

**From:** Ruth Tucker [mailto:Ruth.Tucker@torfaen.gov.uk]  
**Sent:** 28 November 2016 14:14  
**To:** Horton Mark  
**Subject:** 21st century schools

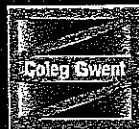
Hi Mark

With regard to the details that you sent to the Council about post 16 provision in Torfaen, the Council has asked me to inform you that it fully supports the 21<sup>st</sup> Century plans

Regards

Mrs Ruth V. Tucker

Clerc i'r Cyngor/Clerk to the Council  
Cyngor Cymuned Pont-y-pŵl/Pontypool Community Council  
35A Stryd Masnach/35A Commercial St  
Pont-y-pŵl/ Pontypool  
Torfaen  
NP4 6JQ



Ref: AL/001/16

28 November 2016

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Mr D McChrystal  
Head of Education Services  
Torfaen County Borough Council  
Civic Centre  
Pontypool  
NP4 6YB

(F.A.O Mark Horton)

Dear Mr McChrystal

**Review of Post 16 Education in Torfaen Consultation**

I am writing on behalf of the Governing body of Coleg Gwent in response to the consultation document prepared by the Authority.

The College's Board welcome the proposals made in the consultation document and recognises that the very close working partnership established between our organisations will bring very significant benefits to young people in Torfaen. I can assure you that the College would do all it can to assist you in the implementation of these proposals should the decision be taken, following the consultation process, to proceed.

The Board believes that the proposed post 16 reconfiguration will bring a number of benefits, including:

- protecting and securing a broad post 16 curriculum offer
- enhanced efficiency and better use of Government funding
- improvements in all learner outcomes
- improve participation in post 16 learning and further reduce the level of those who are NEET

The College brings an extensive range of experience in working in partnership with local authorities and 11-16 schools, and based on that experience is confident that these benefits will be realised in Torfaen. In September 2012 Coleg Gwent and Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council opened the Blaenau Gwent Learning Zone. This has been recognised in Wales as a model of good practice in partnership working and has delivered excellent outcomes. A Level results in 2016 at 99.6% A-E, were 2.3% above the Wales benchmark. Value added performance (as measured by ALIS- University of Durham) placed the Blaenau Gwent Learning Zone in the top 15% of colleges in the UK. At the same time, since 2012, the Authority has improved outcomes in the Key Stage 4 Level 2 Inclusive indicator year on year. The staying on rate for 16 year olds in the Borough has improved from 75.3% in 2010 to 89.3% in 2015.

We believe that your proposals for change will deliver the benefits outlined in your consultation document and will lead to a strong, successful and enduring partnership between us for the benefit of the young people of Torfaen.

Yours sincerely

**Angela Lloyd**  
Chair of the Governors, Coleg Gwent



Os gwelwch yn dda ymateb i / Please respond to:

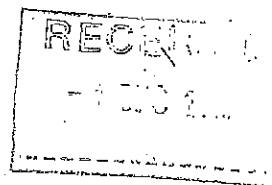
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**ST ALBAN'S RC HIGH SCHOOL**  
The Park, Pontypool, Torfaen, NP4 6XG

**YSGOL UWCHRADD GATHOLIG SAIN ALBAN**  
Y Parc, Pontypwl, Torfaen, NP4 6XG

Mr Dermot McChrystal  
Head of Education Services  
(FAO Mark Horton)  
c/o Torfaen County Borough Council,  
Civic Centre,  
Pontypool,  
Torfaen  
NP4 6YB



30<sup>th</sup> November 2016

**Re: Governors' Response to Torfaen Post-16 Consultation**

Dear Dermot,

**Review of Post-16 Education in Torfaen**

Thank you for providing a consultation document for the above review. The Governors' Strategic Development Committee at St Alban's R.C High School has met and members decided that, as part of the consultation process, they would seek clarification and ask questions in order to determine their formal response later in the process. Please find these questions below:

**Question 1: Continued Faith Provision for Students aged 16-18**

How will the new provision ensure that the support and personal/spiritual development opportunities for young people that currently exist in St Alban's will continue under the new arrangements?

**Question 2: The closure of St Alban's Sixth Form and possible impact on the whole school**

It is possible that the removal of the Sixth Form at St Alban's could destabilise the whole school in terms of recruitment at Year 7 and managing a transition process, including redundancies and other costs, which may place a financial burden on the school which is impossible to meet. Could you provide assurances to St Alban's Governing Body in respect of the above points?

**Question 3: Transition arrangements for Students and Staff**

Can you explain the transition arrangements for staff so that current employment opportunities including pay and conditions are protected? In addition, if the transition arrangements require associated costs e.g. redundancy payments, can you assure the St Alban's Governing Body that these costs will be met by Torfaen CBC and not the Governing Body at St Alban's?

Can you explain the transition arrangements that would be put in place for students? In particular, what will be put in place to support students who start their lower sixth course in St Alban's? Will continued provision for their upper sixth course be guaranteed under the new arrangement?



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**Question 4: Impact on the local community**

St Alban's sixth form students are an important source of revenue for local small businesses in the Pontypool town centre. Have you considered the impact of the removal of these students will have on many of these small businesses?

Thank you for considering our queries. We hope that you will be able to respond in a timely manner as your answers will determine the St Alban's R.C. High School response to the next stage in the formal process.

