

School Session Dates for the Academic Year 2017/18**Report by Grace Vickers, Head of Education, Education, Communities & Economy****1 Introduction**

This paper refers to the setting of school session dates for the academic year 2017/18.

2 Background

Midlothian Council has recommended that the session dates for Midlothian schools be synchronised with our neighbouring council areas in particular with the City of Edinburgh Council, bearing in mind some differences in local holidays.

Council Officers have sought to align school session dates more closely with neighbouring local authorities, mainly Edinburgh and East Lothian. For school session 2017/18 Edinburgh and East Lothian have set their return date as Monday 14th August 2017. If Midlothian were to set the same return date it would result in 14 teacher days in August 2017 and 199 working days in the 2016/17 teacher leave year. Within the parameters set by the Scottish Negotiating Committee for Teachers (SNCT) teachers cannot work more or less than 195 days in the leave year. The implication of this for school session dates is that the number of teaching days in August cannot vary from year to year if they are to comply with the SNCT Handbook.

Following significant discussion on this matter at the Midlothian Negotiating Committee for Teachers (MNCT) the management side wrote to SNCT requesting them to determine if there are exceptions or developments which would permit more than 195 days for teachers to fall within the teacher leave year.

The response from the SNCT Joint Secretary has reiterated the relevant section from the SNCT Handbook “that the leave year for teachers and music instructors *“shall run from 1 September in any year until 31 August the following year” (Part 2, paragraph 5.1) and the working year “shall consist of 195 days of which 190 will coincide with the school year for pupils with the remaining 5 days being worked by the individual teachers on duties as planned by the Council” (Part 2, paragraph 3.5).*”

The letter further confirms that in the leave year teachers cannot work more or less than 195 days and that the Council should work within the parameters set by SNCT. In other words, the leave year in 2017-18 must comply with the Handbook, (Appendix 2).

In procedural terms, if Midlothian Council does not accept the advice of the Joint Secretaries, the next step is to refer the matter to the Joint Chairs for determination. At the meeting of Cabinet on 31 May 2016 it was decided that this course of action would be pursued and the outcome reflected in the setting of school session dates for 2018/19 and future years.

The setting of school session dates for 2017/18 is required imminently so time does not permit this course of action to be pursued for the 2017/18 school session. It was therefore proposed and agreed by Cabinet that the first day of the 2017/18 school session, in line with the SNCT handbook, will be Friday, 18 August 2017.

In agreement with the Joint Secretaries two possible options for 2017/18 session dates for Midlothian schools were drawn up for the purpose of consultation with staff and parents. These dates coincide with those of Edinburgh and East Lothian on the timing of the October, Christmas and Easter breaks and on the last day of the school session which will be Friday 29 June 2018. Both Edinburgh and East Lothian will have a full week break for staff and pupils in February 2018. The Midlothian break will take place in the same week in February however, due to the limitations of the session start date, a full week break for both staff and pupils cannot be accommodated.

Option A which had previously been tabled at MNCT gives pupils a break of two days and gives staff one day in service and a one day break. Option B gives pupils a break of one week and gives staff two days in service and a break of three days. In order to accommodate this option, the Spring holiday on 16 April and the May Day holiday on 7 May would be relinquished.

A survey of parents and staff was carried out on both these options. A total of 415 responses were received with 76.6% of respondents expressing a preference for option B, with the longer February break and no May Day holiday for staff.

On 7th June 2016, the Teachers' side of the MNCT raised an issue concerning the proposed removal of May Day as a holiday for teachers and stated that were Midlothian to make this a working day for teachers then they could not agree option B. Accordingly, in order to agree session dates for 2017/18 by the end of the current school session, the only possible course of action is to propose to Council to approve option A, with the shorter February break. The proposed scheme of school session dates for 2017/18 is attached to this report as Appendix1.

Midlothian will commence the 2017/18 academic session four days later than Edinburgh, with a start date of Friday 18th August and will have a February break of two days for pupils and a break of one day for staff. Edinburgh and East Lothian will have a full week break for both staff and pupils in February 2018. This break will take place in the same week in February in all three authorities.

The school session dates proposed for 2017/18 coincide across the three authorities on the timing of the October, Christmas and Easter breaks and on the last day of the school session which will be Friday 29 June 2018.

Both Management and Unions recognise that this outcome will disappoint staff and parents who responded positively to having a longer February break in 2017/18. Midlothian intends to undertake further consultation in the near future with the intention of achieving fuller alignment of school session dates for 2018/19 and future years.

