

**Notes of a meeting held with the school council
at Bryncelynnog Comprehensive School**

22nd November 2018 at 2 pm

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

Present:

Esther Thomas, Temporary Service Director for Access & Inclusion Services,
Lisa Howell, 21st Century Team Officer
Martin Silezin, 14-19 Strategy Officer
Sophie Nicholls, Graduate Officer 21st Century Team
Gavin Tranter, Governor Support Service Officer
47 pupils present

Esther Thomas (ET) 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. Would Key Stage 3 and 4 be affected?

A. Pupils who are in Gwauncelyn Primary School would go to Hawthorn High School instead of Bryncelynnog Comprehensive School. That will change the composition of the pupils in Key Stages 3 and 4. There are also proposals to build more houses in this area. In the consultation document there are maps which show you the catchment areas of these schools.

Q. Will the works be noisy?

A. There will be minimal noise disruption and work won't go ahead while exams are being sat. The Council and the contractors are experienced in minimising all disruption and risk.

Q. What will be the benefits to Key Stage 3 and 4?

A. You will be able to work in the specialist rooms and we will be looking at the whole site when deciding upon key areas for the improvement works so that all pupils benefit.

A. The works proposed to be undertaken won't only benefit years 12/13. There could be new science laboratories and DT facilities etc. that will be used by everyone. The Council has already invested over a million pounds in the 3G pitch and the running track to benefit all pupils and the community.

A. You will also have some curriculum opportunities as the school would have the opportunity to introduce some new subjects at GCSE level.

A. A school receives more funding if it has more pupils. They can therefore employ more staff to possibly introduce additional new subjects.

Q. *How will this affect transport?*

A. Anyone who has to travel over two miles will still be entitled to free transport.

Q. *Will this affect the school uniform and price?*

A. That would be up to the governors.

A. In Treorchy, we have increased their sixth form but as they are the same school in terms of governance, the school name, badge and uniform is still the same. If things were to change it would be a decision for the school and I'm sure they would consult with you.

Q. *Where will the sixth form be?*

A. We are still looking at this as it is still very early in the process. These proposals are still under consultation and therefore still under discussion. You may see some of our technical advisors undertaking surveys over the next few weeks to decide how we best use this site. The budget that we have is based on the work we have conducted in Treorchy. The exact details of the works are still to be established.

Q. *What subjects will be offered and how competitive will we be in comparison to colleges?*

A. Hopefully more staff would mean more subjects but this is a decision for the school. The school would work closely with businesses and skills shortage areas to bridge any gaps and create a sixth form that is the best stepping stone for your futures.

A. There are two levels here. The choice of subjects is down to the schools and governors and they would consult with pupils. There is also a trend moving towards applied sciences at present and schools need to keep up with this. The new performance indicators will soon be the same as the college and we can then undertake direct comparisons.

Q. *Will teaching staff be stretched?*

A. Some will want to be stretched to be able to teach sixth form classes. There will be others who prefer to teach Key Stages 3 and 4. You have good results here now and you clearly have the teachers deliver this. In terms of the numbers of pupils per teacher, there are currently small classes of pupils which are not viable at the moment. For your A-levels you need interaction to prompt more independent learning and finding a balance for this is needed.

A. The quality of your teachers will probably get even better if there is a large sixth form to teach. You will have more pupils and more opportunities for performing arts or sports too.

Q. Will there be a curriculum change?

A. There will possibly be more choice, however, that is a decision for governors. We are anticipating that there will be more choice.

Q. Where is the £10m being spent?

A. It won't just be spent on the sixth form. We are looking at the whole site. We haven't got plans yet because we cannot undertake extensive surveys at present as the proposal needs to be considered by Cabinet. Should the proposals proceed, we will share the proposals with the school and we would welcome your opinions.

Q. Where is the £10m being spent specifically?

A. We have £168m funding. We can move some of this around if needed and use the wider envelope as much as possible to make the best use of the sites. We cannot be that specific at this point in time until the architects assess the site.

Q. How much bigger will the site be?

A. The site will be the same size but we may have to relocate areas within the site.

A. There may be some extensions etc. but within the current site boundary.

Q. What facilities or courses will be offered to attract additional sixth formers to our school?

A. That will depend on what the school can offer and the staff that are here.

A. In terms of facilities we usually provide sixth form areas such as ICT suites, informal coffee shop areas, a library etc. We will be asking for your input.

