



THE PRIORY SCHOOL

D O R K I N G

Headteacher: Mrs J Trimnell



06 November 2024

Dear Parents/Carers

We are constantly seeking ways to improve and develop The Priory School for the benefit of our students. I know that whilst we have firm foundations in many areas of school life there are still some aspects to secure in the long term.

Consultation on Changes to the School Year

I am writing to consult with you on a proposal to change the term dates for the coming and future academic years. This would involve reducing the teaching days by extending the October half term by a week and amending holiday dates elsewhere to ensure more effective holiday periods, giving a net reduction of teaching of between 5 and 6 days. This would involve reducing the teaching days by extending the October half term and asking for your views on this proposal before proceeding.

Arguments in favour of shorter terms:

- Effective learning and progress are central to any change in our school. The change proposed has been shown to enhance progress and outcomes leading to better teaching and learning.
- Student attendance is a key priority. The attendance and attention span of students falls away in the second half of the autumn term in particular.
- The effect of staff absence on our students is significant. With a longer October half term, absence in the second half of the term will reduce. Research conducted in nearby schools who adopted this model show this to be the case.
- There is a growing concern over teacher workload and retention in the profession. Nationally 25% of teachers leave the profession within the first three years and replacing them is challenging.
- Better teaching comes from being able to recruit and retain good staff and this will help in making our school an attractive organisation at which to work.
- We need to focus on making sure the teaching, preparation and feedback to students are of high quality rather than just the time spent in lessons.
- We believe that we will be able to deliver all GCSE courses within the timeframe proposed.

We are concerned when students are absent, and this will continue to be the case. However, the main problem arises when students miss learning, and the rest of the cohort moves on with their studies. An increase in holiday time in the autumn term when all lessons would be suspended, would help to ensure that students would not fall behind. I understand there can be some concerns over supervision and childcare during the holidays, and I do not want to exacerbate those problems for parents should they exist.

PROPOSED TERM DATES

AUTUMN TERM 2025

Start of term	Half term	End of term
THURSDAY 4 September 2025	Monday 20 – Friday 31 October 2025	Friday 10 December 2025

SPRING TERM 2026

Start of term	Half term	End of term
Monday 05 January 2026	Monday 16 February – Friday 20 February 2026	Friday 27 March 2026

SUMMER TERM 2026

Start of term	Half term	End of term
Monday 13 April 2026	Monday 25 May – Friday 29 May 2026	Friday 17 July 2026

Autumn term 1: 04 September - 17 October 2025 7 weeks

Autumn term 2: 03 November - 19 December 2025 7 weeks

Spring Term 1: 05 January - 13 February 2026 6 weeks

Spring Term 2: 23 February – 26 March 2026 5 weeks

Summer Term 1: 13 April – 22 May 2026 6 weeks

Summer Term 2: 01 June – 17 July 2026 7 weeks

TOTAL = 38 weeks

There will be an additional 3 or 4 Inset days (depending on the school's needs each year), held as a full day, avoiding early closures during the term, which has been raised as a concern by a few parents.

In summary

Currently

We follow the dates for Surrey maintained schools; 195 term days per annum, students are in school for 190 days and there are 5 INSET days.

Proposed

The following changes are proposed:

The school year would be between 188 and 190 term days per annum, students would be in school for between 183 and 185 days per year with 5 INSET days each year.

Other aspects related to this:

I am also reducing the number of term time trips that are not directly curriculum related as we often have to use cover staff on these days. We will instead mainly encourage curriculum trips that engage all students and that have a direct link to learning outcomes and these will be staffed internally.

I am very interested to hear parents' views on this initiative. We are not the first school in Surrey to consider this model and those that have adopted it speak of improved engagement of students, reduced staff absence and no detrimental effect on school outcomes. It would therefore be remiss of us not to explore this strategy and seek your views on whether we should adopt this at the Priory School.

Please send your views, positive or negative, via this link [PARENT CONSULTATION QUESTIONNAIRE](#) by 3pm on Monday 18 November 2024. I will update parents/carers further before the end of the autumn term.

Yours faithfully,



Mrs Trimnell
Headteacher

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 01306 887 337

 enquiries@priorycofe.com
www.thepriorycofe.com

 West Bank, Dorking
RH4 3DG

