



Drastic plans to cut school summer holidays

Tiana K

School Children in Wales could face shorter summer holidays from 2026, in order to help working parents.

Although Welsh children may soon have to face a four or five week summer holiday, the Welsh Government claim that reforming the school year is not about reducing school breaks. There will be no changes to the overall amount of holidays for learners and teachers. Instead, the Government wants to look at how the holidays are distributed across the year. In addition, the Government have guaranteed that the summer break will be at least 4 weeks long.

Wales would not be the first area of the UK to shorten summer holidays, but it will become the first and largest overall area to do so. A small number of local councils in England and Scotland have already opted for shorter summer holidays and a longer half term in October.



A new report is set to recommend a four-week school summer holiday across England for the benefit of teachers, pupils, and parents.

South Korea's school year is the longest in the world, at about 220-230 days and the summer holiday is only around 30 days. Italy, with the longest summer break, gives its students about 90-92 days for their summer break, while children in Portugal and Greece have 84 days.

Over recent years there have been many changes and improvements to education in Wales including a new curriculum. However, the one thing that has not changed, or even been looked at before now, is the structure of the school year, terms, and holidays. The tradition of the 6-week summer holidays in the UK dates back to the 19th century, when it was linked to the agricultural (farming) calendar. In August children were needed to help with the harvest.

But things are now very different. The Government are worried about "learning loss". Forty-two consecutive days without school have a big impact on some children. Some families also struggle to provide hot meals for their children over the long summer holiday. Every primary school child in Wales is now entitled to a free hot meal, every day during term time.

Our reporter spoke to the head-teacher of Rhosddu Primary School, Mrs Marian Young, 58. She told us, "I think this idea is just moving the break to worse weather, so you can't go out the house. Also, with 4 weeks, parents might try to cram activities in, and children will not have time to rest. Another point is that when the school needs repairs like new windows, they are usually done within the 6 weeks, so the children don't come back to a construction site, and 4 weeks are not enough to do that."

She added, "As for the teachers, they need lots of time for training days and lesson planning, but also they need time for holidays and relaxing at home."

Finally, she stated, "I think that there are points for both opinions, but I think they should just keep it as it is, because over 6 weeks you can collect many memories."

Our reporters also spoke to students at Rhosddu Primary School, who agreed with Mrs Young. Sophie Henfrey, 11, said that "I think it is not a good idea because spending time with your family is important, as well as learning."

Kyle Lewis, 9, agreed. "I don't think shorter summer holidays will be a good idea because we need a break from school sometimes."



Emilia Blower, 11, told our reporters that "The shorter summer holidays are not a good idea because I really enjoy my summer holidays."

Wrexham's Big Mac Double!

Mia, Corah, Millie, Anastasia, Noah and Kayden K

Wrexham's second McDonald's opened its doors to its first customers on March 20th. The new Bradley Road restaurant, which is only a seven-minute walk from the original one, is much closer to the football ground, the University and the train station.

The Central Retail Park restaurant will provide 30 full-time jobs and 40 part-time jobs, and has 14 parking spaces. Parking outside the old McDonald's on Regent's Street has been an issue, as there are no parking spaces.



Wrexham's newest McDonald's restaurant

Stewart Williams, who has opened the new restaurant, told us that he expects the old restaurant to have fewer customers, but they will be served faster. Explaining how Wrexham will be able to support two McDonald's, Mr. Williams said that he thinks that people who have been shopping in the city centre and college students will continue to come to the old McDonald's. He added that "The delivery service is moving to the new McDonald's because there is not enough space in the old McDonald's for the delivery drivers to park. It will not disturb the customers because there will be a special place for the delivery people in the new McDonald's."

Only 89 of the UK's 1431 McDonald's restaurants are in Wales, but a McDonald's in Welshpool has been described as "the best in the world" by Michelin-starred chef, Gareth Ward, who runs the Ynyshir restaurant, near Machynlleth in Powys.

Roaring Reds' Sign Up Success

Ethan S

Paul Mullin and Elliot Lee, who play for Wrexham AFC, have officially signed new contracts which tie them to the club until 2027.