Yours sincerely,

Fr David Hayman

Chair, St Alban's R.C. High School Governing Body

**CONSULTATION  
RESPONSE**

*Establish 6<sup>th</sup> Form Centre for Torfaen and Make a Regulated Alteration to Croesyceiliog School, Cwmbran High School and to St. Albans RC High School By Ending 6<sup>th</sup> Form Provision.*

**Opening Comments**

1. The NASUWT is the largest teachers' union throughout Wales and the United Kingdom and has over 500 members working throughout Torfaen.
2. The NASUWT generally supports the initiative to increase choices for Post-16 students. Nevertheless, the Union must ensure that the employment and conditions of service of its members are maintained and wherever possible enhanced. Improvements for students can only be achieved through high quality, well-supported, professional teaching staff.

**General Comments**

3. The NASUWT is unable to support the proposals at this stage, as there is lack of clarity regarding the exact nature of provision; the potential impact on the employment and conditions of service of teachers and the bearing on 14–19 education within secondary schools in Torfaen. The NASUWT wishes to make it clear that if these proposals remain unchanged then the Union will be formally objecting to the proposals during the statutory period should this proceed to that stage.
4. The NASUWT is disappointed that there have not been more detailed discussions with the Union(s) on the development of proposals so that, as representatives of the teaching profession, we can support in implementing the desired improvements in a controlled and collaborative manner. Had such discussions taken place whilst developing the authority's

response to Welsh Assembly Government's Transformational Agenda and the Outline Business Case for a centralised Sixth Form provision then the current scepticism of our members may have been avoided.

5. The NASUWT has always expressed a concern that a Local Authority (LA) relinquishing control of Post-16 education to a Further Education provider would inevitably result in substantial job losses amongst well-qualified, experienced and committed teachers who possess specialist subject expertise.
6. The NASUWT firmly believes that the measures necessary to increase participation and choice for Post-16 students should be achieved through true collaborative working between schools and FE providers. The NASUWT cannot accept a situation where planned changes are seen as an appropriation by FE providers or an abdication of responsibility for Post-16 by the LA. The Union believes that in order to provide equality of choice and provision throughout Wales, education should be delivered through the democratically accountable structures of Local Authorities.
7. The NASUWT also believes that proposals to transfer Post-16 education from schools to the FE sector has been made on the basis of financial rationalisation rather than quality of provision.
8. If the proposal were successful, then the NASUWT, along with other stakeholders, would expect to be informed and consulted on the nature, structure and detail of any prospective partnership agreement between the Local Authority and Coleg Gwent.

### **Specific Comments on the Consultation Document**

#### Section 2: Why The Change To Post-16 Is Needed

9. The consultation notes that the main driving forces behind the proposal are:
  - *The need to improve retention and stay - on rates and learner outcomes*
  - *The need to transform post 16 education in line with Welsh Government's vision*
  - *The need to replace 6<sup>th</sup> forms with a more efficient and sustainable delivery model*
  - *Linkages with other projects within the council's 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools Programme, most notably the provision of a new school for Croesyceiliog School.*

However, there is no evidence, available or offered, to demonstrate that adopting the proposal would improve retention rates and outcomes. In addition, why should the provision

of a new school be predicated on the removal of Sixth Forms from three schools? 'The need to replace Sixth Forms with a more efficient and sustainable model' is an incongruous phrase as no context for the terms 'efficient' and 'sustainable' is given.

10. The section also states that four investment objectives will be delivered, namely:

- *Improving the effectiveness and outcomes of service to all learners.*
- *Providing economies and efficiencies in the provision of the service.*
- *Providing new and enhanced opportunities to all learners.*
- *Improving learner experience and attractiveness to all learners*

Again, no evidence can be offered to the validity of such statements; thus, they are not generalisable.

#### Section 5: Background Information

11. The Section gives data on current and projected numbers and the methodology used to calculate this. The NASUWT's concerns are that calculations for proposed Coleg Gwent students (page 12) lack rigour. The projections for Post-16 retention and drop out rates conceal potential wide variations from the suggested figures as it is based on students who have remained in school under the present system. In addition, it cannot be estimated how many students may be lost to other Sixth Forms outside of Torfaen if school provision ceases. Furthermore, the NASUWT does not believe that the current and anticipated student numbers in Post-16 provision (Table 2) represent Sixth Forms that are currently unviable or not viable in the future. Experience from Merthyr Tydfil has shown that where possible, parents prefer a 'through' education; faith-based student losses are higher than expected and more affluent parents are willing to send their children to schools with an 'acknowledged' Sixth Form.

#### Section 6: Options Considered

12. The NASUWT is unclear as to how the current provision is inequitable. Students may elect to enrol at any of the current Sixth Forms within Torfaen, or to attend other facilities outside the County. The Union cannot see how a single Sixth Form centre will change this and thus provide a more equitable provision. As Coleg Gwent has been the sole provider in the north of the County then it surely is not best placed to raise standards.

13 Specific advantages asserted in the proposal are conveyed (with responses):

- *The range and quality of courses will meet the Learning and Skills (Wales) Measure 2009 for learners.*

The NASUWT does not believe there is any evidence to suggest that the current Sixth Forms are not already providing such quality indicators. The NASUWT also questions the relevancy of this as it refers to an out-dated policy.

- *A wider range of academic courses will be delivered, with the opportunity to work collaboratively with vocational course providers.*

The consultation already notes the wide provision currently available in the Sixth forms. In fact, a greater choice is available at two of the schools when compared to Cross Keys. There is minimal collaboration between vocational and academic courses, as there is little need to do so. The experience from Merthyr has also shown that the number of courses offered has gradually declined.

