

**Notes of a meeting held with staff and governors
at Cardinal Newman Roman Catholic Comprehensive School**

Thursday 22nd November 2018 at 3:30 pm

**Meeting to discuss the Council's proposals to reorganise school provision in
the Pontypridd area**

Present:

Grace Zecca-Hanagan, 21st Century School Officer
Andrea Richards, Head of 21st Century Schools
Gaynor Davies, Director of Education and Inclusion Services
Catrin Edwards, Head of Service Transformation and Data Systems
Chris Bradshaw, Chief Executive
Richard Evans, Director of Human Resources
Sarah Corcoran, Senior Challenge Adviser - CSC
Ellen Williams, Human Resources Adviser
32 members of staff and governors

The headteacher welcomed Council officers.

Introduction from Council officers in attendance.

GD welcomed everyone to the meeting and outlined the proposal, the reasons for the proposal, the purpose of the meeting, the consultation process, the timescales relating to the consultation process and the proposals themselves should they be implemented.

Should the proposals be implemented, the Council seeks to:

- Develop post 16 education at Bryncelynnog Comprehensive School, Beddau and Coleg y Cymoedd, Nantgarw;
- Create two new 3-16 schools in Pontypridd and Hawthorn;
- Improve and increase Welsh Medium primary provision by building a new school on the former site at Heol y Celyn, which will incorporate the former provisions at both Heol y Celyn and YGG Pont Sion Norton;
- Amend the catchment areas of Pontypridd High, Hawthorn High and the 6th form catchment of Bryncelynnog Comprehensive Schools, to better meet and match the demand for school places;

These changes will be achieved by:

- Closing the sixth forms of Hawthorn High School, Pontypridd High School and Cardinal Newman RC Comprehensive School and transferring the post-16 provision to Bryncelynnog Comprehensive School or Coleg y Cymoedd, Nantgarw. For those students who opt for a Roman Catholic education, sixth form provision will be available at St David's College, Cardiff;

- Closing Pontypridd High School and Cilfynydd Primary School and creating a new 3 -16 'all through' school on the site of the current Pontypridd High School;
- Closing Hawthorn High School, Hawthorn Primary School and Heol y Celyn School and creating a new 3-16 'all through' school on the site of the current Hawthorn High and Hawthorn Primary Schools. The local authority designated ALN specialist class located in Hawthorn High School will also transfer to the new school.
- Closing Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Pont Sion Norton and opening a new Welsh Medium Primary School to be constructed on the site of the current Heol y Celyn Primary School. The pupils educated through the Welsh Medium at Heol y Celyn will transfer to the new school and the Heol y Celyn pupils educated through the English Medium will transfer to the new 3–16 school at Hawthorn;

Amending the catchment areas for pupils aged 11-16 of the three LA maintained secondary schools by:

- Transferring the Graig area of Pontypridd which is part of the catchment area of Maesycod Primary School to the new 3-16 school for Pontypridd (currently Hawthorn);
- Transferring the catchment area of Coedpenmaen Primary School to the new 3-16 school for Pontypridd (currently Hawthorn);
- Transferring the catchment area of Gwauncelyn Primary School to the new 3-16 school for Hawthorn (currently Bryncelynnog).

It is proposed that all changes will be in place by September 2022.

GD referred to the detailed information contained within the consultation document which had been circulated and the consultation response pro-forma contained therein (further copies of both were available at the meeting) and referred to page 5 of the consultation document which outlines how people can make comments.

GD explained that the questions/comments/responses would be recorded for inclusion in the consultation report, which would be fed back to Cabinet in early 2019, as would the feedback from pupils. GD stressed that this was a period of consultation and should the proposals proceed to the next stage (statutory notice), objections would be received and recorded at that stage.

GD explained that there had been a meeting earlier that afternoon with the student council where the proposals had been explained to them and a question and answer session followed. GD expressed her thanks for their time and inputs.

The meeting was then opened for questions.

Q. How and why has no funding been allocated to improvements within the school?

A. Responsibility for the building is with the Roman Catholic Diocese who should make proposals to the Welsh Government as the funding stream differs from that of non-Faith Schools.

It was explained that officers of the Council work in partnership with the Roman Catholic Diocese to look at options. However, now this proposal has been made further engagement has taken place with the Diocese and meetings have taken place between parties. The Council and the Diocese are developing a business case for future improvements to the school.

Capital improvements and maintenance works have been carried out to Cardinal Newman Roman Catholic School and the Council is committed to providing on-going support to the school in terms of assisting the school to maintain the building.

Cardinal Newman Roman Catholic School is one of the Council's family group of schools and the Local Authority will continue to support the school in the future.

Officers explained that Cardinal Newman Roman Catholic School is a voluntary aided school and the implications associated with this.

The headteacher outlined that a positive aspect of these proposals is that it has started action towards improvements.

A. It was commented that judgments about the condition of Cardinal Newman Roman Catholic School are potentially being made by comparison against schools that have received funding through 21st Century Schools Band A funding.