In addition we propose to refer to SNCT Chairs, the matter of the May day holiday and the issue of permitting more or less than 195 working days for teachers to fall within the teacher leave year for determination in the setting of school session dates for 2018/19 and future years in order to determine whether we can align more closely with neighbouring local authorities.

3 Report Implications

3.1 Resource

There are no human resource implications associated with this report.

3.2 Risk

By aligning with neighbouring authorities risk implications are mitigated with regard to pupil attendance at school.

3.3 Single Midlothian Plan and Business Transformation

Themes addressed in this report:

- ☐ Community safety
- ☐ Adult health, care and housing
- ☐ Getting it right for every Midlothian child
- ☐ Improving opportunities in Midlothian
- ☐ Sustainable growth
- ☐ Business transformation and Best Value
- ☒ None of the above

3.4 Impact on Performance and Outcomes

Session dates have been designed to maximise attendance by minimising the number of broken weeks for staff and pupils.

3.5 Adopting a Preventative Approach

Not applicable.

3.6 Involving Communities and Other Stakeholders

Consultation has been undertaken with teaching unions, schools and parents and efforts have been made to synchronise session dates with the City of Edinburgh Council as far as possible.

3.7 Ensuring Equalities

The proposed report will have a neutral effect on equalities groups.

3.8 Supporting Sustainable Development

This proposal takes into account the need to deliver an educational service across Midlothian which anticipates and acknowledges the needs and views of stakeholders.

3.9 IT Issues

There are no IT issues arising from this report.

4 Recommendation

Council is recommended:

- To agree the school session dates for 2017/18 as set out in the attached appendix;
- To authorise officers to refer the matter of permitting more or less than 195 working days for teachers to fall within the teacher leave year to the Joint Chairs of SNCT for determination in the setting of school session dates for 2018/19 and future years in order to align with neighbouring local authorities.
- To refer the matter of the May Day holiday to the Joint Chairs of the SNCT for determination of school session dates for 2018/19 and future years.

07 June 2016

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Background Papers:

Appendix 1 - School Session Dates 2017/18

Appendix 2 - Failure to Agree Letter

MIDLOTHIAN COUNCIL

EDUCATION, COMMUNITIES AND ECONOMY

PROPOSED DAY SCHOOL SESSION DATES 2017 / 18

TERM 1	Staff Resume	Friday **	18	August	2017
	Pupils Resume	Tuesday	22	August	2017
	Autumn Holiday	Friday	15	September	2017
		Monday	18	September	2017
	All Resume	Tuesday	19	September	2017
Mid Term	All Break	Friday	13	October	2017
	All Resume	Monday	23	October	2017
	Term Ends	Friday	22	December	2017
TERM 2	Staff Resume	Monday*	8	January	2018
	Pupils Resume	Tuesday	9	January	2018
Mid Term	Pupils Break	Wednesday	14	February	2018
	Staff Break	Thursday*	15	February	2018
	All Resume	Monday	19	February	2018
	Term Ends	Thursday	29	March	2018
	<i>Good Friday</i>	<i>30th March</i>			
TERM 3	<i>Easter Monday</i>	<i>2nd April</i>			
	All Resume	Tuesday	17	April	2018
	May Day	Monday	7	May	2018
	All Resume	Tuesday	8	May	2018
	Victoria Day	Monday*	21	May	2018
	Pupils Resume	Tuesday	22	May	2018
	Term Ends	Friday	29	June	2018

*** Staff In Service Days:** Friday 18th & Monday 21st August 2017,
Monday 8th January 2018,
Thursday 15th February 2018,
Monday 21st May 2018.

Appendix 2

Dawn Farquhar
Jim Glen
MNCT Joint Secretaries

Ref: DM/EN
16 May 2016
dmorrice@eis.org.uk

Dear Dawn and Jim,

Your letter of 19 April has been discussed by the Employers' Side Joint Secretary and Teachers' Side Joint Secretary.

In procedural terms determination would lie with the Joint Chairs or full SNCT. The Joint Secretaries are able to provide initial advice which, if you do not accept, will be referred to the Joint Chairs.

You will be aware from the Handbook that the leave year for teachers and music instructors *"shall run from 1 September in any year until 31 August the following year"* (Part 2, paragraph 5.1) and the working year *"shall consist of 195 days of which 190 will coincide with the school year for pupils with the remaining 5 days being worked by the individual teachers on duties as planned by the Council"* (Part 2, paragraph 3.5).

In the leave year teachers cannot work more or less than 195 days. You have to work within the parameters set by SNCT. In other words, the leave year in 2017-18 must comply with the Handbook.

Yours sincerely

Drew Morrice
Joint Secretary