

Notes of a meeting held with the school council of Hawthorn Primary School

Wednesday 14th November at 2:30 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, Senior 21st Century Schools Officer
Martin Silezin, 14-19 Strategy Officer
Sophie Nicholls, Graduate Officer 21st Century Schools
Number of pupils present = 14

Esther Thomas (ET) explained that the Council are looking to reorganise some of the schools in Pontypridd. The changes would include new 3-16 schools, in Pontypridd and Hawthorn, a new Welsh primary school in Rhydyfelin and moving the school sixth forms into larger sixth forms in Bryncelynnog and the college.

ET went into more detail about the proposal that would directly affect the pupils in Hawthorn Primary, as the school would close and become part of the Hawthorn 3-16 School. The pupils would be part of a larger school and would not have to move when they reach secondary school age. ET explained that although the children would be part of one school, the younger pupils would be separate from the older pupils, but would be able to use some specialist facilities in the school such as the P.E hall, science laboratories and ICT rooms from a younger age.

ET explained that the purpose of the meeting with the pupils today was for the Council to hear and record what the pupils think about the proposals, as their views are very important to the Council.

ET asked pupils if they already knew anything about the proposals.

ET explained what the Local Authority did in the Rhondda area last year and that the Local Authority are looking to use new funding for the Pontypridd area.

Q. *Why do you have to close the school?*

A. We have to close the school to create a new 3-16 school. Welsh Government have rules that we have to follow when we want to do something like this and part of that process is for us to close both schools and create a new 3-16 school for the Hawthorn area.

Q. *Where will the new school be?*

A. The new school is going to be here. The buildings are close together now and we will use our map and draw a new red line around the two sites to create one larger boundary for one school. We may build some new elements and remodel some other parts of the school to make it a new school.

Q. How is it going to work?

A. We haven't made any decisions of what the buildings will look like yet because firstly the Council's Cabinet have to agree whether we can do it. The proposal is for the school to have one Headteacher over the whole school. You will be in your own classes with peers of your age. You will have access to the facilities that are in the other school such as science/computer/PE rooms and facilities. You may have some use of that now but as one school you will be able to work together much more. Pupils and teachers will know each other through the whole school.

Q. How many children will there be?

A. The children from Heol y Celyn English medium will come here too. As a whole school the pupil numbers will be very large because that goes from age 3-16. The capacity will be 1,260 for the whole school, but if you were going to split it into primary/secondary phases that would be 540 primary and the secondary element would be 720 from years 7-11. This sounds like a lot compared to the amount of children you see now but it will be similar to how it is now because you will still have the same numbers in your class.

Q. When will we know if the new school is happening?

A. This consultation happens now with you, staff, governors and parents of your school and at all of the other school affected. This will continue until the end of January next year. A report of your views will then go back to the Council's Cabinet and they will decide whether or not to go ahead to the next stage. They will probably make this decision in March next year. If they decide to go ahead with the proposals, we then go to a 'statutory notice' period where everyone can give their views / objections for another month. That is then reported back to Cabinet for them to finally say if we will definitely go ahead with the plans or not. This will possibly happen by the end of April. The new school won't be set up until 2022 so you will probably all be affected by it.

Q. Will we have the same teachers?

A. It is highly likely that you will have the same teachers. There may be teachers who want to retire or move to new schools but a lot of the teachers will probably be the same. The new governing body for the 3-16 school will decide on the staff.

Q. Will we have the same Headteacher?

A. We don't know if it will be the same Headteacher. The governors will decide. It may be, but it may not be.

Q. Will there be loads of children in each class?

A. There won't be loads of children in the same classroom. We don't know how many children will be coming here exactly but it may be easier to organise the school better with more pupils here, and extra classes could be created to accommodate everyone. There shouldn't be more than 30 in one class.

Q. Will the classrooms be bigger?

A. Some of the classrooms here are already lovely and it looks quite new in some places. When we build new spaces within schools there are certain sizes of classrooms that we have to provide. The Building Bulletin book which we use says exactly how big we have to build the classrooms when we build new ones. They won't be small classrooms for you.