Q. Why was Bryncelynnog Comprehensive School, Coleg y Cymoedd and St. David's Sixth Form College chosen?

A. It was based on retention rates, data and location.

The Council is trying to offer a range of options for young people. Cardinal Newman Roman Catholic Comprehensive School is currently in a deficit budget position and the sixth form is currently being subsidised from Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 funding.

When looking at the data, learners are currently opting to receive post-16 education elsewhere for numerous reasons.

Financially it is challenging for a sixth form to be delivered in Cardinal Newman Roman Catholic Comprehensive School. Only 36% of learners are returning to sixth form – they are already deciding to go elsewhere i.e. St. David's and Coleg y Cymoedd.

Officers are not disputing the quality of education in Cardinal Newman Roman Catholic School. We need to address the budget deficit and part of this involves deciding whether to continue with sixth form courses etc.

Q. *Pastoral care is not maintained with pupils moving from one school to another. How can you guarantee that this aspect of education will be maintained?*

A. There is the capacity to provide more specialist teachers and a greater number of teachers offering pastoral care in larger schools. Improvements and systems will be put in place for transition arrangements to ensure the emotional needs of pupils are met.

Part of sixth form studies is about preparing learners for change and benefits can be gained from change in advance of entering Higher Education.

Q. *Son has Asperger's and is anxious about change already. He is excelling at Cardinal Newman Roman Catholic School because he feels safe and is supported pastorally. From an ALN point of view I feel that this is putting a barrier in his future learning.*

ALN provision at Bryncelynnog is well developed with an ASD Learning Support Class. New ALN reforms focus on person centred planning and input. Support will be provided to ensure that the transition for pupils works well. The college is also fully inclusive and currently supports many learners with specific needs.

Q. *Transition opportunities for staff involved in sixth form transition.*

A. Decisions around staffing will be made by the governing body. There may be capacity in Bryncelynnog Comprehensive School, as a larger school to offer further opportunities for staff.

Q. *Concerned about pupils who live far away from St. David's Sixth Form College who currently attend Cardinal Newman Roman Catholic School and want to continue their education in a Roman Catholic setting – transport.*

A. Transport would be provided to St. David's Sixth Form College at no costs to pupils living in Rhondda Cynon Taf – the logistics of this are yet to be agreed.

Q. *Catchment area for Cardinal Newman Roman Catholic School is Rhondda Cynon Taf wide. How would the organisation of this be made?*

A. It would depend on the volume of students and where they live. Transport may decide to use taxis, mini buses or larger buses. Parents will not be charged for this home to school transport.

Q. *Have discussions with St. David's Sixth Form College taken place to accommodate sixth form numbers?*

A. A conversation with the Principal of St. David's Sixth Form College has taken place and there certainly is space available.

The headteacher echoed the above comments of the Chief Executive. Cardinal Newman Roman Catholic School would become an associated school and it would be written into the Admission Policy of St. David's Sixth Form College and pupils would have same rights as other associated schools.

Q. *We are the only school where pupils do not just live in Pontypridd. This may mean that lots of our learners may go to other sixth form establishments nearer their homes. In terms of the logistics of where the pupils will go and someone being in charge of transition of this it could be a complex task?*

A. The current retention rates are not good with pupils going to various settings. Each Sixth Form will have open days for pupils and parents to engage in and make choices.

A. Based on previous data, the vast majority of pupils go to the settings that have already been put forward.

Q. *Wellbeing of Future Generations Act – how will this affect consideration being made for sports within schools?*

A. Officers explained that they work closely with colleagues in Leisure Services. Schools use leisure centres during the day with members of the public using the centres in the evening. There is an opportunity for schools to use local leisure facilities and more opportunities can be created in the future.

A. The Council has invested hugely in leisure centres recently and use has increased.

Q. *Do we have any data on where Ferndale Community School, Porth County Community School and Ysgol Nant Gwyn Sixth Form students have gone?*

A. This is tracked to ensure pupils have access to the sixth form options that they want.

Q. *Does extra money being spent on schools mean that the schools will be better and provide more successful outcomes for pupils?*

A. Providing schools with a first class environment assists teachers and pupils to improve.

Q. *In a perfect world, I would like the Sixth Form to remain in Cardinal Newman Roman Catholic School. However, we have to be realistic of the climate in which we are in and we want what is best for Cardinal Newman Roman Catholic School and its pupils. There is a partnership with Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council and a desire to move forward together ensuring the protection of our pupils with their best interests in mind.*

- A. Statement noted and confirmed the positive relationship with Cardinal Newman Roman Catholic School and Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council. However, there is a large deficit budget and we would prefer to intervene and support now to protect and develop the school for future learners. We are undertaking this for the right reasons, and when you look at schools that have been through this process the outcome is always positive.

Officers thanked the staff, and outlined the work that will take place with the Council over the coming months.

The meeting closed at 4:45pm.