- *Larger and better-qualified pool of potential employees with a greater range of qualifications.*

The NASUWT is clear that the potential redundancies of many highly experienced, well-qualified and knowledgeable classroom practitioners invalidate such a statement.

- *The building will be to 21<sup>st</sup> century standard with purpose built facilities promoting better educational attainment.*

Such a comment is merely unsubstantiated conjecture. The NASUWT welcomes the commitment to provide purpose-built facilities but cannot necessarily accept that this will inevitably result in better educational attainment (See 12). The NASUWT is clear, however, that it is high quality teaching, which leads to better educational outcomes.

- *As all courses can be offered in one facility, this assists in maximising curriculum time, leading to better attendance and an increase in the % of 16 –19 learners in Education and Training (EET).*

The NASUWT does not believe there is any evidence to support this claim. All current schools offer provision at a single facility. The NASUWT is also concerned that it would be more demanding to provide targeted pastoral support in such a large facility. This could have an adverse impact on vulnerable students, particularly those with disabilities or learning needs



- *More opportunities for professional and personal development for staff at the facility.*

Based upon current and previous experience, the NASUWT cannot accept that this will occur.

- *Ease of access to training resources for both staff and students.*

The NASUWT seeks clarification of the term 'training resources'.

- *Improved financial stability.*

The NASUWT does not agree that moving a provision will necessarily increase 'stability'. Funding per student is provided by WG, whoever the provider. The Union view is that 'stability' would be applicable for Coleg Gwent, but result in increasing [financial] instability for schools.

14. The proposal further states that '*disadvantages of the proposal will be mitigated through effective transition arrangements and good liaison*', though no details are forthcoming as to what this will actually entail.
15. There are stated advantages of proceeding with the proposal for developing a Sixth form centre as well as some disadvantages, although inexplicably, the latter are not considered significant.

#### Section 8: What Will Be Offered And How It Will Be Delivered

16. The consultation implicitly suggests that there is a link between larger Sixth Form class sizes and raising attainment. The NASUWT does not believe that any evidence has been provided to support such a claim. Indeed, the opposite is the case throughout the rest of a pupil's education, so why should this change at Post-16?
17. Wider choice of provision (debatable in itself) will not increase the responsiveness to students' needs if they are lectured to in classes greater than 20, rather than taught in the familiar environment of a Sixth Form. The suggested minimum numbers of 18 to a group merely reduces the learning experience to a 'production-line' form of education and potentially diminishes student choice. Teaching at A-level has always included an element of more student-focused tuition, reliant on smaller class-sizes – that is the whole point of it. The smaller numbers have also balanced out the increased demands on staff in terms of marking load and preparation.

18. The NASUWT does not believe that the current class size numbers presented in a Table from Section 8 are currently unviable and can see no improvement in the proposed new arrangements.
19. Additionally, the proposals do not provide a significant if any change in the number of courses provided. The examples cited state that Croesyceiliog currently runs 36 courses, whereas the proposed provision may offer 35-40. The NASUWT notes that the LA will have little or no control over this in the future, as the facility will be run by Coleg Gwent, which is independent of the LA.
20. The proposed length of the working day (by association to staff) would be unacceptable to most in relation to current custom and practice and the need to maintain an appropriate work-life balance.

#### Section 10: Staffing At The New Centre

21. The consultation notes:

*The centre will require a number of new of staff to deliver the curriculum. Coleg Gwent will employ the staff of the Centre on the established terms and conditions for Further Education. In the first instance, the recruitment and selection process for teaching staff will be restricted to current employees of Torfaen Secondary schools and Coleg Gwent.*

Additionally, [Section 7 of] the document also states:

*The revenue cost of teaching and learning are based on the contracts and terms of conditions of teachers in the Local Authority, however the college would be able to reduce their teaching and learning costs, as they would appoint staff on Further Education contracts and terms and conditions. It can also be assumed that efficiencies could be made on the number of staff required to release money from teaching and learning to fund the other factors (leadership and premises)*

22. This abdication of responsibility by the Local Authority to the terms, conditions, welfare, status and prospects of Torfaen's teaching staff is totally unacceptable to the NASUWT.
23. The Union also wishes to point out that this would be only applicable to new staff appointed by the FE College. Existing employees of Torfaen CBC would transfer on their current

terms and conditions under the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 (TUPE).

24. If the proposals progress, then the withdrawal of funding from the secondary schools and loss of Post-16 provision will, by our calculations, amount to approximately 35 FTE teaching posts of highly experienced, committed and professional practitioners. In addition, teachers who seek/enjoy the challenge of 11-18 teaching may not be attracted to work in Torfaen's 11-16 schools, while those with substantive expertise at this level may look elsewhere, taking their skills and economic input.
25. The proposals also seem unaware that those colleagues who teach Sixth Form students are also delivering across the entire age range. The expertise and breadth of subject knowledge of such staff is invaluable in providing a full curriculum and thus, will be lost to schools.
26. It remains a principal concern to the NASUWT that the closure of the Sixth Forms at three schools will mean that the expertise of teachers could be deliberately ignored in favour of cheaper staff. Nevertheless, the introduction of the Common Contract in FE and the existence of pay scales that in general, mirror those for teachers will not necessarily provide the sought-after cost reduction.
27. The NASUWT also notes the current ESTYN judgements and National Categorisation of the secondary schools in Torfaen. The Union questions as to how the loss of excellent and experienced staff that currently teach in Sixth Forms would positively impact on these judgements. There is likely to be significant detriment with the loss of such staff to the current provision for 11-16 pupils.

