

STANLEY PARK JUNIOR SCHOOL

Stanley Park Road, Carshalton, Surrey SM5 3JL

A Foundation School in the London Borough of Sutton

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17th January 2023

FUTURE TERM DATES

Dear Parents/Carers,

A small number of parents have expressed concern that the term dates for 2023-24 no longer align with those of Stanley Park Infants' School. The particular concern was that the Infants' School have opted to change to a two-week half-term, whilst we at SPJS remain with one week.

When Stanley Park Infants' School consulted with its parents and stakeholders with regards to changing term dates to a two-week half-term, it did so as Cirrus Academy Trust. Cirrus currently has five schools across the whole of Sutton and its decision took into account the results from all five of these schools, rather than focusing on Stanley Park Infants' School specifically. We did respond to Cirrus's consultation sharing our concerns about the disruption that it would cause families who attend both SPIS and SPJS schools.

As a stand-alone foundation school, at Stanley Park Juniors we are able to focus on what we feel is specifically correct for just our school, and we are firmly of the opinion that continuing with a 1-week October half-term is best for our school community, particularly pupils and staff.

In England, local authority-maintained schools, of which SPJS is one, must open for pupils for 190 days during the school year, as well as deliver five in-school training days (INSET) days for staff, whilst keeping within the local authority term dates. This is different to academies, who can decide how many teaching days they provide. For example for the academic year 2023-24, Stanley Park Infants' will be teaching pupils for 189 days (a reduction of one day's teaching).

Some parents have shared that an increasing number of schools are moving to a two-week October half-term. Having looked at 2023-24 term dates for primary schools across the borough, of those that have published data on their websites, only seven are moving to two weeks (with five of these being Cirrus Academy Trust schools, the other two are in different academy trusts) and 22 primary schools are keeping with one week at half-term.

We acknowledge that the majority of secondary schools have a two-week half-term, but this has been the case for a good number years as many of them became academies a long time ago. Despite secondary schools opting to do this, the vast majority of primary schools have kept with one week at half-term.

Headteacher: **Amanda J Lamy BA (Hons)**

Deputy Headteacher: **Julia Burridge BA (Hons)**

However, due to Cirrus's decision, when setting term dates the SPJS Governing Body did consider a 2-week half-term. We decided to keep to 1 week for the following reasons:

- In September, children have already just returned from a six-week holiday and by half-term are just settling back into school and the pattern of learning. The shape of the school year is not a straight climb and the steepest gradient is at the beginning. Taking a break longer than a week at this point risks losing momentum at a key foundational part of children's school year.
- Were SPJS to take an extra week of holiday at this half-term, our five statutory INSET days would have to be spread across an extended period of after-school 'Twilight' sessions. As this would be in addition to the usual staff meetings and Continual Professional Development - and after having taught all day - it would give staff little time for pupil feedback, planning, preparation and assessment on these particular days hence having an impact on pupils' learning.
- Extra-curricular clubs would also be impacted as the majority of these are run by teaching staff and would need to be cancelled whenever staff need to attend INSET in addition to their usual CPD throughout the academic year.

I understand that the changes introduced by Cirrus Academy Trust have led to Stanley Park Infants' School not having their dates mirror ours exactly which is frustrating for parents with children in both schools. We empathise with you on the possible impact on child-care arrangements. However, our priority at all times must be to do what we feel is best for the education of our pupils and the ability of our staff to deliver high quality teaching.

Yours faithfully,



Mrs Lamy
Headteacher