UCAC
Undeb Cenedlaethol Athrawon Cymru
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12.02.2010

Annwyl Weinidog / Dear Minister,

Parthed/Re: Cynnig i newid categori Ysgol Uwchradd Eglwys Newydd / Whitchurch High School proposal for change of category

ENGLISH VERSION FOLLOWS

Mae Undeb Cenedlaethol Athrawon Cymru (UCAC) yn ymateb i'r Hysbysiad Cyhoeddus gan gorff llywodraethu Ysgol Uwchradd Eglwys Newydd ar 18 Ionawr 2010, sy'n gwneud cynnig i newid statws yr ysgol o Ysgol Gymunedol i Ysgol Sylfaen o 1 Medi 2010.

1. Mae UCAC yn credu'n gryf y dylai ysgolion bod o dan reolaeth Awdurdodau Lleol. Credwn mai dyma'r trefniant gorau o safbwynt ysgolion, staff, dysgwyr a llywodraethwyr, am y rhesymau canlynol:

   - **Rheolaeth Ddemocrataidd dros sefydliadau addysg**

     Cred UCAC bod buddiannau hirdymor sefydliadau addysg yn cael eu gwarchod orau pan maent o dan y math o reolaeth ddemocrataidd a gynrychiolir gan Awdurdod Lleol, sy'n atebol i etholaeth gyfan, ac yn y pen draw i'r Llywodraeth

   - **Cynllunio Addysg Awdurdod-gyfan a Thraws-Ffiniol**

     Mae angen i gynllunio addysgol gymryd i ystyriaeth anghenion dysgwyr ar draws y ddinas gyfan; rhaid rhannu adnoddau'n deg, a lleoli ysgolion yn synhwyrol; yr unig ffordd o wneud hynny yw i ysgolion fod o dan reolaeth Awdurdod Lleol, ac i'r Awdurdod gynllunio dros ei hardal gyfan, ac ar gyfer ei holl ddysgwyr

     Bydd Statws Sylfaen yn creu anawsterau ar gyfer ymgyrraedd at ofynion statudol y Mesur Dysgu a Sgiliau (2009) a fydd yn gofyn am elfen o gydweithio rhwng sefydliadau addysg, o fewn yr Awdurdod a dros ffiniau Awdurdodau i sicrhau cymaint â phosib o ddewisiadau addysgol i ddysgwyr 14-19 mlwydd oed

   - **Gwasanaethau Proffesiynol**

     Mae Awdurdodau Lleol yn darparu cefnogaeth broffesiynol i athrawon trwy eu gwasanaethau ymgynghorol, ac yn hwyluso cyfathrebu rhwng arbenigwr pwnc ar draws ysgolion; mae hyn yn hybu datblygiad proffesiynol ac yn dylanwadu'n bositif ar safonau addysgol

     Ymhellach, fel cyflogwyr mae Awdurdodau Lleol yn ganolbwynt arbenigedd ar faterion cyflogaeth sy'n anodd iawn ei ail-greu ar lefel ysgol unigol; bydd y llwyth gwaith a chyfrifoldeb ar lywodraethwyr mewn ysgol Statws Sylfaen yn sylweddol drymach; er bod y Corff Llywodraethu presennol mewn safle o gryfder, ac yn mwynhau lefel uchel o arbenigedd, ni ellir gwarantu sefyllfa o'r fath ar gyfer y dyfodol tymor hir

2. Credwn nad yw manteision Statws Sylfaen mor gryf ag y maent yn ymddangos ar yr olwg gyntaf:

   - **Rheolaeth dros fynediad**

     Nid yw UCAC yn gweld yr angen am reolaeth ysgol unigol dros ei pholisi mynediad; fel undeb, rydym yn gwrthwynebu mynediad dewisol; er bod yr Hysbysiad Cyhoeddus yn datgan '*It is not proposed that the admission arrangements will make any provision for selection by aptitude, or for pupil banding*', rydym yn pryderu i weld ateb y Corff Llywodraethol i'r cwestiwn isod oddi wrth undebau'r athrawon:

     Q11: A fyddai'r ysgol yn parhau i fod yn un cynhwysol neu a fyddai'r meini prawf ar gyfer mynediad yn cael eu newid i fod yn ddewisol?

     Ateb: Byddai'r llywodraethwyr yn rheoli'r meini prawf mynediad, felly mi allai'r naill opsiwn neu'r llall ddod yn realiti.