## **Conclusion**

28. The NASUWT is unable to support the proposals in their current form. As previously stated the NASUWT will, if these proposals remain unchanged, be formally objecting to the proposals during the statutory period should it proceed to that stage.
29. Primary concerns of the NASUWT are:
  - The threat to employment of teachers
  - The threat to conditions of service of teachers
  - The lack of modelling of the staffing and financial arrangements for the remaining 11-16 schools

- The lack of clarity in the proposals
- The lack of clarity in governance arrangements
- The transfer of Post-16 education from a democratically accountable Torfaen CBC to Coleg Gwent
- The lack of consultation with the NASUWT and other unions

30. It is to be hoped that these issues can be solved through consultation and negotiation, as the feeling amongst teachers and the public is one of strong opposition. The NASUWT looks forward to engaging positively and constructively with the Governors and Local Authority on these and any emerging proposals.

For further information on this response please contact Dr John Sheridan, NASUWT County Secretary.

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

December 2016

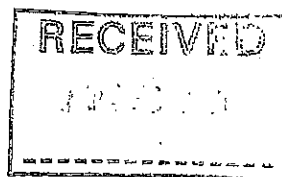


DAVID T C DAVIES MP  
Member for Monmouth

Dec 3

Please Reply To:  
16 Maryport Street  
Usk  
Monmouthshire  
NP15 1AB

Date: 9<sup>th</sup> December 2016  
Our Ref: E(1)Bok  
Your Ref:



Mr D McChrystal  
Head of Education Services  
(FAO Mark Horton)  
Torfaen County Borough Council  
Civic Centre  
Pontypool  
Torfaen  
NP4 6YB

Dear Mr McChrystal

**Re: Proposed changes to 6<sup>th</sup> Form Education in Torfaen – Consultation**

I refer to Mr Horton's letter of the 11<sup>th</sup> November 2016 regarding the consultation on the future of 6<sup>th</sup> form education in Torfaen. As Croesyceiliog Comprehensive lies within the Monmouth Constituency I would like to contribute to the consultation as the sitting Member of Parliament for part of the area covered by Torfaen County Borough Council. I understand council officers are recommending that all 6<sup>th</sup> form education in the county be concentrated at one central site. The consultation documents appear to indicate they believe this will save some money and encourage a greater choice of subjects for students.

However Croesyceiliog Comprehensive is arguably the best performing school in the county, it enjoys an excellent reputation and consistently achieves outstanding A level and Welsh Baccalaureate results, on a par with the best in Wales. I regularly meet with 6<sup>th</sup> formers' at the school and they always seem to be highly motivated and dedicated to their studies. They are interested in current affairs and as any politician will tell you ask the most incisive and difficult to answer questions. This seems to indicate a department which enjoys strong leadership, is well organised, knows what it's doing and is providing genuine support and challenge to students. I would personally be very sorry to see this outstanding facility being closed.



I would advise all stakeholders and parents who feel the same to make their voices heard by responding to this consultation and copying the Cabinet Secretary for Education Kirsty Williams AM at [Kirsty.williams@assembly.wales](mailto:Kirsty.williams@assembly.wales)

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David T C Davies'.

**David T C Davies MP**

Cc Kirsty Williams AM, Cabinet Secretary for Education

**LYNNE NEAGLE AM FOR TORFAEN**  
**NICK THOMAS-SYMONDS MP FOR TORFAEN**

Mr Dermot McChyrstal  
Head of Education Services (FAO: Mr Mark Horton)  
c/o Torfaen County Borough Council.  
Civic Centre, Pontypool, Torfaen, NP4 6YB

[secondaryreview@torfaen.gov.uk](mailto:secondaryreview@torfaen.gov.uk)

19 December 2016

Dear Mr Horton,

**PROPOSALS TO**

- (i) ESTABLISH A 6<sup>th</sup> FORM CENTRE FOR TORFAEN AND**
- (ii) MAKE A REGULATED ALTERATION TO CROESYCEILIOG SCHOOL, CWMBRAN HIGH SCHOOL AND ST ALBAN'S RC HIGH SCHOOL BY ENDING SIXTH FORM PROVISION**

**Opening remarks**

As the elected representatives for the Torfaen constituency we are writing in response to the above consultation issued by Torfaen County Borough Council in November 2016.

We are generally very supportive of the proposals that have been brought forward in this consultation to change the way that post-16 education is delivered in Torfaen.

However, we do have some comments that we wish to bring to your attention and we would also like to highlight some concerns that we have received as representatives which is also reflected in our response.

**Section 2: Why the change to Post-16 is needed**

We are fully aware of the history of post-16 education in the borough. Since 2008 there has been no 6<sup>th</sup> form provision in the north of the borough and only 3 secondary schools in the south offering 6<sup>th</sup> forms, therefore a change is urgently required to address this.

We recognise that this proposal would work within the Welsh Government's sphere of post-16 to develop and provide equal opportunities for all students with a collaborative approach. We also note and share your concerns that the current post-16 offer to learners

will only get progressively worse if action is not taken now and money from Welsh Government could be lost.

As we have said, we support the plans for the preferred option of a £45m purpose built 6<sup>th</sup> form centre in Cwmbran. It is crucial to deliver an equitable post-16 offer for the whole borough.