Lee (left) and Mullin (right)

They both put pen to paper on the 1st of January 2024. It was key to get the players to extend because of their experience in higher leagues. The 'deadly duo' believe that Wrexham can get promoted again with their help. Paul Mullin is on an estimated salary of £4,500 a week, but Elliot Lee is only on £4,300 a week.

Paul Mullin and Elliot Lee were a key part in Wrexham's record breaking season last year. Mullin believes that he and Wrexham can break even more records in the football league.

One young Wrexham AFC supporter, Kyle Lewis, told us "They're one of the best duos in League Two. Elliot Lee has great pace and a really good mindset. Paul Mullin has got pace and I bet the goalkeepers are scared of Mullin." Paul Mullin has already scored 13 goals this season, despite his injury. Noah Musie, 9, said "I think it will be vital because they're too important to leave."

Paul Mullin has even made a joke about the rumour that Saudi Arabia are interested in him, saying "Even Saudi can't tempt us!"

These vital signings mean that Wrexham can now push for League One.

Frustrated man walks out onto aeroplane wing

Ethan M.

A passenger walked out onto the aeroplane's wing at Mexico International Airport on 29th January, after being stuck on the tarmac for 6 and a half hours.



There was no air conditioner and no water available to passengers, so he decided to leave. The police said no harm came to him. All 77 passengers on board the flight gave him their support.

Alex Nash from Manchester Airport told our reporter that 'It is a safety risk in the sense that the passenger opening the door is at risk of falling out and hurting themselves – even when the aircraft is on the ground, passenger jets are so big that you're a long way from the tarmac.' He also explained that it is impossible to open an emergency door while and aircraft is mid-flight because of the air pressure.

Wrexham AFC stand at a stand still

Emilia B, Lily B & Kyle L

Wrexham AFC, the oldest football club in Wales and the oldest football stadium still in use in the world, have had to build a temporary stand due to the construction of the new Kop being put on hold.

Wrexham AFC have built a 2289 seat temporary stand to help more frustrated fans to see their beloved team play. The temporary stand has no cover, therefore fans are exposed to any severe weather. It costs £20 for an adult ticket and £6 for a child ticket in the temporary stand.

By opening the temporary stand, the club now benefits from having passionate home support located behind each goal. Four Walls, the Irish American whiskey company, is now the official sponsor of the temporary stand at the STōK Cae Ras.

Wrexham AFC owners, Ryan Reynolds and Rob McElhenny, promised fans a new stand. Although fans wanted to change the name of the Kop, it has been kept for now. The Kop was named after the Battle of Spion Kop, which took place during the Boer War.



Artist's impression of the new Kop Stand

When it is finished, the new stand will hold 5500 people with 500 business seats at the top. The target capacity of the Racecourse stadium is 16,000.

A recent match at the STōK Cae Ras saw an attendance of 12,095 which surpasses capacities of Bournemouth's Vitality Stadium (11,307) and Luton town's Kenilworth Road (11,500) which are Premier League teams.

Wrexham started knocking down the original Kop in June 2022 and got formal planning permission in January 2023. AFL architects, Gardiner & Theobald, Ramboll, Savills and Royal Pilgrim, designed the new Kop. Before the temporary stand was built it was last used in 2008.

Wrexham AFC and their owners had hoped to receive a portion of a £25m Welsh government grant given to the local council. In January 2023, they learnt that they would not be able to receive anything from the UK government's Levelling-up fund.

The Wrexham Kop is part of the Wrexham Gateway Project, which aims to regenerate key sites and transport structure around Mold Road. It includes improvements to rail, bus and car travel, new hotel and conference facilities, office space, and improvements to the Racecourse stadium that will allow international football to return to North Wales.



“By building the new Kop we can make the Racecourse much better so that we can have international matches here, which bring lots of visitors. Wrexham is getting a lot more visitors now, and we want them to be able to stay here when they visit, so we need more hotels.” Alistair Aldridge, the Gateway’s dedicated project manager, told us. He added that “It will also help Wrexham in a lot of places and could encourage new businesses to move here.”

