

## **Appendix 1A – Notes of Meeting with Governing Body and Staff Members of Mountain Ash Comprehensive School**

<b>Date</b>	11 <sup>th</sup> December 2024
<b>Time</b>	15:45
<b>Venue</b>	Mountain Ash Comprehensive School

<b>Attendance</b>		
<b>Name</b>	<b>Initials</b>	<b>Title</b>
Gaynor Davies	GD	Director of Education and Inclusion Services
Andrea Richards	AR	Service Director for 21 <sup>st</sup> Century Schools and Transformation
Lisa Howell	LH	Schools Business and School Organisation Manager
Ellen Williams	EW	Human Resources Manager
Bethan Gannon	BG	School Improvement Support Officer
Staff and Governors from Mountain Ash Comprehensive School		

### **1. Welcome and Introductions**

GD welcomed everyone and thanked them for attending the meeting. Introductions were made.

### **2. Consultation Overview**

GD provided the meeting with an overview of the proposal being made and the consultation process to be followed, as set out in the Consultation Document.

### **3. Staff and Governor Questions**

The Governing Body and staff members of Mountain Ash Comprehensive school were invited to ask questions. The questions raised and comments made by the Governing Body and staff members, and responses provided are summarised in the table that follows.

<b>Number</b>	<b>Question/Comment</b>	<b>Response</b>
1	In 2014, three local secondary schools merged to form Aberdare Community School and for years pupils and staff formed their own camps. Staff at Mountain Ash Comprehensive School are concerned that this will happen with their sixth form pupils.	<p>Aberdare Community School was a much larger change and there was a change in leadership over a short time frame which added complexity at that time.</p> <p>Currently 75.0% of Mountain Ash Comprehensive School's sixth form pupils are dual registered with the other secondary schools in the consortium arrangement, so lots of relationships between pupils, and staff and pupils are already formed.</p>

		Transition arrangements will need to be strengthened. We advise Mountain Ash Comprehensive School to discuss this process with other schools that have gone through similar change. Visits can be arranged with local colleges and schools for pupils to experience other options.
2	<p>Current year 11 pupils were planning to apply for sixth form at Mountain Ash Comprehensive School, now they're not. Staff have spent time preparing the pupils and the proposal has caused a lot of upset and concern.</p> <p>Some of these pupils are disadvantaged, some pupils were affected more than others by Covid-19, and some just need extra support which they get at Mountain Ash Comprehensive School. Now, whilst in the process of changing, some pupils are worried about the future, feel let down and that they are being treated unfairly in choosing their next steps.</p>	<p>Should the proposal proceed, transition arrangements will need to be strong and enhanced; pupils will need to be made aware of other options available to them in order for them to make a more informed decision.</p> <p>Lots of pupils may need bespoke transition plans and good communication with the staff at Aberdare Community School will be key. Staff at Mountain Ash Comprehensive School will have a good understanding of pupils' needs and can provide extra support for those pupils who need it most.</p>
3	Staff are concerned with the short timeframe.	We encourage everyone to submit a consultation response form with their concerns. The Welsh Government (WG) will then have this information in order to make their final decision. The WG could decide to delay the implementation date, this however, would be a decision for them to make.
4	<p>Pupils are feeling that they will be treated differently at the new sixth form. How do we market it to pupils?</p> <p>Could the sixth form at Aberdare Community School be referred to as a Sixth Form Centre?</p>	Using positive language when discussing the changes with pupils is a good idea. Collaborative working with post-16 staff at both schools will be key to creating a positive environment and support for transition. Identifying and establishing creative new events for transition will be important for all schools involved.
5	There has been a drop in sixth form numbers over recent years, however, these numbers could go up again next year.	There is sufficient capacity in Aberdare Community School to cope with a larger post-16 intake should numbers increase. To note there is a drop in post-16 numbers in most schools, this is not something unique to the schools involved in this proposal.
6	There are subjects that solely run at Mountain Ash Comprehensive School	It is difficult to definitively respond until the number of pupils are confirmed and

	such as Engineering. There aren't staff that can teach these courses currently at Aberdare Community School. Can staff work between both schools.	demand for courses is established as there are financial considerations. We aim to successfully redeploy staff. If there is a need for a specific course, then a potential arrangement to collaborate and share staff under a secondment arrangement could be an option that is explored however this would need a further discussion with the staff, and schools concerned. Creative solutions will be supported but we are unsure at the moment of the demand for specific courses is unknown.
7	Comment: Colleges have more investment and resources which is having a negative effect on schools. The school tried to have a more collaborative approach with the college, but this never materialised.	Noted however the college is often very receptive to partnership working with RCTCBC.
8	The sixth form at Mountain Ash Comprehensive School is small but it is successful, and we encourage pupils to aim high. Many pupils have gone on to be successful after completing sixth form, and staff are concerned, that the support they get at Aberdare Community School won't be replicated.	All schools have a responsibility to get the best out of all pupils. The Seren Project is doing great work delivering support in this regard, and it is important for our learners to be aspirational. Good careers advice and guidance is important and there is some excellent work going on in our schools in relation to GATSBY benchmarking.
9	Could we offer more courses to compete with colleges?	The funding is based on pupil numbers so given the current numbers at the schools, there is not the available funding to sustain this.
10	Have you noticed any specific trends in key stage three and four?	No.
11	Concerned about the timescales for staff leaving and support for redundancy.	Timetable for summer term will be mapped out and shared with staff should the decision be made to proceed with the proposal. Human Resources will offer support to all staff and expressions of interest for any redundancies will be taken into account.
12	How will we be able to plan a curriculum as there won't be enough time?	Look at setting the curriculum now as we remain at the proposal stage. We will work with the schools in relation to budget.  RCTCBC will continue to work with the school and offer support if required to bridge any gaps that will arise due to the timing of the decision.

13	Concerned for pupils that want to attend college for a course that is also available at the sixth form as they won't be eligible for free transportation.	Unfortunately, pupils will not be eligible for free transportation to college if the same course is being offered at a closer setting. This is in accordance with Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council's (RCTCBC's) Home to School Transport Policy and this information can be found on the RCTCBC website.
14	What other options were considered?	<p>There are options included within the Consultation Document, and the reasons why they were discounted have also been included. The options considered were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Remove sixth form provision from both Mountain Ash Comprehensive School and Aberdare Community School.</li> <li>• Federate Mountain Ash Comprehensive School and Aberdare Community School under one headteacher and one Governing Body.</li> <li>• Retain the status quo – continue to offer sixth form provision at Mountain Ash Comprehensive School and Aberdare Community School.</li> </ul>
15	Is the current consultation for additional learning needs (ALN) Learning Support Classes (LSC) a process to change Mountain Ash Comprehensive School from a mainstream school?	No, there is a need for an ALN LSC at Mountain Ash Comprehensive School and there are now many schools with ALN LSCs.
16	A number of staff have raised concerns about professional development given that the proposal will take away the opportunity to teach post-16 pupils.	This is understandable and we acknowledge that the standard of teaching and learning is good at Mountain Ash Comprehensive School. However, we are very keen to make sure that we retain the excellent staff at Mountain Ash Comprehensive School, as key stage three and four pupils also need to be taught by the good teachers that are already at the school.

#### 4. Closing Remarks

All attendees were thanked for participating in the meeting.

Meeting closed at 16:45.