



The School Year

From the Diocesan Director of Education and Training:

From time to time, the Board of Education and Training is asked for its attitude and policy towards the School Year, and especially to proposals such as the Standard (6 Term) School Year and the timing of the Easter holiday.

It is up to the Governing Body of a VA school to set term dates, within the requirement to provide a total of 190 teaching days. Normally VA schools, will follow the same pattern as other maintained schools (inc. VC schools) within the Local Authority and it would be anomalous not to do so.

However, there may be particular issues for Church Schools when the Easter holiday does not include either Holy Week (the week before Easter) or Easter Week (the week beginning on Easter Sunday/Monday).

At its meeting on 10th November 2005, the Diocesan Board of Education agreed the following guidance/policy in response to Local Authorities seeking its views.

- i. Recognition that it may not be possible every year for the Easter holiday to include both Holy Week and Easter Week, given fluctuation in dates of Easter.
- ii. That if only one week of the school holiday is linked to Easter in a particular year, preference is for that week to be Holy Week rather than Easter Week.
- iii. Strong opposition to an Easter weekend entirely cut off from a 'Spring' holiday.
- iv. Retaining the name 'Easter Holiday' rather than a secular alternative.

If the Standard School Year proposal were to be implemented in any Local Authority area falling within the Diocese (and there is not at present any intimation that it will be) it would be possible for the Easter weekend, some years, to fall completely outside a 'spring' holiday. In this event, the Board would suggest that VA schools declare Wed and Thurs in Holy Week as non school days, thus creating a six day break around Easter. The two days teaching days thus lost could be made up elsewhere in the academic year.

Although the status quo does not currently make it possible for both Holy Week and Easter Week to fall outside the school term every year (such as in 2006), the Board does not

recommend that schools otherwise depart from term dates determined by their Local Authority, though of course, this remains a matter for local determination by each VA school governing body.

Tim Elbourne
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