



Cyngor Bwrdeisdref Sirol

Blaenau Gwent

County Borough Council

Educational Provision at “The Works”

**Summary Informal Consultation Document for
Members of School Councils and the Youth Forum**

- Secondary Education in Ebbw Vale
- Post-16 Education and Training
- Primary Education Provision
 - Special Needs Provision

November 2009

1. What is this about?

- The Local Education Authority (the Council) is responsible for making sure the way our local schools are organised provides the best opportunities for all pupils and students in terms of the education they receive and the support that is available to them and their families.
- We also have to make sure that our school buildings and facilities are of a good standard and help teachers teach and pupils learn.
- Sometimes changes have to be made to the way in which schools are organised, to make sure this can continue to happen in the future, or because of new opportunities to improve the way we do things, so all pupils and students can benefit.

2. What is the informal consultation exercise for?

- When considering possible changes to schools, we have to hear the views of all people who may be affected including governors, parents, staff and other members of the community as well as pupils and students.
- An “informal consultation exercise” is an opportunity for us to discuss these possible changes, for you to ask questions and for us to hear your views.
- A document has been prepared which sets out different possibilities and the reasons why we think some changes are necessary. We also say in this document that we think we have a way forward, which will bring better opportunities for pupils and students in the future.
- We want your views on this, and other possible ways forward, which are summarised in this document. You can say you support the proposals, or you are not in favour of them, you can support different options, or bring forward your own ideas, but we will need to have your views by 17th December 2009 at the latest.

3. What does this mean for me?

- If you are a pupil at Glyncoed Comprehensive or Ebbw Vale Comprehensive School, you may be affected because we are considering creating one secondary school for the Ebbw Vale area, possibly in a new facility.
- If you are a pupil in any secondary school in Blaenau Gwent, this may affect the education you receive after the age of 16, where you receive it, the facilities available and the range of subject choices you will have.
- If you are a pupil at Waunlwyd Primary School or possibly at some other primary school in the area, this could affect you because you may move to a new school building.
- If you are a pupil at Pen-y-Cwm School, you may move to a new facility.
- If any changes are introduced, we would talk to Headteachers and school governors about the best ways to avoid any disruption to pupils at important times in their education, for example during GCSE and “A” level years.

4. When might these changes happen?

- These are just possibilities at the moment as we want to consider views before we decide what to do next.
- However, there is the possibility of some of these changes happening between 2012-2013, depending on what people's views are.
- If we undertake another formal public consultation exercise at a later stage, we would provide more information on this and a lot more detail about other issues, including how we would address any concerns raised at this stage.

5. Why are these changes being proposed?

There are a number of problems which we have to face, which we think require changes to the way in which we do things. We also think that these changes will bring better opportunities for children and young people in Blaenau Gwent, school staff and our communities.

The reasons for possible changes are: -

- The number of pupils in our schools has been reducing for some time and will continue to reduce in the future. The money schools receive is directly related to the number of pupils. Fewer pupils means a smaller school budget, a smaller school budget means less school staff and less school staff means fewer subject choices and other opportunities for pupils. This is happening at a time when Welsh Assembly Government expects us to offer more choices to pupils, not less.
- Some of our secondary and primary schools have far fewer pupils than they were built for. The financial "cake" to support your education is limited. If we keep more schools than we need, every school gets a thinner slice of the "cake", which means fewer school staff, fewer choices for pupils and less support if you have a problem.
- Our communities, like all communities, have some problems that we need to address. The decline in industry, in particular coal mining and steel production, combined with the world economic situation means that in Blaenau Gwent some people and some young people, do not feel they have a future with opportunities for them to realise their ambitions, to have employment, and to prosper and be successful.
- We want to help change this and we think the way to do it is to make the best use of all the resources we have and to ensure everyone has the chance to achieve their ambitions. This means creating more opportunities for more people, whether in traditional "academic" subjects, vocational training, or just the opportunity for people to achieve in the things they are good at such as sport, music, drama, art or any other activity you want to think of. Everyone has a skill or ability. We are all good at some things and less good at others. We want to help everyone to make the best of the skills they have.
- Some of our school buildings and facilities are a bit limited and most are not very accessible for disabled people. We want to make sure

everyone has the best opportunities and access to high-quality facilities.

