

Wednesday 8th May 2013

CWMCARN HIGH SCHOOL

We feel it is important you are made aware of some very serious concerns we have regarding Cwmcarn High School, the only foundation school within Caerphilly Borough. I am sure you realise the site was closed due to an identified problem with asbestos in October 2012 which was deemed to be so serious that the school was relocated to Ebbw Vale at a cost originally estimated as £1.4m.

It should be noted that there is still some debate about the dangers posed by asbestos at Cwmcarn High. The Head Teacher herself confirmed recently that the Health and Safety Executive deemed the site "uncontaminated" whilst other experts believe this is not the case. The uncertainty over this remains a contentious issue, yet decisions have been taken regardless of this uncertainty.

In April 2013 CCBC agreed on the recommendation of Council officers to spend over £1m on extensive remedial asbestos work at the school. As a result of this decision we considered submitting a judicial review. Nevertheless, as custodians of public funds we have decided that whilst we are sure we have a clear moral purpose for doing so on the grounds of proportionality, partiality and unfairness of treatment, we have decided that it is not an appropriate use of money, money which should be used for the education of our children and young people.

We consider the expense of relocating the school and providing it with favourable treatment with regard to extensive remedial site work is an inappropriate use of public funds, in an Authority where there are more than enough school places for the pupils- and indeed staff- to be relocated. Many schools have worked very hard to ensure any asbestos poses no danger and have managed budgets and their sites well, often at considerable cost and at the expense of other works which would have benefited pupils.

Following the Council decision you should be aware that a letter was sent by the Head Teacher of Cwmcarn High School talking of the school having had "significant investment", being "refurbished" and this preceding "a period of substantial growth and development for CHS." These comments are frankly outrageous. The funding is clearly intended as an emergency measure and this is now being presented as something completely different. Schools in Caerphilly are all subject to review under a twenty-first century schools rationalisation programme, which is likely to result in school closures in the Borough, and no school can guarantee its future in these circumstances. It is unethical and immoral for any school to create the impression that it can.

As a consequence of this we would like to inform you that we have today formally asked that CCBC withhold the funding to Cwmcarn High School pending an urgent review and any outcomes from the C21 schools process.



Mr John Kendall

Head Teacher

Risca Community Comprehensive School

Chair, CSHA, on behalf of:-

Mr Peter Ward

Head Teacher

Bedwas High School

Mr Ravi Pawar

Head Teacher

Blackwood Comprehensive

Mr Owain ap Dafydd

Prifathro

YG Cwm Rhymini

Ms Heather Duncan

Head Teacher

Lewis Girls' School

Mr Chris Parry

Head Teacher designate

Lewis Pengam School

Mrs Lesley Perry

Head Teacher

Newbridge School

Mr Chris David

Head Teacher

Oakdale Comprehensive School

Mr Tim Williams

Head Teacher

Pontllanfraith Comprehensive School

Mr Robert Davies

Head Teacher

Rhymney Comprehensive School

Mr Ian Kilcoyne

Head Teacher

St Cenydd Comprehensive School

Mrs Kerry Davies

Head Teacher

St Martin's School