# WRITTEN STATEMENT

# BY

# THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

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| **TITLE**  | **Exploring Reform of the School Year** |
| **DATE**  | **30 June 2022** |
| **BY** | **Jeremy Miles, Minister for Education and Welsh Language**  |

As a government, we are committed to exploring the structure of the school year to see if we can better support learner and staff wellbeing, tackle disadvantage and educational inequalities, and bring it more into line with modern and future patterns of family life and employment. This is being taken forward as part of the Programme for Government and the commitments in the Cooperation Agreement with Plaid Cymru.

I am updating members on the progress of our work around exploring reform and setting out next steps.

As part of a wider evidence gathering and engagement programme, late last year we commissioned Beaufort Research to undertake a range of research activity. This work has helped inform our understanding of current perceptions, potential appetite for any change and implications of different types of reform, for example reducing the length of the summer holidays and extending holiday time elsewhere in the year.

This activity was a mix of qualitative and quantitative engagement. It included online focus groups with parents and carers, children and young people and the education workforce, online surveys, and engagement events aimed at wider stakeholders such as business, tourism, childcare, and local government, as well as detailed interviews with a range of representative stakeholders.

I am today publishing the Beaufort Research report ‘*Attitudes towards school year reform in Wales Research and engagement findings*’. I would like to thank Beaufort Research and their partners at Cazbah for undertaking this work. I am also incredibly grateful to the 13,000 stakeholders, individuals and organisations who took part.

It is clear from this report that, when discussed in detail, there is openness to looking at alternative ways of structuring the school year, particularly in terms of how we better support learners over the summer holidays and achieve greater consistency in the length of terms - particularly the current long autumn term - to better align with modern working and family patterns, and to tackle disadvantage and the attainment gap.

I also recognise that whilst there is reasonable contentment with the current school year, after discussion and being shown different potential school year models, a majority of the education workforce and around half of learners opted for an alternative model.

As such, and in line with our Programme for Government and Cooperation Agreement commitments, I have asked officials to develop options to bring forward a formal public consultation during the next academic year.

In our exploratory work to date, we have deliberately looked at a range of options, models, and principles for change in order to test different and distinct structures for the school year, and to gather the widest range of views from learners, staff, families, and the wider community.

The report and the initial views of stakeholders have been extremely helpful in refining our thinking as we develop options for consultation. Whilst I am clear there is no argument for changes to the overall number of holidays or for reducing the summer break to two or three weeks, I am pleased that the research published today demonstrates an openness to looking at the overall distribution of holidays throughout the year with a greater consistency in term lengths.

As we move forward with our new curriculum, support our education workforce, and create more opportunities for parental and community engagement, the way we plan our school year must be part of this conversation. I believe that exploring options for change can enable us to support curriculum planning and delivery, tackle disadvantage and educational inequalities, and support learner and staff well-being. We now have an opportunity to explore these issues in the context of whether the current structure really is the best system to deliver on these shared priorities.

As such, over the coming weeks and months we will continue to gather evidence and engage with stakeholders, particularly learners and the education workforce, to ensure a collaborative approach to any new policy design. I will provide members with a further update in the autumn term.

[https://gov.wales/exploring-reform-school-year-beaufort-research-report-attitudes-towards-school-year-reform-wales](https://eur01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fgov.wales%2Fexploring-reform-school-year-beaufort-research-report-attitudes-towards-school-year-reform-wales&data=05%7C01%7CPSMEWL%40gov.wales%7C77ac74b8f80842c0984108da59ff4e4d%7Ca2cc36c592804ae78887d06dab89216b%7C0%7C0%7C637921250301764789%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=Md%2FDocR3WlGA%2FG2Q65VhIQlo7lfUbs9KsVB%2BmgLn5i0%3D&reserved=0)