

**Notes of a meeting held with the school council
at Hawthorn High School**

Monday 12th November at 3:30 pm

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

RCT Council officers present:

Gaynor Davies, Director of Education and Inclusion Services
Bernard Whittingham, Head of Secondary School Achievement
Lisa Howell, 21st Century Team Officer
Sophie Nicholls, Graduate Officer 21st Century Schools
46 pupils present

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

Q. *GD – Do you understand the proposal and what are your views on it?*

- A. I want to stay here and if the sixth form shuts I will have to travel. My parents don't drive and I can't get free transport.
- A. GD - We want to give you more choice at sixth form instead of small sixth forms with limited courses. Those who are eligible for free transport will get it providing they live further than the two mile safe walking distance from their nearest suitable school.

Q. *If this will be a 21st Century School does this mean all schools in the 21st century won't have a sixth form?*

- A. We are trying to create a larger sixth form to make more curriculum courses available and financially viable. We also want to ensure that school buildings are fit for the 21st Century. Creating a 3-16 school also minimises unnecessary changes for pupils and eases transition.
- A. The 21st century developments mean there will be change. This can include moving schools. So far in the new schools that have opened this year pupils and staff have found that moving schools for post 16 education has been a great stepping stone for pupils to prepare them for Higher Education.

Q. *The Pontypridd area is huge with 33,000 people and some live as far as Ynysybwl. If you are spending £12m, can't we have a sixth form in the Pontypridd area, like Garth Olwg have for Welsh Medium?*

- A. Sixth forms need to have around 250 pupils to be financially viable. Small sixth forms take funding away from Key Stage 3 and 4 pupils, which is unfair to those pupils. Projections and formula from Welsh Government help the Local

Authority assess where there is a need for a sixth form and how large that would need to be. Welsh medium catchment areas are much larger so they need a local sixth form to avoid travelling over the 40 minute maximum travel time recommended by Welsh Government.

Q. *Will you be changing the shape of the building?*

A. The Council's Corporate Estates team undertake several surveys on the buildings to see what is possible. With a £12m investment it is likely that some of the buildings will change.

Q. *Cardiff Road already has too much traffic on it. If there are 400 pupils attending the sixth form how will the road cope with the traffic?*

A. As part of the 21st Century Schools works we often change the entrances to schools where appropriate or necessary.

A. Safe routes to school surveys are always carried out by the RCT Highways department and any changes needed to ensure the route is safe for staff and pupils to access the site will be undertaken. This could include traffic calming measures, road lay outs etc.

Q. *There is already a ‘super-school’ with a sixth form in Y Pant and Bryncelynog is very close. If the proposals go ahead there won’t be one in Pontypridd, so why are you going to put it in Bryncelynog?*

A. Y Pant is a school that is full and oversubscribed every year. We are looking to expand and create one larger sixth form to benefit pupil curriculum opportunities and when deciding on the location we look at a number of factors. Bryncelynog currently has a larger sixth form, improving results for A Levels, and has a site that is appropriate to build on and adapt for the new sixth form provision.

A. Coleg Y Cymoedd is also an option for pupils studying at post-16 level, which is based in the Pontypridd area.

Q. *So why make Y Pant a ‘super-school’ if it’s already full?*

A. Y Pant is always oversubscribed and the catchment area for this school has been changed to try and combat this issue.

A. We are also restricted with some sites, especially Y Pant, as there has to be enough outdoor play space for pupils. We wouldn't be allowed to build much more on the Y Pant site due to the size of the site.

Q. *Cardinal Newman tried to send their pupils to Coleg Y Cymoedd for sixth form a few years ago and brought them back because the results weren’t good enough. How are they doing now?*

A. Coleg Y Cymoedd offer a range of A-Level and vocational courses. You will be able to choose between Coleg Y Cymoedd and Bryncelynog for your post-16 education if proposals go ahead.