### **Section 5: Background Information**

Whilst we appreciate that the current and projected numbers of students studying post-16 provision are essential for understanding and developing plans for any future provision, we would like to highlight the concerns raised by the NASUWT Cymru that the figures (in Table 3) are based on pupils under the current system and therefore it is difficult to assume and predict choice with the proposed new system.

It would be helpful to know therefore what consideration the consultation has given to this and for those students who choose to attend 6<sup>th</sup> form schools outside of the borough.

### **Section 6: Options considered**

As we have said we are generally very supportive of the proposal from the list of options considered. We understand that the removal of the 6<sup>th</sup> forms in the south of the borough is an integral part of the plans to deliver a high-quality post-16 offer to all young people in Torfaen and securing the funding currently on offer from the Welsh Government.

However, we are concerned about the statement on p 20 that:

*Potential loss of some staff from Croesyceiliog, Cwmbran High and St Alban's RC High Schools.*

We would want to see the council taking all possible steps to safeguard the position of all staff in the schools affected. We would therefore strongly encourage the council to work with the unions to ensure that any implementation is collaborative and views of affected teachers and staff are well represented.

### **Section 8: What will be offered and how will it be delivered**

We note the statement on p 22 that:

*It is not unreasonable to suggest that the average class size for the preferred option is not less than 18.*



Can you be more specific on the expected number of students for a typical class size for the preferred option compared to the current Torfaen post-16 class size of 16?

We would note the comments made by NASUWT that post-16 education includes "*an element of more student-focused tuition, reliant on smaller classes*" and would like to see this maintained if possible.

We note that the range of subjects and courses offered will be "similar" to the current offer in 6<sup>th</sup> forms in Torfaen and in Coleg Gwent, Crosskeys. Therefore if the new proposal should provide more opportunity for learners, it is difficult to see how a "similar" offer can provide this?

We note the statement on p.23 that the core working day of the proposed new 6<sup>th</sup> form centre would be 9am - 4.30pm for full-time learners operating flexibly with scope for evening provision if required. As this proposal is for the students, it could be anticipated that the teachers would be working beyond these core hours which are different to that of a typical school day. We would therefore echo NASUWT's comments about the need to maintain an appropriate work-life balance.

#### Section 9: Transport Arrangements

We note and accept the comment regarding free transport and that the current local authority policy will remain although the discretionary provision is subject to annual review.

We would be interested to hear what consideration the Council have given to public transport and improving these links if the proposal goes ahead.

The preferred proposal for a new centre based in Cwmbran lends itself well to the already well established train and bus routes into Cwmbran Town Centre, but we feel there is more than can be done to improve the frequency of current services and the safety for (increased) young students travelling to Cwmbran.

We feel that it is really important, if this hasn't already begun, for the Council and Coleg Gwent to liaise with the key network providers: Arriva Trains Wales, Stagecoach and others to ensure the best possible services for young people.

As elected representatives we have received correspondence from constituents regarding the safety of, and around, the roundabout for the Morrisons superstore. We would therefore be keen to know, if the proposal goes ahead, what steps the local authority will be taking to improve the safety for an increased number of students walking to and from the nearby routes.

We would also be keen to see well-lit routes with increased signage, especially in the winter months given that the proposal states the learning day could finish the latest at 4.30pm.

We would welcome an update on how the council and Coleg Gwent will work with the operators. Maybe a student app could be considered with the college to improve the communication of transport links?

#### **Section 10: Staffing at the new centre**

We welcome a commitment by Coleg Gwent that the recruitment and selection process for teaching staff will be restricted to current employees of the Torfaen secondary schools and Coleg Gwent.

That said, we want to see the Council and Coleg Gwent taking all possible steps to safeguard the position of all the staff in the secondary schools affected.

We have received representations from a concerned constituent that good and trained post-16 teachers could look to leave the secondary schools in the borough and look to move to schools with post-16 education provision and this is something that we would not want to see.

We would reiterate our previous comment that the Council and Coleg Gwent should work with the unions going forward to ensure that views of teachers are well represented.

#### **Section 11: The quality and diversity of education**

As we have already said, the lack of post-16 provision in the north of Torfaen since 2008 needs to be urgently addressed.

We are aware that in some cases, students from the north of the borough, which includes some of the most deprived wards, are travelling on two buses to get to Crosskeys College.

#### **Section 13: Welsh Language Impact Assessment**

Although Welsh-Medium post-16 provision will remain at Ysgol Gyfun Gwynllyw, we would be keen to know what consideration the Council has given to a potential increase in the number of pupils wishing to attend Welsh-medium schools (from primary age) in order to opt for an all-through education approach?

This could increase the Welsh Language demand and should be considered as part of the duty on Local Authorities to measure (and respond to) demand through their Welsh in Education Strategic Plan.

Conclusion

You will appreciate that as the elected representatives, we have received a number of representations about the Council's proposals.

That said, we are generally very supportive of the preferred option at this stage and very much welcome the commitment to address the lack of post-16 provision in the north of Torfaen and to provide equal opportunity and quality for all learners.


We hope that the issues we are raising in this response will be fully considered and we look forward to the Council addressing all the points we have raised.

Thank you for giving this letter your attention.