Q. Will all the rooms be different?

A. The classrooms are different now. The teachers have their own rooms and decorate them how they want to. If we build new classrooms there are some things that have to be the same, for example we have to put glass panels in the doors, but they are mainly standard classrooms that the teachers are able to make their own with displays etc. We make sure that there is good lighting, ICT infrastructure and a C-Touch board. For younger children they are on risers so the touch board can move up and down for all pupils to reach. There will be different equipment outside and different size tables and chairs etc. for pupils of different ages.

Q. What are the classrooms going to look like?

A. They will be beautiful. You already have a lovely school. Is there anything you would like changed in your classes now?

A. No not really.

A. There will be sinks etc. that are slightly different heights in different classes, tables, chairs, ICT, storage etc. Then the classroom will be filled with your lovely creations.

Q. Where would the classes be in our new school?

A. We don't know the answer to that yet. We are here to get your ideas but we don't know yet exactly how it will look. In a few weeks' time we will bring some surveyors with us who will come and assess what buildings are best to use and what needs to be changed. An architect will draw and design a plan for the new school and see where we can put some new classrooms. I don't think we will need to do too much here but as the primary will be larger we will need to put extra classrooms somewhere. When we have the plans we will bring some drawings for you to see and give us your opinion on.

Q. What new things will we have?

A. New ICT equipment as we mentioned. New toilets, new furniture.

A. It will depend on how the buildings are used too. It depends if your hall is big enough for everyone and there will be lots of new things to accommodate everyone.

Q. *Where will all the equipment be kept?*

A. We try and build in some storage into every classroom. There will be other places in the school where we can build stores for things like health and safety equipment. They need to have specific places to put things. Storage for classes is important for you too. There will be places for everything.

Q. *Are we going to have a second floor?*

A. Again we don't know yet. There won't be one on this block but if we build a new one there may be a second floor. We have built a range of new schools with a single floor and others with two floors because we have a smaller area to build on. We need to make sure you have enough outdoor space to play in. Would you mind if it was one or two floors?

A. Pupil - We want two floors.

Q. *Why?*

A. Pupil - If I am tired I can walk downstairs and wake up a bit.

Q. *Will we have a lift?*

A. If we build two floors then you will definitely have a lift. If it is one floor then you won't.

Q. *Why would you need a lift?*

A. Pupil - For disabled people

A. Well done. We need to think about the future if there are any pupils who need help to access a second floor.

Q. *Will there still be a football field?*

A. Yes we wouldn't take any of your play space away. To be healthy and fit you need places to exercise so the more room we give you to try new sports or exercises the better.

Q. *Will there still be a SAP room - where we talk to the teachers about our feelings and emotions?*

A. That will be down to the teachers to say that they really need to have that for the pupils. We need to make sure the children are happy and as you go through the 3-16 school it is important that you talk.

A. In many secondary schools there are also special spaces for this.

A. We can give you the space but it will be up to the staff to make sure it is used for that. Older children may be able to help too.

Q. What will happen to the swimming pool?

A. It will stay. We have no plans to take it and you should be able to use it during and after school.

Q. What will the canteen look like?

A. What would you like it to look like that is different to how it is now?

A. Pupil - Comfier chairs not benches.
Colourful instead of one boring colour.
Not benches for you to fold out all the time.
Like in high school it is a canteen, not a hall too.

A. We are trying to do that in other schools. We need to have the space on site for outdoor play too. That is why we tend to put the canteen and hall as one shared space. That doesn't mean that you can't advise us on colours or furniture that you want.

Q. What will the food be like?

A. It won't really change.

Q. Will there still be after school clubs?

A. If you have lots of after school clubs now then they will probably continue and we would advise the teachers that they should make sure they have the opportunities to do more.

Q. Will the older children mix with the other children?

A. They might. There are opportunities for the older children to help with you reading etc. If you have older brothers or sisters next door you may get to see them. There won't be older children wandering around where you are as they would be in lessons. Are you happy for the older children to be there?

