



Selling to Schools in the **Summer Term**

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Selling to Schools in the Summer Term

The spring term is now behind us, and we have some good news for you – alongside enjoying lighter mornings and evenings, the summer term is when most school decision-makers make their big purchasing decisions, according to [our own survey of nearly 6,000 school staff](#).

So now's the time to pull out all the stops and deliver a marketing campaign that will transform teachers into leads.



Key dates to consider during the summer term

The long summer term incorporates much of April, May, June, and July, stretching from the end of the Easter break to the summer holidays, and the end of the academic year.

In between, you have the summer half term (which is usually a week long, but can vary between local authorities and countries) and multiple Bank Holidays, with one extra in 2023 for the Coronation of Charles III.

DID YOU KNOW...

Often, schools in the independent sector refer to the summer term as the Trinity term. This relates to these schools originally having links with the church. The other terms are called 'Michaelmas' and 'Lent' terms. If you're looking to sell to independent schools, this is a small yet much-appreciated way to show that you understand how they work.



The summer term is a particularly busy period for teachers of exam-age pupils.

SATs for KS1 usually take place over a week in early May, closely followed a week later by KS2 SATs. SATs for seven-year-olds (KS1) are due to become non-statutory from September 2023 following the introduction of the reception baseline assessment in autumn 2021.

GCSE and A-Level exams usually take place from mid-May through to late June.

With students expected to take around nine GCSEs, and most exams lasting two hours, operating a busy exam schedule is a time-consuming task, particularly with an increase in students requiring extra time or needing to take their exams under special conditions.

This is the second year of 'business-as-usual' for exam students after the disruption we saw in 2020-2021. Whilst grade inflation was the news of the day in 2022 following teacher-assessed grades during COVID-19, education leaders are now citing learning loss and attendance as their major concerns.

Over the pandemic years, summer exams were cancelled and students received teacher-assessed grades based on their performance across the year instead. This has led to grade inflation that has been deemed unsustainable. 2022 saw a return to exams, and to avoid a sharp drop in grades, the government set grade boundaries accordingly, thereby adjusting results to some extent. Grades in 2022 remained higher than 2019 but dropped from 2021, though students gaining grade 7 or above is still nearly 6% higher than it was in 2019. With grade boundaries set at a midway point between 2019 and 2021 levels, this is part of the governments intended 'soft landing' to move grades closer to pre-pandemic years.

Of course, the summer term isn't just about revising for exams! School calendars are often packed with sports competitions, school trips, awareness days, and events over the summer months.

Here's a small selection of the dates that many schools will be aware of this summer

Deaf Awareness Week

2 – 8 May

A week to raise awareness of the challenges of deafness and hearing loss faced by 1 in 6 people in the UK.

Coronation of Charles III

6 May

Charles III is crowned King by the Archbishop of Canterbury in a ceremony held in Westminster Abbey. The Coronation will reflect the monarch's role today and look towards the future, while being rooted in longstanding traditions and pageantry.

Walk to School Week

15-19 May

A week promoting a more active lifestyle in children and young people. They are encouraged to travel to school more sustainably. 2023 is #PowerUp year, where pupils complete challenges to move up to the 'next level'.

LGBTQIA+ Pride Month

Typically, June is known as Pride Month in the UK. LGBTQIA+ pride is the promotion of self-affirmation, dignity, equality, and increased visibility of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people as a social group.

World Refugee Day

20 June

The United Nations' World Refugee Day is an international event honouring the courage, strength, and determination of women, men, and children who are forced to flee their homeland under the threat of persecution, conflict, and violence.

National Writing Day

23 June

A day to promote writing for creativity, expression, and enjoyment, as well as literacy in children and young people.

The Men's and Women's Ashes

16 June – 31 July

The old rivalry between England and Australia's cricket teams resumes this summer, as both the men's and women's teams play for the coveted Ashes Urn. The men's team play five test matches, alongside the women's multi-format series, including one test match and series of one-day internationals and T20 games.

Want to access our full education calendar?

[Speak to us about Campus](#). Our Education Insights Calendar, available only to Campus users, is the most detailed education calendar available to sellers for schools, including events, deadlines, exams, awareness days, holidays, and much more. It will take the guessing out of your marketing to schools forever!



The shape of school budgets during the summer term

Maintained schools run their budgets in line with the financial year, between April and March. By contrast, Academies run theirs in line with the academic year, from September to August.

Most schools will begin forecasting next year's budget between January and March, while reviewing their current budget to identify any areas for improvement or any potential underspend.

At the end of the financial year, local authorities can claw back unspent funds. Schools will, therefore, be keen to use up any surplus budget before the end of the financial year to avoid losing it. Academies, on the other hand, are allowed to retain unspent funds as optional reserves.

By the time the summer term rolls around, schools should have a good idea about any major spending they're planning, and with access to their new budget, they will be putting those plans into action.

In addition to their core budget, you should also be aware of other key sources of income ,including:

The Sports Premium initiative

This provides primary schools with a yearly share of funding set aside to improve the quality of PE and sports across their facility. The funding has been confirmed to continue across the 2023-2024 and 2024-2025 academic years, with a total of over £600 million provided across the two years. Schools receive a share based on the number of pupils within the school.

The Sports Premium is released in two allocations per year, with one usually falling in April or May, depending on the type of establishment.

