

Are children's summer holidays too long?

The six-week school summer holiday should be consigned to the educational dustbin¹, according to a school which has radically boosted its exam results by introducing a four-week break.

Greensward College, Essex, a secondary school and sixth form college², has introduced a radical five-term year - with four equal breaks of two weeks and a four-week summer holiday. Under the new system, the number of pupils gaining at least five good GCSEs³ has leapt⁴ from 70 per cent to 88 per cent.

Teachers say the shorter break ensures children retain their focus, but parents have warned that staggered⁵ holiday timetables will spell havoc⁶ for families with children at different schools. Criticism is also likely to come from teaching unions, who scuppered⁷ a proposal for a six-term year in 2003.

10 Do you think it is worth cutting short children's time of rest and relaxation for better exam results? Are children already under too much pressure from testing?

If you have children, do you think they forget their lessons during the six-week break? Are the holidays a sacred island of family time, or a protracted ordeal of costly childcare and endless demands for entertainment?

If you are a teacher, how do you view shorter summer holidays?

To send a letter to the editor of The Daily Telegraph, email dtletters@telegraph.co.uk

Selected comments

15 **Siobhan** "I do not think you should cut kids holidays like that! What's the one thing the kids look forward to at the end of the school year? The summer holidays! You have after school studies, you have summer school Kids need to be free outside school! In all fairness some children don't listen in class and teachers need to be stricter to the kids that don't! That's what will get the scores higher! LEAVE THEM ALONE!"

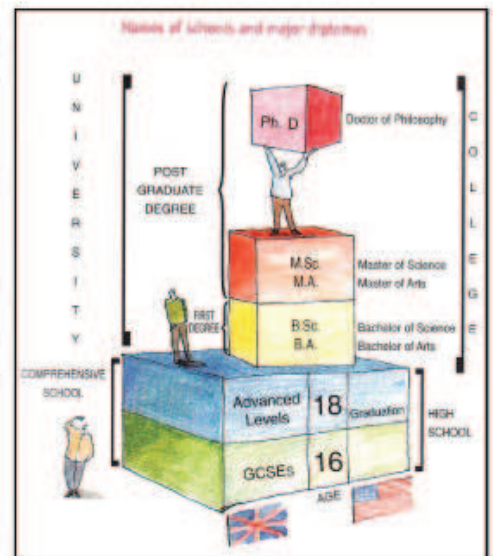
20 **Rickie** "The summer holidays are far too long and made worse by teachers adding training days and the return to school falling on a bank holiday. Kids in the area where I live are bored senseless after three weeks and many WANT to go back to school. I've also noticed that once many become bored they turn to anti-social activities. Vandalism increases ten-fold after the third week. The police will verify this."

Jazz "I am 13 and after the 4th week its boring I think that it should be 2 weeks shorter because we all get dead bored, we all miss are friends and it's even harder when we come back because we are off for so long!"

30 **Peter** "Here in France, everything is too long: Lessons last approximately 55 minutes although we know that interest duration rarely exceeds 35 minutes. Days mostly begin at 8am and go on to 6pm. Holidays for most secondary school begin early June and carry on until the first week in September. Less exhausting days and shorter, but more numerous lessons and holidays seem an excellent idea pedagogically speaking."

35 **Judith** "Yes, the summer holidays should be shorter. They seem to be on holiday every five minutes anyway. These days, children seem to be unable to do anything without creating maximum noise. Perhaps the doting indulgent parents love hearing the uncontrolled uproar they make all day long - but I don't. But then we, without children, don't count do we?"

40 **Sarah** "Here in France, my son stays for 'étude' and comes home at 6. He has Wednesday afternoons off when he can do all sorts of activities which are laid on by various associations for children (music, sport, art, etc). He has 8 weeks holiday in summer, half of which is spent with me, half with his father. I always buy him an activity book for his age as he does forget a lot of what he's been taught during the summer. But he returns relaxed, happy and ready to start again and see his friends. It also gives them time to get bored and look forward to going back to school."



¹ dustbin = garbage can, litter basket

² sixth form college in GB means secondary school (// French lycée); college in USA means university

³ GCSE = British equivalent of the French DNB

⁴ to leap = to jump, to rise up

⁵ staggered = disturbed

⁶ havoc = chaos

⁷ to scupper = to sink deliberately a proposal

Adapted from

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/yourview/1553675/Are-childrens-summer-holidays-too-long.html>