- A. The un-ratified results for the 2018 A-Level exams at Coleg Y Cymoedd were very good. These will soon be ratified and made public.
- Q. *I used to travel to Cardiff College every day and it took over an hour. It could take the same to get to Bryncelynog from here so I think this would make more students automatically choose college.***
- A. Welsh Government recommend that the journey to school should take no longer than 40 minutes. It definitely shouldn't take that long for pupils of Hawthorn to reach Bryncelynog. Continuing the pupil/teacher relationship is important too which is why 3-16 is a good option here. Post-16 pupils are more capable of coping with a transition to ensure they are able to access the best curriculum options for them.
- Q. *Sixth formers have free lessons so have more time to do extra duties e.g. school council and buddies. This would be put onto year 11 pupils who don't have the time to do this.***
- A. Sixth formers should in fact be busier because of the nature of their workload. They have a lot of independent studying to do. The 11-16 schools I have worked in have shown this to be beneficial because many 15/16 year olds relish the chance to have the responsibilities at a younger age.
- Q. *If year 12 is similar to year 11, I wouldn't want the responsibilities so young. Sixth form contribute loads to all pupils and year 11 has more exams. The sixth form do newspapers, anti-bullying ambassadors etc. and if they weren't able to help it would be hard.***
- Q. *I had so much help from the sixth form then I moved to this school and I chose this school because of the education and relationships instead of going to Tonyrefail or Bryncelynog which are both closer to me.***
- Q. *School Lane is already very busy. Will you be able to manage the increased volume of people with the budget that you have?***
- A. The proposal is match funded by Welsh Government so this makes it much more financially viable. We will conduct safe routes assessments and we have a duty of care to ensure the routes into school are safe.
- Q. *Garth Olwg have a 3-19 school being created; why don't we get that opportunity to have senior leadership roles? We won't get that in Bryncelynog.***
- A. All pupils transitioning to Bryncelynog could still have the opportunity to apply for those positions in the new sixth form. The new provision would be larger but could allow for a better education. The sixth form there will still have responsibilities to help with the whole school.
- A. In Tonyrefail where other sixth forms have amalgamated the current Head Boy was from Ferndale School and has just moved to Tonyrefail School for sixth form.

Q. So we could still help younger pupils there.

A. Yes

Q Why are we changing it if it is going okay so far?

A. We always strive to move forward and improve. Improvements mean change and we always strive for change that will improve current education provision.

Q. Half of sixth form provision here and half at Bryncelynog or Coleg Y Cymoedd. What happens to me as I will be going into year 13 when this happens?

A. At the end of year 11 you would be given the option to move then. If you stay on for sixth form in the school your subjects will have to be offered when you move.

Q. Y Pant had more than £20million and Tonyrefail had more than £40million. How can we be a super school with only a £12million budget?

A. The way the budgets are calculated depends on the size and condition of what is there already. We in RCT spend a lot on our schools. We need to think holistically about the budgets as the money being put into Bryncelynog will be benefiting some pupils here too.

Q. There doesn't seem to be enough money being spent here to make the school eco friendly and new technology costs a lot of money.

A. If you compare £40million to £12million it obviously seems much less but we look at the sites holistically. This is still a consultation and if the proposal is accepted and surveys completed, the allocated budget could go up or down. This is also not a one off spend as we continually undertake school improvement works.

Q. With more pupils coming here how will you make it eco-friendly with the increase of traffic on site?

A. New materials for schools help make it eco friendly by lowering the CO2 emissions used to create heating etc. A traffic impact assessment will also be undertaken.

Q. This school was built a long time ago. 21st Century schools should be built with 21st Century materials and not have buildings with asbestos. Is £12million enough?

A. Not every building will be removed but we need to do as many surveys as possible to ensure we invest sensibly in a way that is safe for pupils and staff.

Q. GD – How best can we consult with you in the future?

A. Pupils – Assembly, online surveys and social media.

Questions and comments from School Council at Hawthorn High – left as written notes.

- *What are your plans for disability access for the new supers-school within the school?*
- *Have you considered the psychological effects of having such young children and older children in a combined space and how it will affect their mental health?*
- *What compensation will people living on school lane receive if you are making drastic changes to the road and surrounding areas?*
- *How do you justify the difference in expenditure for the 21st century schools? For example Tonyrefail had £40m and Y Pant had £23m but we only get £12m. Why is there such a big difference? Surely in such a deprived area a focus should be put on us?*
- *We have been in the school since year 7. Why should our learning be disrupted? I don't understand why we need to move. Why fix something if it's not broken? Our school wouldn't have the same dynamic if the sixth form left.*
- *Are the current super-schools working?*
- *This would affect all the children - learning GCSE level is stressful enough but not having adequate classroom space to learn effectively is very detrimental to their learning.*
- *How much of our green space are you going to use?*
- *What does Bryncelynog have that Pontypridd doesn't?*
- *We have read the reports you have written about our school and they are quite negative, when in actuality we are on a par with schools like Bryn and Ponty. How will reviews like this encourage pupils from Gwauncelyn to join our school?*
- *There is too much pressure on year 11 already and to take away the sixth form would make it worse.*
- *How are you going to ensure pupils in different primaries get the same education as those who are involved in the school?*
- *GCSEs have changed an extreme amount, so it is unfair to give sixth former duties to year 11 pupils. I find having a small sixth form is beneficial as teachers are able to focus on pupils' needs.*
- *What do you plan on doing with the current teachers when the new school is built?*
- *What would happen if A-Level grades worsen because of the change?*
- *What strategies are to be put in place to guarantee safety for younger children?*
- *Do you really expect children from Gwauncelyn to come to Ponty only to go back at 16?*
- *As a year 10 pupil I will be in my final year in 2022. I came to Hawthorn believing that I would be able to stay on and get my A-Levels. Am I expected to move to a different school half way through my A-Levels or move the year before? However, with both options, my close friends that are staying on for sixth form and I may end up separated. How am I expected to balance my social life with my education?*