A. Pupil - Yes as long as they are in their own classes.

A. You would always be safe and have your own toilets. If some of you excel in maths etc. then maybe you can have a lesson with year 7.

Q. Will there be mixed toilets?

A. What do you have now?

A. Pupil - We have separate toilets now but the infants are mixed.

A. Where we have put mixed toilets in for secondary age pupils, you can see into the sink area. Where there are mixed toilets the doors go from the floor to the ceiling to they are private. Lots of people were a bit worried when we did that but they are working very well in the schools they are in now. Bullying and children misbehaving in toilets has got much less.

Q. Will it take 10 minutes to get to the toilet and back?

A. New schools have toilets very close to the classes. That is how we will start the planning, but where we can't do that we will have to ensure that the toilets are close enough.

Q. Will older pupils be in the pupil council?

A. A school council could then be from age 3-16. To make decisions for the whole school you would need opinions from many pupils. There may be smaller groups but that would be down to the staff and Headteacher to decide.

Q. Will older children come to our discos?

A. Do you want the children at your discos? It would be down to the staff. The older children may not want to come. As a whole school council you possibly could decide that. Do you want something for everyone or for just one part?

Q. What about bullying? Will there be more and will it be harder to control? Lots of our children moved from Heol y Celyn because of bullying and now they will be with us. We are worried about this.

A. Is there bullying here?

A. Pupil - No

A. Staff in this school won't tolerate it and we need to manage this so that pupils don't get bullied. Bullying often happens in places where people can't see you. We design buildings so people can't hide in places and bully people. You must always tell a member of staff if you are being bullied. Our priority is for children to be safe.

Q. My brother said there are not adults on the yard in Hawthorn High.

A. There should be people on the yard supervising.

A. Lots of schools have safe places for you to go to. Where there are a mix of ages we have found that pupils become calmer because they are around their younger brothers and sisters etc.

Q. Will they still swear and be nasty like they do in the park?

A. You will have segregated play areas too and you may have play times at different times to minimise this. None of us can eradicate swearing. It is hard to make people stop swearing but the staff will manage this and make sure you are safe.

Q. Are we going to be disrupted when everything is being built?

A. I can't say that there will be no disruption because you are going to be in a school where we may be building other blocks, decorating or demolishing some

spaces etc. I can promise that the construction team are going to put big fences up to keep the staff and pupils separate from the works and they would have a good team on site that would come and visit you and speak to you to explain to you what is going on. If you have issues or complaints your staff will be able to complain and tell the construction people to stop. It will be important for exam time to be quiet so we need to make sure there is excellent communication. The project manager will be familiar to you and anything too noisy or disruptive can be sorted out between your staff and the project manager. We only let builders on our sites that will work with us and listen to us.

Q. *When will they start building? Will it be in the six weeks holidays?*

A. Some work may be in the six weeks holidays, But there would be a project plan for the whole school. Pupils would be able to visit and see how it is being built. We need to make sure you can still learn while it is going on, so no extra days off for you.

Q. *What is the school name going to be?*

A. It will be for the school governors to come up with suggestions based on your opinions and they then recommend the name to the Council. The Councillors will then decide the final name for the school.

Q. *What will the uniform and logo be like?*

A. What would you like it to be?

A. Pupil - Half of ours of half or Heol y Celyn
Red

A. It will be up to the governors and school staff to decide.

Q. *Will we get to see the school before it opens?*

A. Hopefully you will be part of the whole process rather than just seeing it at the end. We can make changes to colour schemes etc. then as it goes on. Pupils could help choose toilet colours etc.

Q. *We know what we would like in our new school. Will we get to have an opinion on the school?*

A. If it is passed we will show you photos of what we have done so far on other schemes and you can help decide.

ET – Thanked all for their inputs and their preparation.

ET - This has been excellent and you have had very sensible questions.

Do you think overall that this is a good or bad thing?

8 = good

1 = not good

5 = unsure.