Q. How many students are estimated to attend?

A. There will be an estimated 450 sixth form pupils based on the data we have currently. There is a lot of information in the consultation document explaining how that figure was reached. There are also other options and some pupils may decide to attend Coleg Y Cymoedd.

Q. Will this building be built and then become too small by 2022?

A. No, but with further houses that are being built, we may, in the future need to build another school in the area. This will be monitored and managed by the Local Authority.

Q. Will registering for the sixth form be more selective?

A. No if you have the appropriate qualifications for Key Stage 4. Any changes to this would be brought forward by the school and governing body.

Q. *Would this affect age 7-11's education whilst the building works are being carried out?*

A. Part of the site will be a construction site and there may be some mess and noise in the areas of construction works. However, we work very closely with the contractors and they work closely with the school to ensure that they aren't undertaking loud work during exam periods etc. They are experienced contractors and they do all they can to liaise with the school regarding the works being undertaken. There will be safety barriers between the school areas and construction areas. We ensure that the teaching of pupils is not impacted upon, as your learning, health and safety is our paramount concern. Construction works have not impacted upon any of the results of the schools we have completed to date. The contractors also provide opportunities for pupils – for example, sometimes they teach engineering courses or tradesmanship.

Q. *Will students still visit other schools?*

A. We will try to minimise this as much as we can. There still may be some movement but we want to try and minimise it.

Q. *ET asked the pupils - What don't you like about visiting other schools?*

A. Pupil - The timings - sometimes I don't get a lunch break and have to eat on the bus, or it takes me ages to get home. I like that I can do this subject there but timetable clashes are common too so we have to take even more subjects at Y Pant to minimise this.

Q. *Would we see more Y Pant students coming here for courses?*

A. Y Pant's numbers are also increasing so they could also become a standalone sixth form.

A. We are managing the school places with the houses that are proposed to be built here.

A. We are hoping this will minimise the amount both sets of pupils have to travel.

Q. *Will there be additional baguette bars or canteen areas?*

A. We are looking at putting more facilities here for sixth form pupils. If there are more pupils we need to cater for more people which will probably mean additional food areas.

Q. *If the site and the building aren't going to grow how will we accommodate extra pupils?*

A. We will look at the whole site, but there are surplus places here now. There may be some extensions here and we will be looking at efficient use of the space. It is an opportunity to reconfigure this school.

A. Sometimes we build upwards to limit the floor space used for the footprint of a building.

Q. *In some schools you said classes are too small - there will be more pupils and if you need more staff, will that balance out the pupil/teacher ratio?*

A. We look at staffing across all subjects rather than one subject specifically. We try to make it as manageable as possible and staff are flexible and will provide additional classes if they can. We are looking at roughly 18 pupils per sixth form class to be totally viable and it encourages a new way of learning.

A. We don't know in terms of subjects yet but you will have more staff because the larger the sixth form the larger the school's budget. The ideal 18 pupils per class means you are likely to be able to fund another teacher.

A. Some schools could be in huge debt if they have low pupil numbers in a class.

Q. *There is a CDU unit here and is very important to us. How will this be affected?*

A. That unit will remain and they do a brilliant job. At the moment they cater for pupils up to 16 years for statutory needs but some pupils may still need support. We will look at this in the future, but there is no plans to grow it at present.

Q. *Some have described this as a centre of excellence - will it be separate from Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4? We work very closely with them now.*

A. No, they will all be in the same school and most pupils will have come from Key Stages 3 and 4 in this school. The continuity between staff and pupils shouldn't change with this sixth form. There will be additional pupils at sixth form but we encourage sixth forms to work with younger pupils.

A. There will be more pupils with more skills to offer to the lower school community and it is an exciting opportunity.

Q. *The Council's budget has been decreasing due to Westminster. Is this just money we would have had if the cuts hadn't happened?*

A. We have to apply for this money specifically as a department and compete for this money. We received a large amount of funding from Welsh Government for Band A of the 21st Century Schools Programme which was matched by the Council and Welsh Government have approved (in principle) £168m for Band B. We have indicative costs for this school which is where the initial £10m has been identified.

A. If we didn't do this we wouldn't get this money. This isn't money that we have taken from other schools to fund this.

Q. *Is this EU funding? Will it be retracted?*

A. No it is Welsh Government specific money coming directly to the Council.

All were thanked for their inputs and the meeting closed.