

Dear Parents and Carers,

Stopsley High School and Middlesex Learning Trust recognise that our greatest asset is the staff that teach our students day in, day out.

All schools and trusts are facing recruitment challenges for both teaching and support staff. Currently, recruitment is difficult across all sectors, particularly the public sector. We are looking to both retain our current, excellent staff and recruit the very best staff when our vacancies arise.

We have been researching and discussing strategies used nationally that could support recruitment and retention in our school and across the trust.

Having looked at the way some trusts and schools organise the school year differently, we are provisionally looking to make an adjustment to the dates in the autumn term 2024. This will support recruitment of the very best staff and could also reduce absence rates in the Autumn Term. Good health and wellbeing of staff and students is essential to the education of our pupils. The long Autumn Term, and emerging viruses at that time of year, seem to combine to create higher than usual absence rates, particularly in November. By adding five days to the October half term, we believe this will impact positively on the physical, emotional and mental health of our staff and students, and decrease absence during this term.

As part of a trust, academies can set their own term dates and school day. Over the past few years, many academies have chosen to extend the October half-term to two weeks. Extending the October half term by five days, of course, means we will need to ensure that those five days are made up at another time to ensure that there is no learning time lost for any student. There are a variety of strategies used by other trusts and schools, but we must do what's best for our school and students.

Proposal to move to a two-week autumn half term break

After consideration, at this school, we plan provisionally to add 10 minutes to each day to make up the time: we will add 10 minutes to the start of the day. Alongside the necessary changes to meet government minimum expectations, these proposed changes would mean that the school day would begin at 8:30am.

The only other way we could accommodate that time would be to add an extra lesson one day a week. We feel that spreading the time out rather than putting fifty minutes a week into a late lesson is preferable as we are keen to ensure that a range of intervention and extracurricular activities run each day after school and adding an additional after school lesson may limit these opportunities.

Consultation

If we choose to move to a two-week October half term, school day will begin at 8:30am from September 2024. That is a choice for us to make.

We would welcome your thoughts.

- Do you agree with the proposed change to the school term dates?
- Are there any comments you would like considered?

Please respond using this [online google survey](#).

Once the consultation is complete, we expect to confirm by the end of March the dates for the next school year 2024-25.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Karen Hand', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Karen Hand
Headteacher