



Ref: KBy/CAd
17th January 2024

Dear Parent/Carer,

We are seeking your views about deciding on whether or not to continue with a two-week half-term break in the autumn term in future years.

Why did we trial a two-week half term in October 2023?

The schools across Unity Schools Partnership recognise that their greatest asset is the staff that teach children day in, day out. As with many of the public services, schools nationally are facing recruitment challenges for both teaching and classroom support staff. The trust is looking to do yet better both to retain staff and recruit the best when vacancies arise.

We see schools and trusts re-look at the way the school year is organised and as you know we trialled a two-week half-term break in the autumn term of 2023 with each school making up the learning time in different ways.

What did we learn?

Importantly, we saw a notable difference in staff absence due to illness during November and December - significantly less than the previous year – which works towards our aim of reducing the need for supply cover and reducing disruption to children's learning.

We also know that many families were able to take holidays or extended breaks during the two-week half-term.

We know that childcare was a significant issue for families who were concerned about the two-week break. We had a number of children attend the additional provision we arranged and would welcome thoughts about where else parents would find this helpful if we have a two-week break.

Parents may recall that we have made up the learning time by increasing the tutor period to 30 minutes daily. The intention is to keep the 30 minute tutor time slot, but to move it forward we need to complete the following to develop it further:

- Continue with the interventions for English, Maths and Science for Year 11 for up to four sessions a week to allow our pupils to be competitive with other pupils in other schools.
- Use where possible and staff are agreeable tutor sessions through dedicated tutor groups to work on specific subject areas outside of the core subjects. For example additional time

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where appropriate on subjects that rely heavily on coursework such as Art, Technology etc... in Year 10. For three sessions a week.

- Develop the tutor programme in Key Stage 3 to ensure that the centralised reading curriculum is embedded and resourced for all staff and pupils. By adding this we will allow pupils to access the curriculum in a more positive way. Increasing the reading time allocated to the curriculum.
- Use ICT in Key Stage 3 to allow pupils to access interventions and work that supports the Key Stage 3 curriculum for one session a week where practicable.
- Where possible use the sessions to promote inter house activities and structures.

Just for further clarity we also took ten minutes from parts of the day, five minutes from lunchtime and five minutes from an extended period 5. The intention is that this time will not return onto the school day for the next academic year.

What else are we doing?

In researching strategies used across the country we are looking to provide the best professional development opportunities and, where staff look for promotion or other opportunities to provide as many as possible. We are also looking to provide the best possible working environment.

Your views

We would welcome your thoughts. Please respond by Wednesday 31st January:

- Do you agree with the October half-term break being two weeks?
- Are there any comments you would like considered?

Please use the form linked below to share your views regarding the two-week October half-term.

<https://forms.office.com/e/BAvg5VVE1s>

We expect to confirm by 16 February dates for the next school year.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "K Blakey".

Mr K Blakey
Executive Headteacher