Wrexham AFC are hoping the development of the new Kop stand and a new pitch will start in summer 2024 and finish in summer 2025.



Wrexham General railway station is visible on the right of this artist's impression

Did you know that Wrexham General Railway Station was first opened in 1846?

The North Wales Mineral Railway company built a line between Chester and Ruabon, to transport the large amounts of coal and iron which were being produced in the area at that time. The Great Western Railway named the station 'Wrexham General' and rebuilt it between 1909 and 1912.

2023: Hottest Year in History

Aura Willow M

Nasa have officially announced that 2023 was the hottest year on record. The planet experienced scorching temperatures and extreme weather events including floods, droughts and wildfires.

Twelve months ago, no major scientific body predicted that 2023 would be the hottest year, but now temperatures are rising rapidly. In the UK, the hottest day in 2023 was September 10th, with a temperature of 33.5°C but, despite the heat, it was also a rather wet year for the UK, with rainfall up by 11%.



From December to July, each month set a global temperature record in the UK, with July the hottest month ever recorded.

Sophie Henfrey, a year 6 student, said that “July being the hottest month is worrying because we are destroying our planet.”

Last year, the average global temperature was 14.98°C, 0.17°C higher than the previous annual record in 2016. 2023 was about 1.48°C warmer than the long term average before humans started burning vast amounts of fossil fuels.

The increasing temperatures are also affecting people’s jobs, and making it harder for them to work. Sue Owen, a farmer from Wrexham, said “February was so wet that heavy animals would churn up the ground and effectively trample the grass into mud. Tractors cannot get onto the fields to spread muck and encourage the grass to grow because they are very heavy vehicles and would sink.”

Although temperatures are rising, there are also other problems. Antarctic sea-ice has hit a low, and glaciers in western North America and the European Alps experienced an extreme melt season, adding to the sea levels. The world’s sea surface hit its highest recorded temperature because of multiple marine heatwaves.

As the temperatures rise, countries are experiencing hotter and hotter years. In 2023, there were a total of 55,571 wildfires, with Canada having over 6500 of them.

Natural disasters were a huge issue in 2023. According to a study, the Philippines had the highest natural disaster risk in the world. Some of the natural disasters in 2023 have been the worst that the respective countries have seen for years.

2023 may have been the hottest year on record, but 3 months into 2024, the Met Office already forecasts this year to be even hotter.

Iceland Erupts again!

Iliana K

Iceland is now in a state of emergency after the fourth large volcanic eruption in five months. Residents of the fishing town of Grindavik have been badly affected.

Earthquakes, which are often a sign of volcanic activity, began in the area in October 2023. After the third eruption, on 8th February, the damage was significant enough to declare a state of emergency. The lava destroyed many homes, but due to the effective evacuations 4,000 residents were saved and no lives were lost. No flight disruptions have been reported.



Image of the smoke, fumes and lava that are being produced.

The most recent eruption was the strongest one yet. The volcano probably erupted because an enormous store of magma had gathered just below the surface around the town of Grindavik. Over several days in February the land rose at a rate of 8mm per day. The volcanic damage has been so bad that Grindavik’s people may never be able to return to their homes.



Lava spilled into Grindavik town and covered some of the streets, destroying homes in the process

Deep within the Earth it is so hot that some rocks slowly start to melt and become a thick flowing substance called magma. Since magma weighs less than the solid rock around it, it rises and collects in magma chambers. As the magma rises, it finds weaknesses in the Earth’s crust.

Ludicrous loot boxes still aimed at children

by Tobie M, Theo M & Reece S

Despite evidence of links with gambling habits, the UK government has decided that they will not make loot boxes illegal in video games aimed at children. Instead, they have decided to allow games companies to 'self-regulate'.



Loot boxes can encourage 'gambling-like' behaviours

Loot boxes often appear as virtual treasure chests, crates, or card packs and contain highly collectible items. Players can either buy the boxes directly or receive them during play and later buy 'keys' to open their loot boxes. Because players do not know what their loot box contains, they have to 'gamble' on the box's contents.

