

Majority of parents back week-long February holiday

A majority of parents in West Lothian are now backing a week-long February school holiday, it has been claimed.

The February mid-term break has in the past been seen as a curse by many parents and children – too miserable to stay at home and too soon after the expense of Christmas for a holiday in sunnier climes.

But now it is not just winter sport-loving families who are supportive of the break, local education leaders have been told.

The council's Education Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel heard this week that a majority of families chose the week-long holiday option for the school term dates in 2026-27.

While the decision has yet to be ratified by the Education Executive it was supported by the PDSP and puts the council into line with neighbours in the Lothians

Where West Lothian differs is at the September weekend break, and the local EIS rep urged a rethink on those plans.

Heather Hughes said local members of Scotland's largest teaching union lost out under the local plan of giving Friday and Monday off instead of Monday and Tuesday.

Hannah Heywood, a Customer Services Manager with the council, said a survey was held last October which produced almost

12,000 responses. The survey went out to pupils, teaching and non-teaching school staff, parents and carers.

In the results 6,749 parents or carers, or 48% of respondents, backed the February and October week alongside six weeks in the summer and two weeks at Easter. The next highest support came from pupils with 2,240, or 24% in favour. More than half of teachers and non-teaching staff also backed the option. Of the total number of votes cast 43% of all wanted the February week over and above a long weekend.

When the weeklong break was first mooted pre Covid, many parents objected because it placed extra holiday demands so soon after Christmas during a month of predominantly bad weather, and a time when many parents struggled to get time off.

Many parents of senior pupils also voiced fears of disruption to exam preparation.

In her report to committee Ms Haywood said: "Further comments from parents and carers were received suggesting various options including longer summer holidays, shorter summer holidays, changing the day off for Spring Day to the end of May bank holiday, matching other local authority session dates, and having fewer long weekends and short breaks.

"Overall, there was no consensus in the comments. The most popular option from the survey was for 6 weeks in summer, one week in October and one week in February. This pattern of holidays has therefore been used for the proposed dates for the 2026/27 school year."

Local EIS rep Heather Hughes asked: "Why do we always have Friday/Monday, rather than Monday Tuesday. Because we have the asymmetric week it is actually not a full day for us. We don't get paid as if it's a full day for those people who work part-time who only work on a Friday, so actually we are being cheated out of a bit of holiday."

“We can take that comment on board.” said Ms Haywood.

In the 26/27 year the September weekend is also out of kilter with the other parts of the Lothians which have already decided their weekend. Normally they tie-in.

Other holiday dates do not match with those known in Midlothian and Edinburgh, though both those councils all also break for a week in February.

Neighbours in Falkirk and South Lanarkshire have yet to announce their dates. South Lanarkshire has never offered a week holiday in February, only a long weekend with an in-service day attached.

The PDSP also heard that a planned teachers' in service day for 5 May next year has been moved to 7 May to coincide with the Scottish Parliamentary elections, when a lot of schools will be used as polling stations.

Term dates for 2026/27:-

Wednesday; 12 August 2026 .

September Holiday; All break Thursday, 17 September .
All resume Tuesday, 22 September .

October Holiday: All break Friday, 16 October .
Pupils resume Tuesday, 27 October .

Last day of term; Friday, 18 December .

Term starts Tuesday, 5 January 2027.

February Holiday: All break Friday, 5 February .

Pupils resume Tuesday, 16 February.

Last day of term: All break Friday, 19 March.

Good Friday: All off Friday, 26 March.

Easter Monday: All off Monday, 29 March.

Return after Easter: All resume Monday, 5 April .

May Holiday: All break Friday, 30 April .

May Public Holiday: All off Monday, 3 May.

Last day of term Friday, 25 June.

By Stuart Sommerville, Local Democracy Reporter