Yours sincerely,



**LYNNE NEAGLE AM**  
Assembly Member for Torfaen



**NICK THOMAS-SYMONDS MP**  
Member of Parliament for Torfaen

Response to Torfaen LEA and Wales Government (Education) December 2016 regarding Torfaen Council's proposals for Post 16 Education from Croesyceiliog School Governing Body

Croesyceiliog School Governing Body wishes to formally object to Torfaen County Borough Council's proposals to remove all post 16 provision from their secondary schools and transfer responsibility to Coleg Gwent.

We are extremely concerned over the length of time it has taken the LEA to present their final proposals on Post 16 provision and how the preferred model has been subject to major change over the last 12 months. We also fail to understand the absence of meaningful dialogue or consultation on strategic options open to the LEA and the consequences for students, staff and the wider community now and in the future.

We consider the evidence provided in support of the Council's Outline Business Case to be limited in regard to educational performance and financially flawed. Our objections, as set out below are based on Papers submitted to the full Council, this consultation document, our independent research and consultation with all stakeholders.

Welsh Government has stated Councils should widen the opportunities for all students at 14 – 19 in a way that prepares young people for the full range of pathways open to them and respecting the different learning styles of those students. Removal of choice in Torfaen's proposals totally fails to meet the priorities and objectives set out by Welsh Government.

Croesyceiliog School has continued to move from strength to strength, and has enjoyed, in the last three years its best ever sets of external examination results. We have proactively developed new courses, whilst embracing the challenges of the Welsh Bac qualification as key stage 4 and 5. We have invested in the future of our 6<sup>th</sup> form and broadened the range of vocational opportunities available to our learners and worked hard to offer the best life chances to our young people. The School's success makes an important contribution to Wales and Torfaen over time.

Partnership working with other Torfaen secondary schools has been further developed, not only amongst ourselves but with FE, work-based learning providers and the life-long working sector. Such collaboration builds on the present strengths of our Sixth Form and develops continuity of our education, high quality of provision, strong pastoral system, wealth of enrichment activities and access to our learners to opportunities offered elsewhere.

The knowledge, expertise and commitment that has delivered the high standards in academic study, sport and music for over 50 years in Croesyceiliog School Sixth Form will be lost forever, and Torfaen's schools will disappear from the Higher Level Education map. The testimonials for our pupils from Higher Education are a matter of record.

Torfaen is proposing a post 16 model not operating or indeed proposed by the neighbouring Local Authorities. The retention of their successfully performing sixth forms will almost certainly lead to Torfaen pupils travelling outside of Torfaen, which has apparently not been factored into the Business case for closing all our existing schools sixth form.

The Governing Body is not persuaded that this plan to re-organise post 16 provision is the only way that the Local Authority together with Welsh Government can and should proceed. Our Stakeholders have questioned the financial case regarding the land value of the new site and the need for this new build given the current Torfaen school property portfolio, and outstanding proposals for Croesyceiliog and St. Albans Secondary Schools. Rejected options need to be revisited. Public money should not be used on an additional educational facility that does not offer a significant increase in available courses and quality.

The sixth form guarantees added value in relation to recruitment and retention of the highest quality teaching staff particularly in subjects subject to shortages, which brings measurable benefits to all pupils and enables us to deliver outstanding performance at all levels. The strengths of teachers who deliver across a range of age groups, with added benefit of in depth knowledge of pupils and their abilities, will be lost. The three schools will suffer significant redundancies across all areas of staffing and the impact on remaining teachers will be felt for many years. New build and restructuring usually lead to lower outcomes and given the current performance in Welsh Education we believe the scenario must be avoided for all Torfaen pupils.

There does not appear to be any persuasive evidence that pupils in 11 – 16 perform any better than in 11 – 18 schools, and in Torfaen the three schools with sixth forms consistently outperform the other two secondary schools. The Coleg Gwent performance at the two Gwent locations at Pontypool and Ebbw vale fail to compare favourably with the three English Medium secondary schools in Torfaen now threatened with closure of 6<sup>th</sup> form provision.

The failure of Welsh Government to provide the necessary funding for Torfaen's Sixth Form is unacceptable and is forcing Torfaen to propose the radical option of removing choice and jeopardising future performance at this level. We consider there remain options which avoid the loss of the heritage of educational excellence in Torfaen. The answer should be to build on the experience and success of the schools and invest in it. The operational standards, HE relationships and results have been built over 60 years and to throw this away when Wales needs it most seems to us a huge retrograde step. We note the Minister's recent words regarding PISA that this is not a time for knee jerk reaction and we need to continue to invest and improve. This is not a time to wipe the slate clean and start afresh in Torfaen.

The Governors urge the Council to take a little more time to develop the proposals which retain choice in Torfaen. We also request further consultation with the parents and future students of Torfaen before taking the decision that could have significant repercussions for years to come.

December 2016

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** 23 December 2016 14:29  
**To:** Secondary Review  
**Subject:** responses noted at TASG

The following responses were noted at a recent special meeting of Torfaen association of School

\* several governors commended the proposal. A post 16 college with additional vocational options & A levels will be a better provision. A fit for purpose building offering inclusive access for all with latest digital technology is welcomed. The proposal ensures equity for all young learners across the authority. Proposal proves efficient in terms of budget. Young adults will understand that independent learning is their responsibility and mature as learners. We have a moral obligation to provide fair access to learning across the authority.

\* As the Post 16 education will be in the hands of Coleg Gwent there must be a clear accountability from Coleg Gwent to Torfaen. More information about the "partnership" is needed. Previous experience of Coleg Gwent unilaterally dropping A-level provision at the Pontypool campus is a concern. Governors are concerned that Torfaen LA will have little influence over future provision.