The Australian government have made games containing loot boxes 18+. Belgium, the Netherlands, Austria and Germany have implemented similar rules. It is only recently that the UK government has made refund policies for children buying loot boxes without permission available.

The Children's Commissioner for England believes that the Government should take firm action to prevent under-18s from buying loot boxes. Dame Rachel De Souza is concerned about how low the odds of receiving the desired reward from a loot box are – e.g. the probability of receiving a FIFA Gold 84+ Player can be as low as 4.2%. She said that 'this can lead to children entering a cycle of uncontrolled spending as they attempt to chase losses.'

The current legal definition of gambling, under the [Gambling Act 2005](#), does not include loot boxes because the prize cannot be converted into real-world money. Dame Rachel believes that Clause 6 of the Gambling Act should be changed to include loot boxes, because they encourage gambling-like behaviours.

Rocio Cifuentes, the Children's Commissioner for Wales, told the Rhosddu Guardian, "I do not think loot boxes are fair, and gambling can be a harmful activity for people of all ages, and children have special protections against gambling."

Parents plainly agree with Ms Cifuentes. One of our adult survey respondents told The Rhosddu Guardian, "In my eyes loot boxes are a form of gambling as you never really know what you are getting in them."

More than half of the children that we surveyed play video games and of those, nearly half have seen loot boxes in their games and more than one in ten have bought loot boxes. Reece Sandle, 9, said "I think loot boxes are bad because they spend all your money, it is gambling."

Despite the link between loot boxes and gambling, it will remain up to parents alone to protect their children.



Many games use psychological techniques borrowed from the gambling industry, 'nudging' players to keep spending money.

STOP PRESS:

In August 2023 the government's "technical working group", which included video-game companies and tech businesses, published a set of 11 principles on loot boxes.

Video game companies must now ensure that, when they advertise their games, it is clear that they contain paid loot boxes. So far, 268 games adverts have broken this rule.

Why not try the 'PowerUpPact' with your family?

It's important to have family conversations about online video games. There are in-built **parental control settings** on all consoles and devices. Talking about the settings empowers children and parents with a shared understanding.

To make the conversation a little easier, the video games industry has created the PowerUpPact, an easy-to-use form that guides families through a conversation to agree on boundaries around in-game interactions, spending and time limits.



Pets as Prizes - Fair or Unfair?

Sophie H

In Scotland, it has been an offence to give an animal away as a prize to anyone, since 2006. After a campaign by the RSPCA, all councils in Wales are finally banning pets as prizes at funfairs and events.

Goldfish given away as prizes often die due to shock, oxygen starvation and changes in water temperature when being transferred from the bag to the tank.



Due to this change in the law, goldfish and other animals cannot be given as prizes on Council land or during events supported by the Council. Since 2021, almost 80 local authorities have banned Pets as Prizes, Wrexham being the 3rd authority in Wales to do so. It remains perfectly legal to give away pets as prizes on private land.

Between 2015 and 2022, 38 cases of live animals being given as prizes in Wales were reported to the RSPCA. These statistics only show the number of incidents reported to the RSPCA - it is likely the number of incidents across Wales is far higher.

14% of the children we surveyed have won a pet as a prize. However, more than half of our respondents did not think pets as prizes is a good idea.

Commercial spacecraft makes history

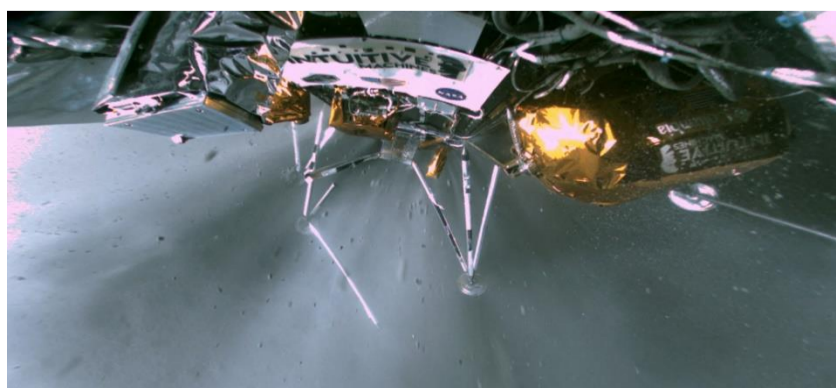
Charlie J

History has been made as the first successful commercial spacecraft landed on the Moon on the 22nd of February. All previous US landings have been planned and carried out by the government, not private companies.