- We also think there are really positive opportunities from having a number of high-quality facilities reasonably close together, creating a “learning village” and connecting these up with other activities such as leisure, recreation and the performing arts.
- We also need to make sure that the support we provide to people from different services are “joined up”, so that if you are a person or family that needs advice or support, all the different Services that are there to help can work together to make sure this happens.

6. Do we really need to change things?

- People will probably have different views on how changes should be made. Some people may not think change is necessary because things seem to be fine in their local school and they see change as bringing problems.
- However, we think that even in schools where things seem fine at the moment, there could be problems in the future because the money we receive for education is likely to be less in real terms because of fewer pupils and the world economic situation – less money, less staff, less subject choices and opportunities, etc.
- Our schools have made great progress in recent years in improving pupil’s results and some pupils achieve highly. However, in to many areas our results are below Welsh averages. We must change this.
- The Local Authority (the Council) has to make sure that every pupil, in every school has the best opportunities we can give them – to achieve, we have to make sure we make the best use of resources and spend money efficiently on teaching and learning. This requires changes to school organisation.

7. What do we want to do and why? Are there alternatives?

- We want people to tell us their views on what we think is the way forward, whether they agree or disagree and whether they have alternative suggestions.
- These possibilities are set out in our document “Educational Provision at The Works“ which you can look at – In summary, our preferred options or “best way forward” (which may change depending upon the views people express) are set out at the back of this document “The Works –options for children, young people, families and communities in Blaenau Gwent”.
- The current preferred options in summary, are for new facilities on the steelworks site including: -
- A, 3-16 school providing secondary education for the Ebbw Vale area and primary education for the Waunlwyd catchment and possibly other areas of Ebbw Vale (Primary pupils would not necessarily share the same buildings or even site as secondary pupils).

- Post – 16 education for the whole of Blaenau Gwent based at the Learning Zone including “A” level and vocational provision in partnership with Coleg Gwent and the University of Wales, Newport.
- A new facility for pupils with special needs.
- “There are alternative options set out in our other main document” including: -
- Doing nothing
- Creation of a single 11 – 16 school for the Ebbw Vale area, based on one of the existing secondary schools.
- Creating a single Blaenau Gwent Sixth form based at one of the existing secondary schools or at a new school to be built on the former steelworks site with provision of a new, but separate facility for other post – 16 and higher education provision.
- We are interested to know your views.

8. How do I express my views – and do they count?

There will be meetings with the School Councils of all our secondary schools in November, as these are the schools which are likely to be most affected by these possible changes. There will also be discussion with the Youth Forum. In addition, members of School Councils (or other pupils) can attend the meetings to be held at 6.00pm on several evenings for parents and other interested parties. Details of the dates and times of these meetings are set out in the back of this document.

As well as expressing your views at the meetings, you (and other pupils) can also write to Robert Barbour, Chief Education Officer, or you can “E” mail Lisa.coles@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk. We would ask you to discuss these proposals with your fellow pupils and other people whose opinion you value. We are expecting a lot of different views on these proposals and everyone’s views will be considered.

Don’t forget, we must have your views by the 17th December 2009.

9. What happens next?

- The Council will listen to everyone’s views and concerns and decide on what we feel is the best way forward.
- We may then undertake a “Formal consultation exercise” about more detailed changes (rather than different possibilities) and everyone would be consulted again and views considered.
- The last stage may involve a legal process giving people the opportunity to object to proposals, with a decision then being made by the Welsh Assembly Government Ministers and not the Council. The Ministers would consider everyone’s views on the possible changes and whether or not they would bring benefits for pupils and students, or not.
- We would be very surprised if everyone agrees on the best way forward.