\* The number of A-Level students equates to 25% of all pupils within Torfaen, but what about the remaining 75%? Where will these young adults go?

\* A new application must be submitted for a Tertiary College and to allow opportunities for people in this area to get jobs

\*Concerns that a dispute over Tertiary will endanger the 6<sup>th</sup> Form proposals

\* Up to date skills provision for 6<sup>th</sup> form is important but not to be endangered

\* Concerns expressed for employees transferring to Coleg Gwent

\*Transport – Travel costs for students although subsidised may be a barrier to learning. Coordination needed with service bus routes & availability.

\*The North-south divide within Torfaen remains a worry with the proposed site not central to borough.

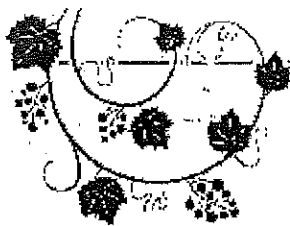
\*Class sizes will increase

\* Learners must be consulted with regarding the range of options to study at a 6<sup>th</sup> Form College

\* Finance will reign over provision and this is why we, in Torfaen must have control – to ensure that consistent provision

\* the proposal will see a loss of relationships for vulnerable learners and a transition packages must be available

\* Communication and relationships between schools, LA and colleges is vital



## Monmouth Diocesan Trust

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Company no: 00182863 • Charity no: 232841

Thank you for this consultation document on the Review of Post 16 Education in Torfaen. It is comprehensive and addresses many clear needs in a pragmatic way, which is well evidenced. As someone with a long history of working in HE, I can see how this plan would knit in well as a bridge between 11-16 and HE.

Since I am representing the opinion of the Monmouth Diocese (Church in Wales/CinW) on this, I'd like to just mention a few points. In the Diocese of Monmouth, we currently have 16 CinW schools – all primary. As is already known, three of these are in Torfaen: Blaenavon, Ponthir and Henllys. We are in an odd position where we have absolutely NO secondary CinW provision in the diocese at all. This is clearly a concern to us and something which is high on my agenda for attention. Therefore, 6<sup>th</sup> form provision may, in some respects, appear quite remote at the moment. However, with a longer term vision, it is still of interest, since we have parents who are requesting CinW education for their children from the ages of 3-11, there is likely to be a substantial continuity in this desire through the education system within Torfaen and the wider Monmouth Diocese – and yet this isn't currently addressed at all. This is something I would like to discuss further with Torfaen LA (and other LAs) in the near future:

With regard to the matter in hand, it seems that the only faith based 6<sup>th</sup> form provision at the moment is in St Alban's (RC)... and that will be lost. There is a brief reference (p29, bullet point 4) to having some "faith based support" but no clarity on how that might be facilitated. A further concern is that faith based support would be quite different to faith based education with an underpinning of Christian ethos throughout. Therefore, this proposal seems to offer a considerable weakening of the limited faith based education currently available – and this is a concern to us. Young people in the 16+ age group are exactly the key individuals we, as a church, want to nurture, mind and support in much more holistic and integrated way; this proposal sounds like the faith element would be more of a bolt on option and this does not make it attractive to us.

As we all know, there are a number of faith based university options available in the HE sector, so there is an issue of equity and continuity here in ensuring this is properly provided for in all the other sectors. I'm conscious that, within the document, there is reference to provision for 6<sup>th</sup> form Welsh medium education and how this is to be protected. In the interests of fairness, then why isn't a similar ring-fenced protection being provided for faith based education? This is a point of serious concern.

Therefore, since Welsh medium provision is being protected, what about a faith based 6<sup>th</sup> form that is RC and CinW? Would that be something that could be put forward alongside these plans? Could this be something brought into Band B? And with that, an additional consideration of faith based education (esp CinW) for the 11-16 age group?

Thank you for your consideration of the above points.

Dr Annette Daly  
*Diocesan Director of Education*

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**REVIEW OF POST 16 EDUCATION IN TORFAEN**  
**CONSULTATION DOCUMENT**

**PROPOSALS:-**

- 1) TO CHANGE THE AGE RANGE AT CROESYCEILIOG SCHOOL, CWMBRAN HIGH SCHOOL AND ST ALBAN'S RC HIGH SCHOOL, PONTYPOOL FROM 11 - 18 TO 11 - 16.**
- 2) TO ESTABLISH A 6<sup>th</sup> FORM CENTRE TO SERVE THE WHOLE OF THE TORFAEN COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL AREA.**

**YOUR VIEWS**

**WE WOULD LIKE YOUR VIEWS ON THE ABOVE PROPOSALS. THIS IS ALSO YOUR OPPORTUNITY TO SUGGEST ALTERNATIVES TO THIS PROPOSAL. PLEASE EITHER COMPLETE THIS FORM AND RETURN TO THE HEAD OF EDUCATION SERVICES (FAO MARK HORTON) C/O TORFAEN COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL, CIVIC CENTRE, PONTYPOOL, TORFAEN, NP4 6YB, OR EMAIL: [secondaryreview@torfaen.gov.uk](mailto:secondaryreview@torfaen.gov.uk)**

**Anne Robertson**

**Director of Schools  
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As a partner in the provision of maintained schools in Torfaen, the Archdiocese of Cardiff welcomes the very detailed and comprehensive consultation document on the review of post-16 education in that County. We also welcome the recognition that the provision of schools with a religious character in Torfaen is an integral feature of the educational landscape of Torfaen, allowing parents who wish their children to be educated in the context of a school with a religious character to do so.

