



John Kyrle High School

& Sixth Form Centre

Headteacher: **Nigel Griffiths BA (Hons), FRSA,**
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NPJG/CAS

13th March 2018

Mr Stephen Brady, Headteacher
Mr Paul Weiss, Chair of Governors
Dene Magna High School
Mitcheldean, Gloucestershire GL17 0DU

Dear Mr Brady and Mr Weiss

Response to consultation

Thank you for the information regarding your proposal to offer A-level provision in Gloucester College from September 2019. While we have yet to see any further details on this, we have several questions which we intend to raise over time with you and other partners.

The opportunity to contribute to the consultation is appreciated. Notwithstanding any future decisions, we enjoy very positive relationships with Dene Magna and trust these will continue.

Our concerns will be shared transparently. Like you, we want to deliver what is in the best interests of young people in the locality. It would be naïve and hypocritical not to raise issues of staff and institutional self-interest. Indeed, aspects of cost effectiveness in this era of reducing budgets must be at the centre of discussions.

It appears you are becoming a de-facto 11-19 organisation. As far as we are aware, you have not gone through any process of redesignation. This would have involved a high level of due diligence, the sort we are expecting given this recent proposal. This issue will be raised directly with the Regional Schools Commissioners in your region and ours. We will also be sharing thoughts and questions with Sir David Carter's office, Local Authorities and MPs.

As you and trustees are aware, John Kyrle High School is consistently graded as 'Outstanding' by Ofsted for our sixth-form provision, including as recently as March 2017. How convinced are you and trustees that you can offer high-quality examination outcomes even close to ours and some other local providers? You have no experience of A-level provision at a time of rising examination demands and huge curricular changes.



We are about to share with the community that we are, once again, in the top 10% of A-level providers nationally. Our students from Dene Magna and the wider Forest of Dean area were part of this successful group and have moved on to higher education, including Russell Group universities or employment/apprenticeships and training. This will be a matter for the Department for Education but we will argue there is high-quality, high-choice, long-established A level provision already in the area. Transport links are popular and sustainable.

Further replicated A-level provision, at least in the manner proposed here, will only serve to dilute provision locally. This could lead to less choice and the possibility of redundancies in other schools. We are also unsure of the realism of 100 students per annum target you have set, and how viable this is for breadth of A-level choices. This will be a matter for us all to discuss with other providers and the Education & Skills Funding Agency.

It is of concern that Gloucestershire College leaders were not themselves involved in your consultation letter. Was the proposal as you have now outlined part of any initial consultation by Gloucestershire College on the setting up of the new provision? If this formed part of any funding agreement, we will want this to be looked at. We will, of course, be speaking to Gloucester College leaders. We do not know of any other similar arrangement to the one proposed by you and would like to look at any which may exist. Are you offering some sort of a franchise? Who is in charge? Who is accountable? If it is Dene Magna, as is alluded, then you are becoming an 11-19 organisation and should go through different channels. If the college is in charge, as they are providing the site and possibly staff funding, including for transport requirements, training, resources, and are the exam centre, we have further questions for them.

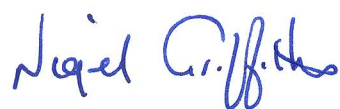
The consultation is late. You have less than four terms to set up A-level provision, if given the go-ahead. This is insufficient time for you or us. Draft budgets should be set for next year, as should staffing plans. This is to say nothing about complex programmes of study, schemes of work, syllabi and requisite staff training. This all seems, to us at least, very 11th hour and piecemeal. Others may have similar or differing views and this is, of course, why you are consulting and we will also be seeking the opinion of others.

While we understand many headteachers would like to run post-16 education, and believe it has always been an aim of your leadership, the landscape has changed markedly. A proposal which will only dilute funding and provision in the wider area, and one with no track record of standards or value for money is, in our opinion, not a wise move.

Thank you once again for your offer to comment. You will hopefully understand our genuine concerns. We will, at this stage, object strongly but openly.

Our trustees have commissioned an external consultant to look into this matter further and liaise with interested parties.

Yours sincerely



Nigel Griffiths
Headteacher



Denise Strutt
Chair of Trustees