

ABERDARE BOYS' COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL  
NOTES FOR RETENTION OF COUNTY PHASE-IN PERIOD OF 3 YEARS.

In the Governors' Meeting on Tuesday, October 31st, I was asked for my opinion of an accelerated phase-in to make the Boys' Comprehensive School a single sex unit in 1979. I replied that I was totally opposed to any such project.

I would now like to amplify some of the objections I made to such an accelerated scheme: -

(i) The County on several occasions gave a pledge to the parents, teaching Unions and other organisations that the phase-in period would extend over three years. I was a member of two deputations from a local organisation to County Hall when this pledge was given. The assurances given helped win a belated acceptance of the scheme from those to whom they were addressed. Indeed, as far as a merger of a social priority school such as Rhydywaun with the Boys' Grammar School was concerned, it was the most attractive feature of the three site scheme, as this pattern of re-organisation was considered to present a greater difficulty.

An element of stability dependent upon the gradualness of transition is highly important here because many of the children in the Upper forms at Rhydywaun come from socially disadvantaged backgrounds. Such children need the security and continuity of personal relationship within a school.

There have been no changes of situation since the County gave its assurance on the matter of the phase-in period, and I find it surprising, therefore, that any re-consideration need be made.

(ii) The present phase-in programme is working well. Boys from Gadlys and Rhydywaun have been fully assimilated with former Grammar School boys into Form 2 at the Upper Comprehensive. However, age difference is of considerable importance. These children were separated after Primary School education by only one year. Such ease of assimilation would not be as possible with years 4 and 5, and it is worth stressing here that Rhydywaun is basically a Community School which is better phased out gradually as by the County's decision. Those children who will be entering Forms 4 and 5 in Rhydywaun in 1979 have clearly indicated that they want to spend the last two years of their Secondary education there. This is understandable when one considers that most of them have grown up together through Infant, Primary and Secondary stages of education. They also realise, that transfer at such a late stage to enter another school can appreciably and adversely affect their educational prospects. Moreover, the parents of those children who will be engaged on 'O' level/C.S.E. Courses at this stage have expressed concern that there should be no disturbance such as transfer which might badly affect their examination chances.

The extent of disturbance may be measured by the fact that boys from Gadlys and girls from Rhydywaun would leave known teachers for those who would be, for the most part be total strangers to them. The County stated that no such disturbance would be contemplated after September 5th, 1978, the date of Secondary Re-organisation in Aberdare.

(iii) The staff of Aberdare Boys' Comprehensive School also overwhelmingly oppose the shortening of the transition period. There would be no marked reduction in commuting and although the distances involved range from 1½ to 2 miles, the staff are more concerned about the continuing smoothness of transition than about any marginal personal convenience. They fully realise that the social priority element contained in the Rhydywaun situation needs special treatment.

- (iv) There has already been a considerable re-arrangement in Form 2 in 1978 to secure integration. Many parents are understandably concerned that there should be no more re-arrangement and that the school should be allowed to settle over its graded phase-in period. They emphasise that they do not want their children disturbed in the critical examinations' years of 4/5.

The commendable record of success at C.S.E. at Rhydywaun could be in jeopardy if it is proposed to disperse the children of Forms 4 and 5 from there and Gadlys to a different site and to different teachers. I draw special attention to the existing difficulty of inducing children in deprived areas to sit C.S.E. This is clearly recognised by the Director's recent statement on examination results in Mid-Glamorgan. Up-rooting pupils from a 'deprived area' school gives a marked disincentive to enter examinations they were previously persuaded to enter.

I can imagine the outcry if, for example, it were proposed to move the 'O' Level Grammar School Form in its 4th or 5th years. The children of former Secondary Modern Schools, who are not in the main, academic "high-fliers", have a right to see their prospects of success protected not jeopardised in their crucial years. Moreover, the Upper School cannot offer pupils any more than they would expect to be taking if they continued in their present school where the ground work for C.S.E. has already been started in Form 3.

- (v) Truancy is always a problem in a social priority school and I would expect it to increase for many Senior pupils at Rhydywaun, if bussing to school became necessary.
- (vi) Transport presents a problem now and this problem will be aggravated by a further movement of children.
- (vii) The advantage of breaking up a social priority school, will, in part, be negated by re-uniting the boys and girls on other sites. At present, the boys in Form 2 in the Upper School are subject to the considerable academic motivation of others in the same school, because they are very much in the minority. This should work to their good.

#### Summary.

(a) I consider the case for the retention of the three year phase-in period to be overwhelming. Parents have accepted the County's assurance that the phase-in period will be as promised. I have re-assured some of them on this score when they have expressed pleasure at the present smoothness with which integration is taking place, but seek assurance that no further changes are contemplated for the next few years.

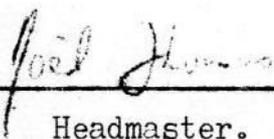
(b) For social reasons, gradualness is essential because of the special problems attached to a school like Rhydywaun.

(c) The children of Rhydywaun's senior forms stress that they do not wish to be moved for their last two years at school.

(d) To transfer pupils in their 4th and 5th year of examination work would seem to me highly undesirable educationally. Many of the pupils would be given to teachers whom they would not know and who would not know them.

In view of the doubt and uncertainty now felt by teachers, parents and pupils, I would like to County to re-affirm its assurance that the phasing-in period of 3 years be retained.

Signed

  
Headmaster.

November, 1978