The Odysseus lunar lander robot, which was named after a Greek king, was made by Houston-based Intuitive Machines. The lunar lander was sent up to evaluate the environment of the south pole of the Moon, as well as delivering payloads.

In 2021 Intuitive Machines won a Nasa contract valued at \$77m. After modifications, the towering 4.2m Odysseus lander eventually cost a staggering \$118m.

When the Odysseus landed on the Moon it tipped on its side. Nova-C had planned to keep the spacecraft on the Moon for one week, but the lander is now officially out of power.



Violent Dogs Sorted?

Wiktor K

In February 2024 it became a criminal offence to own an XL Bully dog in England and Wales without a Certificate of Exemption. Those with a certificate will now need to stick to strict rules in order to keep their dogs.



68 year old Esther Martin, died in February after being attacked by two XL bullies. The grandmother was attacked when she put a broom between the two fighting dogs. Since December 2023, it has been illegal to breed, sell, advertise, exchange, gift, rehome, abandon or allow XL bullies to stray. As a result of Esther's death, ownership laws have now been changed.

According to the BBC, the government had received 61,000 applications for exemption before the certificate deadline. Police can now seize unregistered prohibited dogs, and their owners face a criminal record and unlimited fine.

Many people believe that XL bullies are not dangerous. A recent report that an XL bully had been attacked by a **cat** while the dog was wearing a muzzle, and was unable to fight back, has been widely shared on social media. Casey Wilson, the attacked dog's owner, said that the dog wouldn't have fought back even if she was not wearing a muzzle.

Despite this incident, according to GOV.UK, the number of people being killed by dogs in the UK is rising. Around three people a year were killed by dogs until 2021. However, in 2023 alone, that number doubled.



Many people are attacked and severely injured by dogs each year

According to our survey, 75% of people are **not** scared of dogs and 75% think that only some dogs are unsafe. These people think that XL bullies are dangerous, and others like Aura-Willow Maddocks, 11, think that "Not all of them are dangerous and it could depend on how the dog was raised by their owner."

Ancient Bog Body Found in Northern Ireland

Hatty M & Nia M

The body of a 2500 year old teenage boy was discovered in Londonderry, Northern Ireland in October 2023.



The Londonderry Bog Body

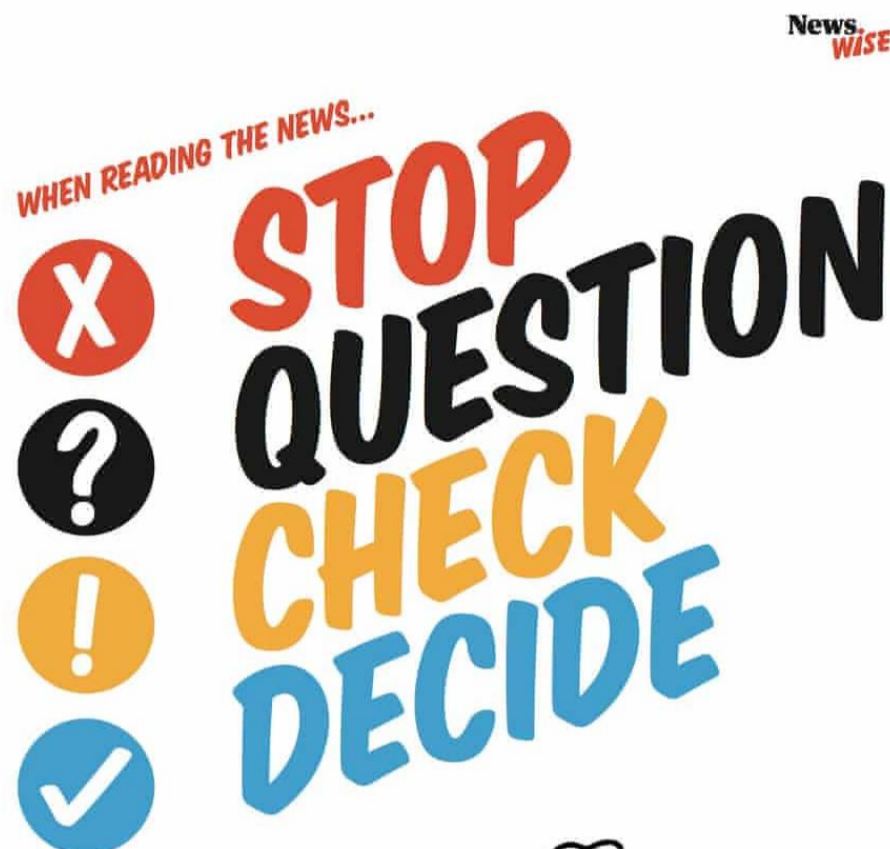
The body, which dates back to 500BC, was excavated by the local Police Service's Archaeological Unit. Bodies which have been buried in acidic bogs are preserved by the natural surroundings. This means that some parts of the body do not decompose. In this case, the internal organs, nails, skin and a kidney remain in tact. Despite the body's well preserved state, it is unclear how this teenager died. Experts at Queen's University performed the carbon dating process to determine the age of the body. The remains will be sent to the National Museum of NI in Cultra.

