



**HEDINGHAM SCHOOL  
AND SIXTH FORM**  
ACHIEVEMENT & EXCELLENCE

6 December 2024

**Official Sensitive**

Dear Parent/Guardian

**Proposal – Two-Week Half-Term – October 2025**

Following recent conversations with various stakeholders, I am writing to you regarding our proposal to move to a two-week October half-term break in the Autumn term starting the academic year 2025/26. The Autumn term is a long and challenging term and one in which we typically see students and staff fatigue, which leads to increased levels of absence. Staff and student voice have indicated that learners' energy and engagement levels subside towards the later stages of a long term and an extended time for rest and recuperation would hopefully counteract this.

Evidence gathered from schools who have already adopted a similar model suggests a 25% drop in student sickness absence and a 50% drop in staff absence. Consistent staffing is critical in maintaining continuity in classrooms and maintaining a high quality of learning provision for all.

I am committed to ensuring that we continue to recruit the best teachers who have the skills and knowledge to best support our students. With a well publicised national crisis with the recruitment and retention of teachers, it is a priority for me to ensure that Hedingham School remains an attractive place to work so we can attract and retain the dedicated colleagues who serve the school so well.

With new national guidance around attendance, to which we are tightly bound, term-time holidays are not permitted. A benefit of this new model is that it may offer greater flexibility for families to take holidays and potentially at a time when there is an opportunity to take advantage of lower prices.

**Consequences of Change:**

You may be understandably concerned that an additional week of holiday will negatively impact on learning loss for students.

The school proposes to "regain" this time through adding 10 minutes to the length of the school day next academic year. Students will attend school for 185 days in total, so the additional time generated will be 1850 minutes or effectively just under 31 hours (above the 25 hours lost through the collapse of an Autumn term learning week).

**Current School Day**

Registration and PD: 8.40-9.10am  
Period 1: 9.10-10.10am  
Period 2: 10.10-11.10am  
*Break:* 11.10-11.30am  
Period 3: 11.30-12.30pm  
Period 4: 12.30-1.30pm  
*Lunch:* 1.30-2.15pm  
Period 5: 2.15-3.15pm

**Revised School Day**

Registration and PD: 8.30-9.00 am  
Period 1: 9.00-10.05am  
Period 2: 10.05-11.10am  
*Break:* 11.10-11.30am  
Period 3: 11.30-12.30pm  
Period 4: 12.30-1.30pm  
*Lunch:* 1.30-2.15pm  
Period 5: 2.15-3.15pm

The school proposes to add 5 minutes to both Period 1 and Period 2. These are typically our most productive lessons of the day when students make the most learning gains.

By starting the day 10 minutes earlier, we avoid changes to Break, Lunch and finish time. Our Bus Companies can all accommodate a pre-8.30 am arrival and this will reduce “waiting” time in the mornings for those who arrive on early bus routes.

I really hope that parents and guardians welcome this strategy and recognise its importance in supporting students and staff. Many schools that surround Hedingham School (including Samuel Ward, Castle Manor, Thomas Gainsborough, Alec Hunter, Honywood, Helena Romanes, New Rickstones, Maltings Academy) have adopted this model and it has offered me the opportunity to carefully look at implementation.

I do acknowledge that there may be some families that are inconvenienced by this change. I have floated the idea with a small group of parents with whom the proposal was very well received, but I am keen to give all members of the community the opportunity to comment. For this purpose, the school would encourage parents to send their comments (positive or negative) via the following email address: [clerk@hedingham.essex.sch.uk](mailto:clerk@hedingham.essex.sch.uk) The school will take careful note of all comments expressed when making a final decision but will need to confirm its intentions by the start of January 2025. **Deadline for responses is 9.00 am on Friday 20 December.**

To confirm our revised October half-term for 2025-2026 would be Monday 20 October – Friday 31 October.

Your sincerely



Mr P Finch  
Headteacher

Headteacher • Paul Finch BSc (Hons) PGCE NPQH

Yeldham Road • Sible Hedingham • Essex • CO9 3QH • Telephone 01787 460470

e-mail: [enquiries@hedingham.essex.sch.uk](mailto:enquiries@hedingham.essex.sch.uk) • Website: [www.hedingham.essex.sch.uk](http://www.hedingham.essex.sch.uk) • Registered Company No. 8330173



Approved  
Centre

