction under the 2002 Act to ensure that term dates are harmonised across Wales.

However, before they may use their powers of direction the 2002 Act places the Welsh Ministers under a duty to carry out an appropriate consultation. In addition, the Education (Consultation on School Term Dates) (Wales) Regulations 2014 set out further requirements on the form and length of such a consultation.

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## Practicalities

In summary, the Welsh Ministers would like all maintained schools in Wales to have the same term dates for 2026 to 2027 and so they are asking the public and key stakeholders for their views on this. This consultation is open for anyone to respond from 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2025 to 25<sup>th</sup> May 2025.

Two sets of dates were proposed by two emerging groups of local authorities. Welsh Ministers favour the dates set by Group A (13 local authorities) over the dates sent by Group B (9 local authorities). This is because Group A's dates avoid split weeks as far as possible and place the Easter bank holidays in the middle of the spring break.

The draft direction included with the consultation proposes the following dates for all schools:

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Start of Autumn Term 2026	1 September 2026
Start of Autumn Half Term 2026	26 October 2026
End of Autumn Half Term 2026	30 October 2026
End of Autumn Term 2026	18 December 2026 (22 December 2026 for Powys)
Start of Spring Term 2027	4 January 2027
Start of Spring Half Term 2027	8 February 2027
End of Spring Half Term 2027	12 February 2027

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End of Spring Term 2027	19 March 2027
Start of Summer Term 2027	5 April 2027
Start of Summer Half Term 2027	31 May 2027
End of Summer Half Term 2027	4 June 2027
End of Summer Term 2027	20 July 2027 (16 July 2027 for Powys)

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## Long term

The legislation on harmonising term dates was introduced with the intention of the principles being followed every year. We think having the same or similar term dates across all local authorities helps families to plan. In addition, we think the tourism industry benefits from having the dates published in advance and being able to plan staffing arrangements accordingly.

In the longer term, if reform of the school year were to be explored again, this may affect how term dates are set and the legislation that governs it.

We continue to listen to feedback, through consultations like this one, to ensure the policy still meets the needs of the people affected by it.

## Prevention

By having the same or similar term dates across Wales, families are less likely to need to have complicated childcare arrangements that potentially differ where their children attend different schools. We believe this could lead to cost savings

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for families and allow them to plan time together for wellbeing.

## Integration

Where term dates are harmonised and published in advance, business, tourism and transport are also able to benefit from being able to properly plan for the holiday periods. This could mean that older learners are able to secure holiday jobs and mean that learner transport companies can ensure they have appropriate staffing when needed.

Where parents are able to plan in advance for childcare, this can be helpful particularly for those parents who work irregular shift patterns or contracted hours. It could mean that they are less likely to miss out on hours in work if they do not have to organise multiple childcare timetables.

We believe this proposal contributes to the 7 wellbeing goals as follows:

- A prosperous Wales.
- A resilient Wales.
- A healthier Wales.
- A more equal Wales.
- A Wales of more cohesive communities.
- A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language.
- A globally responsible Wales.

Both individuals and businesses should benefit from harmonised term dates as it provides fairness and time for advance planning to all.

Tourism businesses are incredibly important to the economy in Wales, and it is right that we help to nurture this industry by making this simple policy decision.

There is no direct impact on health, but by ensuring term dates are harmonised,

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we are providing everyone with the same opportunities.

It stands to reason that harmonising term dates across Wales will lead to a more equal Wales and that learners, staff, families and businesses can benefit from this.

Communities can cross county borders and geographic lines – harmonising term dates will bring cohesion right across Wales.

There is no direct impact on the Welsh language and culture, but harmonised term dates could lead to better access during the school holidays if businesses are able to plan adequately in advance. In addition, by allowing Powys schools to close slightly earlier at the end of summer term, those children, families and school staff will be able to benefit from the cultural experience of attending the Royal Welsh Show.

There is no direct impact on the global responsibility of Wales, but harmonised term dates will help visitors to plan according to holiday dates published in advance.

## Collaboration

Local authorities and relevant governing bodies are responsible for setting their school term dates, so these along with the rest of the maintained school community are the key partners in this proposal.

Following the usual process of engagement with local authorities on their proposed dates for 2026 to 2027, we informed them of the Welsh Ministers' intentions. We invite all local authorities, schools and other interested parties to have their say both on this proposal and the impacts it may have.

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## Involvement

Local authorities have provided their proposed dates in line with the legislation. In doing so they will have collaborated with governing bodies of maintained schools in their area, as well as neighbouring authorities. However, harmonisation has not been achieved, with a clear split between dates chosen for the spring and summer terms in 2027.

## Impact

We believe that what matters is the impact on families and affected industries. That is the reasoning behind the original legislation and this consultation.

We recognise that school term dates may feel like an insignificant issue to many people, but to some it can significantly affect their work and wellbeing. Whilst the proposal does not pretend to fix all of the potential issues, it seeks to make things as simple as possible for those affected.

Local authorities and relevant governing bodies will also be affected by the proposal, with those in Group B needing to communicate and make changes to their dates. This may impose an additional administrative burden, but it is hoped this is to some extent minimised by the dates being set out clearly by Welsh Ministers. As well as the reasoning for the chosen dates set out above, we felt it would be better to have fewer local authorities and schools needing to change their dates which again would minimise the negative impacts on those bodies.

The consultation gives us a meaningful opportunity to hear from interested parties about our interpretation and any further impacts we may not have identified through this process.

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## Costs and Savings

We do not anticipate any additional costs to the Welsh Government which are not already funded through normal staffing budgets. There could be an additional cost to local authorities which need to change their dates to comply with the direction, however as with the Welsh Government it is expected that these would be covered through normal staffing budgets.

There should be no further costs to individuals or organisations and there are anticipated savings for families who live, work or learn across local authority boundaries as there should be no need to arrange additional childcare.

## Mechanism

A ministerial direction will be required to give effect to the proposal. This is classed as subordinate legislation and so will follow the processes required for bringing this forward. A full explanatory memorandum and regulatory impact assessment is included as part of the direction.

## Conclusion

We have considered all the likely impacts on different groups and on social, economic and cultural well-being while making this proposal.

Having done so, we are confident that the positive impacts of having harmonised term dates for the school year 2026 to 2027 on children, families and school staff outweigh any reasons for not pursuing the proposal. We also believe that tourism and other seasonal businesses will benefit from it.

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The consultation seeks the views of anyone with an interest, and we will consider any and all comments and take them into account when deciding whether to proceed with fixing term dates for all maintained schools.

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