- Already the car park is extremely full. With double the pupils in the school, how will you accommodate the amount of cars/buses etc that will be here?
- I feel that students that go to the sixth form in Bryn have a massive disadvantage because we would have to re-navigate and find our way around the school.
- Why is Bryncelynog better than HHS? Bryn have 19% FSM (Free School Meals) pupils and Hawthorn has 25%. Hawthorn grades should be worse yet we have more 1s and 2s on the charts compared to Bryn. WE ARE ABOVE AVERAGE.
- Will we have to pay for travelling?
- When you create the 3-16 school years 7/8/9 will not have a choice to go to a sixth form in Pontypridd and if you create the super-school you are taking that choice away from us, so why can you not give us a choice to decide whether we go to sixth form in Pontypridd.
- What will the £12m be spent on? Is this project in the best interest of education or money? College life is extremely different to sixth form. Without a sixth form in Pontypridd we could see a decline in further education?
- Would RCT Council be responsible for the education at Coleg Y Cymoedd? (Described as 'adequate' with their A-Level education by Estyn.)
- Have you considered the year 7s that may want to go to sixth form in Hawthorn?
- What will happen to the teachers in the primaries that are shutting down?
- What will happen to the current pupils of Hawthorn high during construction?
- Moving to a new school can be very scary as if none of your friends were going to the sixth form in Bryn, you might not know any of the people and won't be as close with the teachers.
- If Bryncelynog is getting £10m for a sixth form centre, why not move it to Pontypridd where there are a lot more people – 33,000 people in Pontypridd as well as being a university town.
- Cars go to fast down Cardiff Road and this 21st Century plan will also possibly cause traffic going from Hawthorn through to Upper Boat and maybe even Taffs Well. Even though buses will be put on there are still parent cars and more accidents are more likely to happen.
- The extra-curricular activities currently run by sixth form in Hawthorn is not only beneficial to KS3 and 4 but allows KS5 to develop their university application as it's not all reliant on results but experience.
- Is there a worry that all the change surrounding sixth form will discourage pupils from staying in education?
- Why would putting infants in the same environment as young adults be beneficial?
- With the expansion of our age range we will definitely need an expansion within the school itself as there are many classrooms that are almost always full.
- I think that we should have a sixth form and Ponty should have a sixth form because they are easy to access from each other and they are not too far away.

- *Why do you spend less money on us? Y Pant. What you going to do with our car park?*
- *Do you care about school bullying? I think Welsh Government mostly care about our future but if a kid gets bullied in school and school teachers can't really help. It will make this kid's future all dark. So I think Welsh Government is first not looking after the future, they should look do the students get bully or no because if this gets to you he will choose end his life.*
- *If you can spend £40m on Tonyrefail and £23m on Y Pant why is Hawthorn only getting £12m? If we had more we could have a super school that INCLUDES a sixth form.*
- *21st Century Schools are supposed to be Eco friendly, yet you want to create more roads destroying more grass lands and taking away the school fields.*
- *When the super-school goes ahead after a year say it starts going not so well, what will happen?*
- *By including a 3-16 school, how would the lunch times be altered for the needs of these children? Surely there would be issues having a three year old having the same breaks as a 16 year old.*
- *Since the time the 11 plus was removed, equality of education and opportunity was the main aim. Removing the sixth form from Pontypridd denies this equality as we only get the opportunity to go to sixth form in catchment area.*
- *If there is a sixth form on USW campus then they can work hand in hand and makes it easier for pupils to transition to sixth form and then to university.*
- *Why are pupils expected to stay at Bryncelynog after arriving at school at 8:30am. As a sixth former I sometimes have one lesson a day, but I enjoy my independence and do studying at home as school is too noisy.*
- *Removing the sixth form at Pontypridd diminishes schools potential to have a centre of excellence. Pupils are not pushed to do A-Levels as there are not many opportunities. Why isn't there a choice of sixth form but rather where you are closest to?*
- *How will we handle the parking because we are struggling now and if you do make a new entrance it will take money so what will you do?*