DATE	TIME	CONSULTEES	VENUE
* Monday 16th November 2009	2.00pm	School Council Abertillery Comprehensive School	Abertillery Comprehensive School
	3.00pm	Staff Abertillery Comprehensive School	Abertillery Comprehensive School
	4.30pm	Governing Body Abertillery Comprehensive School	Abertillery Comprehensive School
	6.00pm	Parent of KS3 and KS4 pupils attending Abertillery Comprehensive School and interested parties	Abertillery Comprehensive School
* Tuesday 17th November 2009	2.00pm	School Council Glyncoed Comprehensive School (2 issues)	Glyncoed Comprehensive School
	3.00pm	Staff Glyncoed Comprehensive School	Glyncoed Comprehensive School
	4.30pm	Governing Body at Glyncoed Comprehensive School	Glyncoed Comprehensive School
	6.00pm	Parents of KS3 and KS4 pupils attending Glyncoed Comprehensive School and interested parties	Glyncoed Comprehensive School
* Wednesday 18th November 2009	2.00pm	School Council Ebbw Vale Comprehensive School (2 issues)	Ebbw Vale Comprehensive School
	3.00pm	Staff Ebbw Vale Comprehensive School	Ebbw Vale Comprehensive School
	4.30pm	Governing Body Ebbw Vale Comprehensive School	Ebbw Vale Comprehensive School
	6.00pm	Parents of KS3 and KS4 pupils attending Ebbw Vale Comprehensive School and interested parties	Ebbw Vale Comprehensive School
* Thursday 19th November 2009	2.00pm	School Council Nantyglo Comprehensive School	Nantyglo Comprehensive School
	3.40pm	Staff Nantyglo Comprehensive School	Nantyglo Comprehensive School
	5.00pm	Governing Body Nantyglo Comprehensive School	Nantyglo Comprehensive School
	6.30pm	Parents of KS3 and KS4 pupils attending Nantyglo Comprehensive School and interested parties	Nantyglo Comprehensive School

* Monday 23rd November 2009	2.00pm	School Council Brynmawr Foundation School	Brynmawr Foundation School
	3.00pm	Staff Brynmawr Foundation School	Brynmawr Foundation School
	4.30pm	Governing Body Brynmawr Foundation School	Brynmawr Foundation School
	6.00pm	Parents of KS3 and KS4 pupils attending Brynmawr Foundation School and interested parties	Brynmawr foundation School
* Tuesday 24th November 2009	2.00pm	School Council Tredegar Comprehensive School	Tredegar Comprehensive School
	3.20pm	Staff Tredegar Comprehensive School	Tredegar Comprehensive School
	4.30pm	Governing Body Tredegar Comprehensive School	Tredegar Comprehensive School
	6.00pm	Parents of KS3 and KS4 pupils attending Tredegar Comprehensive School and interested parties	Tredegar Comprehensive School
Wednesday 25th November 2009	6.00pm	Governors & parents of Abertillery, Blaentillery, Bryngwyn, Queen Street, Roseheyworth, Sofrydd and St Illtyd's Primary School	Abertillery Comprehensive School
Thursday 26th November 2009	6.00pm	Governors & parents Coed y Garn Primary and Ystruth Primary and interested parties	Ystruth Primary School
Monday 30th November	6.00pm	Governors & parents of Beaufort Hill, Garnlydan, Glyncoed, Pontygof and Rhos y Fedwen Primary Schools (2 issues)	Ebbw Vale Comprehensive School
Tuesday 1st December 2009	6.00pm	Governors & parents of Briery Hill, Cwm and Willowtown Primary Schools and All Saints R.C Primary School. (2 issues)	Ebbw Vale Comprehensive School
Wednesday 2nd	6.00pm	Governors & parents of Brynbach, Deighton,	Georgetown Primary School

December 2009

Georgetown and Glanhowy Primary Schools & St Joseph's R.C and interested parties

**Thursday 3rd
December 2009**

3.45pm

Staff Waunlwyd Primary School

Waunlwyd Primary School

5.00pm

Governors Waunlwyd Primary School

Waunlwyd Primary School

6.00pm

Parents Waunlwyd Primary School and interested parties

Waunlwyd Primary School

**Thursday 3rd
December 2009**

4.00pm

Staff Pen y Cwm Special School

Pen y Cwm Special School

5.00pm

Governors Pen y Cwm Special

Pen y Cwm Special School

6.00pm

Parents Pen y Cwm Special School and interested parties

Pen y Cwm Special School

**Thursday 3rd
December 2009**

6.00pm

Governors and parents attending Blaen y Cwm, St Mary's C.I.W. and St Mary's R.C. Primary Schools, Ysgol Gymraeg Brynmawr and interested parties

Blaen y Cwm Primary School