The Education (School Day and School Year) (England) Regulations 1999 require all maintained schools to be open to educate their pupils for at least 380 sessions (190 days) in each school year. A maintained school’s year must begin after the end of July.

There are no specific legal requirements about how long the school day should be. Governing bodies of all maintained schools in England are responsible for deciding when sessions should begin and end on each school day. Governing bodies are also responsible for deciding the length of each lesson and the timings for the morning session, the midday break, and the afternoon session.

Academy and free school funding agreements state that the duration of the school day is the responsibility of the academy trust.

In the event that a school decides to make changes to its school day, it is our expectation that the school should act reasonably when making such decisions; giving parents notice and considering the impacts on those affected – including pupils, teachers, and parents’ work commitments and childcare options.

Extending the school day, or offering extra education activities around the school day, can help children, particularly the most disadvantaged to improve attainment, social skills, raise aspiration and the love of learning and also help parents with childcare. It is for schools to decide whether to make any changes to the school day, or offer provision after the end of the school day.

Governing bodies of foundation and voluntary aided schools have responsibility to set their own term and holiday dates. The local authority has responsibility to set the term and holiday dates for community schools, community special schools, voluntary controlled schools, pupil referral units and maintained nursery schools. Governing bodies and councils must set dates in line with the requirements of the length of the school year as set out in the Education (School Day and School Year) (England) Regulations 1999.

Academy trusts (of academies and free schools) are free to make changes to term and holiday dates. They are not bound by the school day and school year regulations, or the school teachers’ pay and conditions document.

School holidays are not determined at national level; they are agreed locally by schools and local authorities (depending on school type). We believe that head teachers, school governors and local authorities are best placed to set school term and holiday dates in the interests of the pupils and parents at their school.

They need to arrange them in a way that helps pupils to learn and gives them time away from school. Maintained schools, however, must as mentioned previously be open for at least 190 days per year. While there is no formal process for coordination of term dates, in practice many schools and local authorities work together, and with other areas. They do this because of practical constraints such as the timing of examinations and local areas’ desire to minimise any disruption to parents.

If schools do decide to change their term dates, they would be required to act reasonably; giving parents notice and considering the impact on those affected – including pupils, teachers, the local community and parents’ work commitments and childcare options for both parents and teachers.

In summary, it is for schools and local authorities to manage their own school day and calendar and this department does not prescribe how this should be done.