

Notes of a meeting held with school council
at Cardinal Newman Roman Catholic Comprehensive School

Thursday 22nd November 2018 at 2 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
Sarah Corcoran, Senior Challenge Adviser - CSC
15 members of the school council

Welcome and introduction from school council.

Introduction from Council officers.

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.

GD opened the meeting up to questions from the school council.

Q. *We feel that there is more of a focus on making financial savings. Cardinal Newman Roman Catholic Comprehensive School's sixth form offers an environment that is comfortable for pupils and supports their wellbeing.*

A. GD acknowledged the comments made and replied that any changes made would be made with support offered to pupils.

GD also commented that a change in 6th form provision can help to prepare pupils for when they move into Higher Education.

It was confirmed that the change was not just financial but because the breadth and depth of subject choice could not currently be offered at Cardinal Newman Roman Catholic Comprehensive School's sixth form due to its small size – at present only 36% of pupils return to year 12 from year 11 – we need to question why 64% aren't returning and where they are going.

Q. *Cardinal Newman Roman Catholic Comprehensive School's sixth form has only been in place for two years and needs to be in place for longer for the benefit of the pupils of Cardinal Newman Roman Catholic Comprehensive School.*

A. The Local Authority looks at a Rhondda Cynon Taf wide approach, not just Cardinal Newman Roman Catholic Comprehensive School approach.

- Q. Years 7, 8 and 9 are large year groups that would in turn mean larger sixth forms.**
- A. This is not necessarily the case as the data demonstrates that pupils are choosing a different learning pathway already.
- Q. The teaching at Cardinal Newman Roman Catholic Comprehensive School is very high quality; by taking away, the sixth form you are taking away high quality teachers.**
- A. It was acknowledged that Cardinal Newman is a good school.
- Q. Having a larger sixth form means that pupils can get lost in the system and will not be supported by staff with whom they have formed close relationships.**
- A. New relationships with new members of staff in new settings could be formed. Officers talked about the sixth forms at Bryncelynnog Comprehensive School and St. David's Sixth Form College.
- A. Officers also explained about the pastoral and wellbeing systems currently in place in Bryncelynnog Comprehensive School and the college.
- Q. In 2016, Bryncelynnog Comprehensive School underwent an Estyn Inspection where they were graded 'adequate' for current performance and 'good' for prospects for improvement. Is this good enough for Cardinal Newman Roman Catholic Comprehensive School pupils?**
- A. Officers discussed the results of Bryncelynnog Comprehensive School. Officers also discussed how the proposals are not about how well and badly a school performs but are also based on the size of the sixth form. The current size of Cardinal Newman Roman Catholic School's sixth form is very small and unsustainable.
- Q. There are transport implication to St. David's Sixth Form College. Would the long journey time be justifiable when you consider the other pressures facing young people?**
- A. When you have a future pathway that you are keen to follow you are incentivised to travel to achieve it. It is a further distance to travel and many students currently choose this option to attend a quality provision.
- Q. The pupils at Cardinal Newman Roman Catholic School's sixth form currently run a 'buddy system', which brings a family ethos to the school.**
- A. The officers outlined that these systems are in place in schools throughout Rhondda Cynon Taf that do not currently have sixth forms, so there are new opportunities to develop different systems.

Q. We feel that Cardinal Newman Roman Catholic School is the best performing school in Rhondda Cynon Taf – why are these proposals being made?

A. GD confirmed that Cardinal Newman Roman Catholic School is a very good school, however it is not the best performing sixth form in Rhondda Cynon Taf currently.

GD explained to the School Council why these proposals were being made – namely, a small sixth form being subsidised by Key Stage 3 and 4 which is run at a high cost per pupil head and offering a limited subject range. We need to look at offering a greater choice of subjects with larger teaching groups, which is not subsidised by Key Stages 3 and 4.

Q. Why was Bryncelynnog Comprehensive School chosen?

A. Officers outlined that Bryncelynnog Comprehensive School is a good, improving school with strong outcomes and is led by a strong Senior Management Team. The percentage of learners that return from year 11 to year 12 is nearly 45%.

Q. Why is Cardinal Newman Roman Catholic Comprehensive School not being refurbished in any way?

A. Faith Schools are voluntary aided and funded differently to maintained schools. However, the Local Authority support the school with investment and will continue to maintain the buildings in partnership with the Diocesan.

All were thanked for their attendance and inputs and the meeting closed at 3pm.