

Consultation on the school year

Consultation response form

Your name: Stephanie Price (Chair)

Organisation (if applicable): Wales Council for Outdoor Learning

email/telephone number: 01874 623086 / Stephanie.Price@DofE.org

Your address:

c/o Duke of Edinburgh's Award
First Floor
Plas y Ffynnon
Cambrian Way
Brecon
Powys
LD3 7HP

Responses should be returned by **12 February 2024** to:

School Time Branch
The Education Directorate
Welsh Government
Cathays Park
Cardiff
CF10 3NQ

or completed electronically and sent to:

email: ExploringUseOfSchoolTime@gov.wales



Cyngor Cymru ar Gyfer
Dysgu yn yr Awyr Agored

Wales Council for
Outdoor Learning

[Wales Council for Outdoor Learning](http://www.walescouncilforoutdoorlearning.org/) acts as a voice for the outdoor learning and environmental education sector bringing together organisations that support and deliver high quality teaching and learning in the outdoor environment.

The partnership shares good practice and influences policy development, highlighting the many benefits of outdoor learning and its contribution to the development of ethical and informed citizens of future generations.

Wales Council for Outdoor Learning helps to raise the profile of Out of Classroom Learning, aiming to foster greater understanding and appreciation of its value and its vital contribution to education for sustainable development and global citizenship.

More information can be found at: www.walescouncilforoutdoorlearning.org/

Wales Council for Outdoor Learning welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Structure of the School Year proposals to ensure the role of outdoor learning and the natural environment in improving physical activity, mental health and well-being, and attainment is highlighted throughout the teaching and learning system.

The Council recognises outdoor learning as covering a wide range of activity from use of our school grounds, local parks, woodlands and beaches, field studies, environmental education, recognised accredited approaches to teaching like forest school and coastal school, residential stays and adventure education. The partners provide expertise in areas ranging from Initial Teacher Education, professional learning and curriculum support, use of school grounds for play and learning, and for well-being and physical health improvements, supporting awards, land ownership, residential and overnight expeditions, national guidance and health and safety.

The Network can provide advice and guidance on quality assured outdoor teaching and learning and provide training and support for teachers and education professionals.

Please do contact us for further clarification or information.

Select all that apply to you from the following.

- Age 17 years and under
- Age 18 years and older
- Education workforce
- Tourism sector
- Childcare sector
- Full-time work (please specify)
- Part-time work (please specify)
- Parent or carer (the term 'parent' has been used as a shorthand to include mothers, fathers, foster carers, adoptive parents, stepparents, 'kinship' parents, grandparents and guardians)
- Other

Supporting comments

Wales Council for Outdoor Learning is a network of organisations including charities, independent providers, universities and public sector bodies. Our membership includes:

Urdd Gobaith Cymru
Wildlife Trusts Wales
Field Studies Council
Antur Natur
Pembrokeshire Outdoor Schools
Partneriaeth
The Duke of Edinburgh's Award
UK Youth for Nature
Partneriaeth
John Muir Trust
Bangor University
Centre for Alternative Technology
Outdoor Education Advisors Panel
RSPB
North Wales Outdoor Education Service
AHOEC

With support from:
Natural Resources Wales
Cadw
Bannau Brycheiniog

Question 1 – To what extent do you agree or disagree that the school calendar could be better designed to support the way we live, learn and work today?

Strongly agree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Agree	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Strongly disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Question 2 – To what extent do you agree or disagree that the school calendar could be better designed to support socio-economically disadvantaged learners?

Strongly agree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Agree	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Strongly disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Question 3 – To what extent do you agree or disagree that the school calendar could be better designed to support learners with additional learning needs (ALN)?

Strongly agree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Agree	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Strongly disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Question 4 – To what extent do you agree or disagree that the school calendar could be better designed to support teacher or learner wellbeing and ease fatigue?

Strongly agree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Agree	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Strongly disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Question 5 – To what extent do you agree or disagree with an additional break week (taken from the summer break) dividing the longest term (autumn)?

