

SJB/JRu
18 July 2018

Mr N Griffiths & Ms D Strutt
Headteacher and Chair of Trustees
John Kyrle High School & Sixth Form
Ledbury Road
Ross on Wye
Herefordshire HR9 7ET

Dear Mr Griffiths and Ms Strutt

Proposal to increase the age range of students taught at Dene Magna School by adding a sixth form and teaching A-level to students in the new campus in the Northern Quarter.

Thank you for your detailed response to our consultation. A key feature of your response centres on the physical building and questions regarding funding and resources. As with our previous correspondence to you, this proposal is different as the actual college building is nearly complete and will open for Vocational Provision in September 2018.

Funding for this college can be fully traced through press releases from Gloucestershire College and I would like to point out that there have been no additional costs due to Dene Magna's involvement. If you read these press releases on our website you will also see how Dene Magna has always been involved in the development of the new college.

It is worth pointing out that, as we have stated before, there has been no historical challenge from John Kyrle High School to the building of the new college in Cinderford. The college, which is part of a proposed £100 million regeneration scheme for the Forest of Dean, has always been designed to deliver both vocational studies and A-Levels. This college development has passed through ministerial approval to secure funding and to be built. It has also been the subject of some very high profile stories during the planning phase and we are left to wonder why John Kyrle High School did not, at any point, challenge this? Surely there must have been the same threat to numbers during that phase of planning? It has been well documented that Dene Magna School was always going to work with Gloucestershire College to provide A-Level provision and yet it is only now, at the end of the consultation period, that these challenges have been raised.

In order to secure ministerial approval, a business case would have been submitted for sign off, answering the questions raised with respect to demand, location, funding so there is a level of mystery as to why the challenge has only now surfaced when this development has been such a high profile story in the area.

Hopefully, some of your other questions can be answered in this response:

1. The projected impact on numbers at John Kyrle High School

With the college nearing completion, it has clearly been agreed that there needs to be high quality A-Level provision in the central Forest of Dean. Our part in this is to ensure there is a

continuation in this provision and we feel strongly that whilst you rightly point out that there may be an impact on numbers at John Kyrle High School, we are sure that this new college will reach students from further afield in the Forest of Dean and not just our immediate area. Letters of support from Forest of Dean Headteachers confirm that there is a demand for this. The central Forest of Dean covers an area of over 110 sq. miles and there is currently no provision for A-Levels in that area (this hopefully addresses your feelings that the central Forest of Dean is well served by Post-16 providers).

It is interesting to note that one of our letters of support came from Wyedean School, who see this as an opportunity to work in partnership to ensure that learners in the Forest of Dean genuinely have access to the best provision on their doorstep. We have also been in dialogue with Newent School, who have made it clear that such is the strength of our partnership work with them, they stated that they will not raise an objection to the project.

2. The new Sixth Form not being viable

Our own research, and that of Gloucestershire College, shows that we believe there will be demand for this. You raise the question of outcomes in the Forest of Dean as a means for exercising caution on numbers. We see the potential in the growing number of students who will achieve a grade 5+ in schools where intensive school improvement is paying off. Rather than being a gamble, this is an act of faith in the raising of aspirations and outcomes by our central Forest of Dean peers. If you take into account the rising number of students projected to achieve grades that will enable them to take up A-Level places and the accessible location of the new college, we feel this makes our proposal more sustainable in the future.

With the backing of the County Council, MP, Forest Economic Partnership, District Council and local employers and parents, we feel that together, we can make this thrive.

It is only right to set the record straight regarding the decision of Gloucestershire College to cease their A-Level provision. As we have stated, they operate across a number of sites in Gloucestershire. Staff are employed on central contracts and their base is Cheltenham. They have cited the issue of competition for places and a drop in learners with Cheltenham being the key reason. Their decision to cease A-Levels across all three sites meant that they would no longer be the provider of A-Level teaching in the new college.

3. Question regarding PAN being set at 250

Our projected PAN is over 125 in Y12 and, therefore, 250 in the Sixth Form.

4. Questions over journey times for students and disadvantaged students

As the Forest of Dean is a large area, there are students living in areas that require 2 hours on public transport to get to providers. You will know how poor transport links are and will, of course, understand that this barrier can often lead to disadvantaged students not taking up appropriate Post-16 courses. Evidence of this comes from our analysis of Social Mobility Index Data (2017) which shows how few disadvantaged students move on to achieve 2 or more A-Levels by the age of 19 in the Forest of Dean (26.21%). The number of these students who go on to Higher Education at age 19 drops to 12% and only 2.33% of these enter a selective university at age 19. When you factor the poor access some of these students have to transport and nearby providers, it becomes a clear focus of our vision to engage these students and help them reach their potential.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/social-mobility-index-2017-data>

5. Staff training and timetabling

We have produced a very simple timetable that incorporates a later start and finish. This will allow staff and students ample time to make the 7 minute drive between sites. We always focus our priorities on managing the workload of staff and they have been actively involved in their own CPD regarding A-Level teaching. Student well-being and safeguarding will be well led as there will be Dene Magna staff on site (including an onsite DSL) to look after the welfare of the students. They will report to us as part of our wider monitoring and support systems.

6. Governance

There will be a management board involving representatives from other central Forest of Dean schools, Gloucestershire College and local businesses/parents. This board will meet to look at progress and standards and will report to the Governing Body at Dene Magna School.

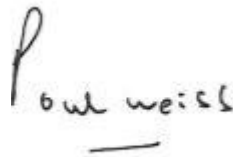
External support/guidance will come from Christopher Healy and we will utilise our contacts as a Teaching School to continue our development over time.

In conclusion, we appreciate your concerns as a single school, but we urge you to look at the vast number of positive responses we have had and to see how this project is of vital strategic importance to the regeneration of the Forest of Dean.

Yours sincerely



Stephen Brady
Headteacher



Paul Weiss
Chair of Governors