Britain's most famous Bog Body, Lindow Man, was discovered in 1984, less than 50 miles from Wrexham. The discovery of this 25 year old's body provided a huge amount of information about the lives of Iron Age Britons at the time of the Roman Invasion. Lindow Man is currently on display at the British Museum, in London.

Although only two bog bodies are believed to have been discovered here in North Wales, we do have our own ancient body, Brymbo Man, who was uncovered in 1958 and is almost 4000 years old. This 35 year old was very carefully buried with a pottery beaker and a flint knife.

Brymbo Man is far from alone. Sophie Edwards, from Powys Archaeological trust, told us, "There are thousands of burial sites within Wales that would be considered ancient."

Remember to be a NewsWise reader, who is constantly on the look out for misinformation! Before you TRUST, REACT and SHARE...

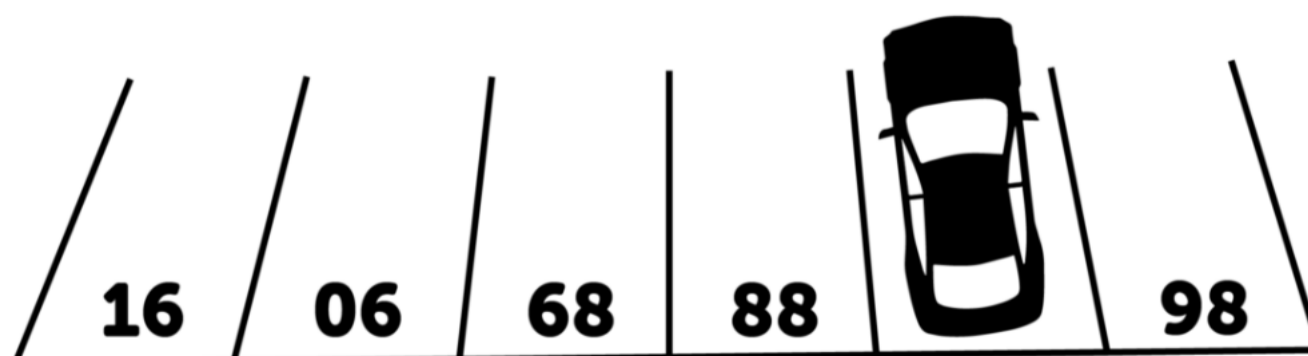


theguardian.com/newswise

Try out the NewsWise headlines quiz:

<https://www.theguardian.com/newswise/2021/feb/04/fake-or-real-headlines-quiz-newswise-2021>

⌘ The Rhosddu Guardian Brainteaser ⌘



What is the number of the parking space containing the car? Email Mrs Jebb with your answer!