Strongly agree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Agree	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Strongly disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Question 6 – To what extent do you agree or disagree with having the flexibility to de-couple (separate) the spring break from the Easter public holiday?

Strongly agree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Agree	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Strongly disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Question 7 – To what extent do you agree or disagree with an additional break week in May or June (taken from the summer break and added to the existing May break) to even up term lengths?

Strongly agree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Agree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Strongly disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Question 8 – To what extent do you agree or disagree with holding A level, AS level and GCSE results days in the same week?

Strongly agree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Agree	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Strongly disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Question 9 – To what extent do you agree or disagree with Option 1: maintaining the existing school calendar?

Strongly agree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Agree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Disagree	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Strongly disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Question 10 – To what extent do you agree or disagree with Option 2 and the proposed draft direction: a school calendar with a 2-week October break, a spring break at broadly the same time each year (despite when Easter falls) and a 5-week summer break?

Strongly agree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Agree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Strongly disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Question 11 – To what extent do you agree or disagree with Option 3: a school calendar with a 2-week October break, a spring break at broadly the same time each year (despite when Easter falls), a 2-week May break and a 4-week summer break?

Strongly agree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Agree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Strongly disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Question 12 – For 2025 to 2026, do you agree or disagree with the proposed term dates as set out for Options 2 and 3?

Strongly agree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Agree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Strongly disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Question 13 – What, in your opinion, would be the likely effects of the proposals on the Welsh language? We are particularly interested in any likely effects on opportunities to use the Welsh language and on not treating the Welsh language less favourably than English

Do you think that there are opportunities to promote any positive effects?

Do you think that there are opportunities to mitigate any adverse effects?

Supporting comments

As the number of teaching days are remaining the same we do not believe the proposals will have an adverse effect on the Welsh language.

Question 14 – In your opinion, could the proposals be formulated or changed so as to:

- have positive effects or more positive effects on using the Welsh language and on not treating the Welsh language less favourably than English; or
- mitigate any negative effects on using the Welsh language and on not treating the Welsh language less favourably than English?

Supporting comments

No comment

Question 15 – We have asked a number of specific questions. If you have any related issues which we have not specifically addressed, please use this space to report them:

Supporting comments

Our members discussed the proposed changes and raised the following points:

- If a week was taken from the summer break meaning more time in school in July this should coincide with better weather and more opportunity to learn outside the classroom across the AoLE's. It also provides more time for offsite trips, field work and linked to the proposed Outdoor Residential Bill, more time to accommodate residential trips and DofE expeditions during the summer term. Linked to the wish to help learners in poverty, this could also help reduce the barrier of requiring wet weather clothing.
- Some members proposed a longer summer term (linked to comments above) instead of the longer autumn term (a straight swap in length), keeping the autumn break to one week. They felt a two week break during the worsening weather was not helpful to families.
- Many members agreed that the autumn term was too long, the spring term often felt too short, and the summer holidays can be too long, particularly

for those in vulnerable situations. They agreed with decoupling the Spring break from the Easter weekend. Again, the weather is improving in the spring term, and it is a good time for outdoor learning of all kinds to take place, particularly gardening – planting seeds and produce – which ties in very well with many aspects of Curriculum for Wales.

- There was also an observation that the autumn term is a good time to gain an understanding of seeds, trees and hibernation. Many schools take part in the Acorn Antics campaign and the timing of an extended break would need to be thought through as losing a week when the days are still a decent length in terms of light could be detrimental.

With reference to questions 10, 11 and 12, we have not made a decision about the options other than to agree that a change is positive, that decoupling the spring break from Easter provides greater flexibility and shortening the summer break in preference for a longer summer term provides multiple opportunities for increasing outdoor learning of all kinds.

Responses to consultations are likely to be made public, on the internet or in a report. If you would prefer your response to remain anonymous, please tick here: