



Dear Parents and Carers,

I am writing to you to share our plan for the academic calendar for Portsmouth schools at the Thinking Schools Academy Trust (TSAT) for the 2026-2027 academic year.

From September 2026 (and already published 2025-2026), schools across TSAT will align on school term dates. The main features of this are:

- A two-week break for the October half term
- A minimum of 184 teaching days within the academic year
- Minimised early closure days

We are finalising the exact dates for teacher training days and will align them with other Portsmouth schools. These dates will be published on each school's website in autumn 2025.

Our main goals:

Targeted pupil support: We are committed to providing extra help for students who need it most, outside of regular school hours. This includes sessions to close learning gaps and offer extra challenges. Following a successful pilot of a change to term dates during this school year, we will extend this to more groups of pupils for additional focused-support time. Some of these sessions will focus on closing specific gaps in pupils' understanding, and others will provide extra challenge and opportunities to extend pupils' thinking.

Reduce absence: We are driven to reduce absence within the second half of the autumn term. Across our schools, we are seeing higher rates of absence amongst pupils between September and December. By giving an extra week's break in October, we are providing more opportunity for pupils to rest and recharge, and this will help us in our efforts to reduce levels of absence. Initial data from across TSAT this year has shown that schools have seen better pupil and staff attendance in the second half of the autumn term – between November and December. Good attendance supports positive outcomes.

Professional development: The term dates will allow staff to maximise on their opportunities for professional development. We want to make sure that our teachers are experts in their subject areas and in their teaching craft. This model provides additional time outside of the teaching day for us to train our staff and for them to work together on the best ways to deliver the curriculum that will positively impact your child's outcomes.

Holiday provision where it is most needed: We recognise that TSAT's academic calendar may also create additional time for holiday club provision amongst our families. In October 2024, we trialled a successful holiday provision, with places subsidised for families most in need. We are looking at expanding this provision for next academic year (2025-26) during the October half term. There are also discussions taking place currently about additional provision in July, depending on how our term dates correspond to those of other Portsmouth schools.

I am grateful to have TSAT's Board of Governors and Academy Governing Boards support, who will work closely with our leadership teams to ensure good results are achieved through these aims.

If you would like the opportunity to discuss and of the details shared or other aspects our Trust's work with our Portsmouth schools, then I will be available at:

- Meon Infant School – Tuesday 20th May, 08.30-09.00
- Meon Junior School – Wednesday 11th June, 08.15-09.00
- Moorings Way Infant School – Wednesday 25th June, 08.30-09.00

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Thank you for your continued support. I truly believe that by working in partnership, we can continue to transform the life chances of our pupils.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D Botting', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Daniel Botting
Regional Director (South)
Thinking Schools Academy Trust