Schools must follow guidelines with their purchases, and publicly report how they've used the funding. This funding stream provides a wealth of opportunities for any business offering products and services relating to sports, physical health, swimming, clubs, and more.

Pupil Premium

Similar to the Sports Premium, Pupil Premium provides schools with extra funding on top of their standard budgets. The Pupil Premium provides schools with more money to provide extra support for pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds.

For the academic year 2022-23, this breaks down into £310 per service child. For children eligible for free school meals there is £1385 for primary and £985 for secondary, and £2410 per looked-after child. In cash terms, these figures are set to increase by 5% for 2023-2024.

Pupil Premium is paid to the local authority in four quarterly instalments, with an allocation falling in the summer term.

As per the Sports Premium, schools must follow certain rules and document their spending to ensure it's being used to support eligible pupils in the best possible way. This can include providing targeted support or professional development for staff, or tackling non-academic barriers to success in school, such as attendance, behaviour, and social and emotional support.

*£310 per service child,
£985-£1385 (primary and
secondary, respectively)
per child eligible for
free school meals, and
£2410 per looked-after child.*

Summer spending habits

At the beginning of 2023, we conducted [our most in-depth education survey ever](#), capturing insights from nearly 5,900 teaching and support staff to ask some key questions about school spending decisions.

Our aim was to find out when schools generally made their big purchasing decisions to give you the power to shape your strategies for the year ahead.

We asked the question: ***'When are the "bigger" purchasing decisions generally agreed upon within your establishment?'***

The summer term received the highest average responses, with 22.6% of survey respondents telling us that they made bigger purchasing decisions in April, 19.9% in May, 24.9% in June, and 17.2% in July.

April spending patterns weren't a huge surprise, as schools will have their new budgets in April. We were surprised, however, to see July still had such a high response, at 17.2%.

These results challenge the idea that schools will be winding down ahead of the summer holidays in July, and are more likely to put big purchasing decisions off until September. Looking at these results, it's worthwhile continuing with marketing activity right up until the summer holidays. One potential reason in secondary schools is that exam pupils will finish towards the end of June, giving their teachers a bit more time to prepare for the following year.

Although it doesn't fall within the summer term, it's worth noting that August came out almost joint-lowest with December, with just 4.5% and 4.3% of responses respectively.

We'd therefore recommend generally avoiding the summer holidays, though would suggest laying some groundwork in July before the new school year and bumper sales in September. Staff will be having some much-needed downtime in August. While they may be in school for the odd day here and there to supervise ongoing projects or for exam results days, they aren't likely to be holding full-scale meetings to discuss your offer. Do them a favour and keep their inbox clear, and you'll be much more favourable when they're back in work mode and your essential email drops into their inbox.

What does this all mean for your selling-to-schools strategy for the summer term?

Consider key dates

It's worth compiling a list of all the events that take place in a school's calendar that are applicable for your business to ensure your emails are landing in inboxes at the perfect time, and always give yourself a decent time buffer.

Historically, half terms were usually quiet in the edu-marketing industry. With schools closed, few teachers checked their emails, so there was a slight drop in response rates during school holidays.

Fast-forward to a world still recovering from the impact of the pandemic, which has normalised remote working and Zoom, and it has become increasingly common for school staff to check their emails away from their desks. Add to that the issues with term-time workload, and this could be a moment for teachers to breathe and catch up with their marketing correspondence.

Since the start of the pandemic, we've witnessed open and click rates during half term that are only a few percent lower than term-time results.

There are still some businesses that prefer to stick to the safety of term-time response rates, but this can work in your favour if you choose to send during school holidays. Teachers have fewer work-related emails to check, meaning your marketing email has a better chance of standing out and being read more carefully.

Of course, it's important to consider whether your offering is right for a holiday send. If you're promoting dates for a wellbeing workshop, emailing teachers in their downtime may not go down so well.

But, if you're sending an early-bird invitation for a discounted event, emailing free back-to-school resources, or taking bookings for post-holiday site surveys, it might be worth testing a half term send to get those all-important leads in before the summer holidays.



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Start early

Don't delay. For teachers with busy calendars and an endless list of responsibilities, it's crucial that you start building awareness early, particularly if your product or service is a big purchase. Senior leaders will likely need time to secure buy in from the whole senior leadership team, and possibly the board of Governors.

Give them the support they need to build a case for your solution – think quick downloadable guides and on and offline meetings from now onwards to suit their schedule.

Build a consistent presence

While we recommend keeping yourself visible in teachers' inboxes by delivering a multi-phase email strategy to make teachers aware of your product or service, remember that teachers are busy people.

Build a consistent presence, but don't overwhelm your audience with intrusive sales messages. Offer them value early in your strategy, such as free resources and advice, and save the direct sales messages for those who engage with your outreach emails. You could also throw in a discount code closer to the end of term to help sweeten a deal.

Need more?

If you're not sure where to start and would like some advice, drop us a line.

We can manage every aspect of your summer strategy with our managed strategies plan, share our secrets about combining email and postal to great effect, and let you know all about how we've revolutionised education marketing with Campus – our complete selling-to-schools solution.

Get in touch at info@sprint-education.co.uk or 01684 297373.



Sprint Education

T. 01684 297374
E. info@sprint-education.co.uk
W. www.sprint-education.co.uk