We agree in principle with the main conclusions of the consultation document that the educational needs of post-16 learners in Torfaen will be best met with the provision of a dedicated 6<sup>th</sup> Form Centre whilst recognising that there are implications of this proposal for school staffing numbers in Torfaen and on the spiritual and religious formation of post-16 learners.

We also welcome the references to the requirement that St Alban's Catholic High School is in need of significant levels of investment (p. 15-16). We would expect to see the continued commitment of Torfaen CBC to work with, and support, the Archdiocese to replace the current St Alban's High School with a new school building as indicated on p 16 of the Consultation

Document. We envisage that, in order to be viable, the new school would become an age 3-16 school. Our support for the current proposal for a 6<sup>th</sup> Form Centre in Torfaen requires this commitment to continue.

In addition, we feel that it is vital that there is a commitment in the final proposal to the spiritual and religious dimension of post-16 students' lives, recognising that the spiritual dimension of the human person is as important to well-being and happiness as the physical, emotional and cognitive dimensions. Currently, all post-16 students at St Alban's Catholic High School benefit from an extensive religious and spiritual provision, including a chapel, a religious education core programme and a wide range of religious, social and cultural activities.

In order to sustain this provision, we would welcome a proposal in the new 6<sup>th</sup> Form Centre to provide a 'sacred' or 'quiet' space, suitable for students of all religions and of none, for prayer, reflection and mindfulness, staffed by an appropriate 'chaplains' team.

We would also welcome a commitment to a general, core, curriculum provision that explored matters of faith and life, not least in order to break down racial and religious barriers of ignorance and prejudice. An example of this is the 'core' 'Religion and Life' programme developed by St David's Catholic 6<sup>th</sup> Form College, Cardiff, which includes such areas as 'faith, tolerance and society', 'the pursuit of happiness', 'the authentic self' and 'mindfulness'. This programme is currently used in Coleg y Cymoedd in Rhondda Cynon Taff where post-16 provision is a collaboration between Coleg y Cymoedd, St David's Catholic 6<sup>th</sup> Form College and Cardinal Newman Catholic Comprehensive School. While initially timetabled for the students of Cardinal Newman, the programme is now being accessed by many other students at Coleg y Cymoedd. If the proposal for a 6<sup>th</sup> Form Centre proceeds, we would like to work with the Local Authority and Coleg Gwent to ensure that the curriculum and pastoral support provided meets the needs of all students, regardless of their spiritual or religious standpoint.

As a partner in the provision of maintained schools in Torfaen, the Archdiocese of Cardiff would welcome further dialogue regarding the development of the post-16 proposals as well as the re-development of St Alban's Catholic School, Pontypool.

## Appendix 4



### **PROPOSALS:-**

- 1) TO CHANGE THE AGE RANGE AT CROESYCEILIOG SCHOOL, CWMBRAN HIGH SCHOOL AND ST ALBAN'S RC HIGH SCHOOL, PONTYPOOL FROM 11 - 18 TO 11 - 16.**
- 2) TO ESTABLISH A 6<sup>th</sup> FORM CENTRE TO SERVE THE WHOLE OF THE TORFAEN COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL AREA.**

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#### Response from Careers Wales

Careers Wales will support this proposal and look forward to developing our services in the revised Secondary and Further education sectors in Torfaen. Below are some comments that are related to this proposal.

- 1) The post 16 offer that will be available is Level 2 and 3 for both FE and 6<sup>th</sup> Form College. Work Based Learning providers offer engagement and Level 1 provision as well as Level 2 / 3. It seems that all levels of provision are covered for learners in Torfaen, however, recent guidance from the Welsh Government has led to clarification that any learner who has achieved the Level 2 Threshold is not eligible to enter a Level 1 course through work based learning and this has caused some challenges in progressing learners who are looking to enter the labour market. This comment is made to raise awareness of this issue with the local authority and to ensure that appropriate pathways are developed to support all levels of learners. Careers Advisers are available to support the transition arrangements.
- 2) There are two references to supporting pupils with ALN in the proposal although it isn't clear what specific facilities will be available in the new build and also at Coleg Gwent campus to better support the needs of clients with additional learning needs. New legislation and guidance will be launched over the coming years about the support required for these pupils and this seems like a good opportunity to enhance the current offer. This is likely to lead to a cost saving for social services in the longer term.

- 3) The transition support for pupils into the new 6<sup>th</sup> Form Centre will be critical and Careers Wales would welcome discussion about how we can support students through the transition and also better prepare pupils in KS4 to manage their transition.
- 4) The proposal mentions that the offer that will be available will be the same as it is currently. Careers Wales has expertise in developing and utilising Labour Market Intelligence to help students make informed decisions about their future and would welcome the opportunity to work with the Local Authority to research and develop an appropriate curriculum based on this expertise.
- 5) Pupils who do not achieve higher than C grade at GCSE can be offered a bespoke Level 2 course; does this guarantee progression to a level 3 course? Careers Wales would be able to provide next step support to support appropriate progression and future sustainability.
- 6) Over the next 3 years, Careers Wales will be increasing its digital presence and digital expertise of its staff and services. We would welcome discussions with the local authority on how we can integrate our services for students at the 6<sup>th</sup> Form College through digital media.