   - **Cyflogi staff:**

     Nodwn ddatganiad y Corff Llywodraethu y bydd "gan y Corff Llywodraethu rhagor o gyfrifoldeb dros faterion megis cyflogaeth a iechyd a diogelwch" a phwysleisiwn y lefel o gyfrifoldeb sydd ymhlyg wrth hyn, y lefel o arbenigedd sydd ei hangen, a'r amser bydd angen ei dreulio – gan wirfoddolwyr – ar y materion hyn

     Yn ychwanegol, nid ydym yn cydweld â'r Corff Llywodraethol o ran eu rhagdybiaethau am ddiswyddiadau posib. Rydym yn derbyn ei bod hi'n debygol y bydd cwtogi ar y nifer o swyddi yn y gweithlu addysg yn y ddinas o ganlyniad i ailstrwythuro; serch hynny, os yw ysgolion yn aros o fewn system gynllunio'r Awdurdod Lleol, mae modd cadw'r niferoedd mor fach â phosib, ac mae modd manteisio ar gyfleoedd i ailgyflogi staff mewn lleoliadau eraill. Mae diogelu un ysgol mewn modd artiffisial yn creu sgil-effeithiau llawer mwy niweidiol ar gyfer ysgolion eraill o fewn yr Awdurdod, ac mi fyddai hynny'n andwyol i forâl staff ac i safonau addysgiadol

3. I gloi, mae Statws Sylfaen yn tueddu i ynysu a phellhau ysgol oddi wrth (a) ysgolion a staff addysgu eraill yn yr ardal (b) yr Awdurdod Lleol a'r gwasanaethau a'r gefnogaeth mae'n gallu cynnig (c) Llywodraeth y Cynulliad.

   Tra'i bod hi'n berffaith bosib bod Statws Sylfaen yn cynyddu annibyniaeth a lefel rheolaeth y Corff Llywodraethu, ar yr un pryd, ac yn anorfod, mae'n gosod baich cyfrifoldeb a llwyth gwaith llawer fwy ar ysgwyddau'r gwirfoddolwyr hynny sy'n aelodau o'r Corff Llywodraethu.

   Rydym yn deall mai Cynlluniau Trefniadaeth Ysgolion Cyngor Caerdydd sy'n gyrru'r galw am Statws Sylfaen yn Ysgol Uwchradd Eglwys Newydd. Nid yw UCAC wedi datgan barn am y cynlluniau hynny, ond rydym wedi pwyso ar Gorff Llywodraethu Ysgol Uwchradd Eglwys Newydd i ddechrau deialog adeiladol gyda Chyngor Caerdydd ar unrhyw agweddau o'r cynlluniau hynny sy'n achosi pryder.

Am y rhesymau a amlinellwyd uchod, mae UCAC yn credu'n gryf y byddai Ysgol Uwchradd Eglwys Newydd yn gallu cyflawni ei hamcanion o "ddiogelu a gwella cyfleoedd addysgiadol" a "chefnogi staff i ddatblygu cyfleoedd dysgu ac addysgu yn yr ysgol" cymaint yn well drwy barhau o fewn strwythurau cynllunio a rheoli'r Awdurdod Lleol.

Rydym yn eich cymell i sicrhau fod Ysgol Eglwys Newydd yn parhau'n a'i statws fel Ysgol Cymunedol – er budd dysgwyr Caerdydd, ei hathrawon, llywodraethwyr y dyfodol yn Ysgol Uwchradd Eglwys Newydd, ac er budd system addysg Caerdydd yn ei chyfanrwydd.

This letter is Undeb Cenedlaethol Athrawon Cymru (UCAC)'s response to Whitchurch High School Governing Body's Public Notice, of 18 January 2010, proposing a change of category, from Community School to Foundation School, as of 1 September 2010.

1. UCAC is strongly in favour of schools being, and remaining, under Local Authority control. We believe that this is the best arrangement from the point of view of schools, staff, learners and governors, for the following reasons:

   - **Democratic control of educational institutions**

     UCAC believes that it is in the best long-term interests of education institutions to be under the kind of broad democratic control represented by a Local Authority, which is accountable to the whole of the electorate, and eventually to the Government

   - **Authority-wide and Cross-border planning of education provision**

     Education planning needs to take into account the needs of all learners across the city; resources need to be distributed equitably and schools need to be located sensibly; the only way to achieve that is for schools to be under Local Authority control and for the Local Authority to plan across the whole of its area, for all of its learners

     Foundation Status will place barriers in the way of achieving the statutory aims of the Learning and Skills Measure (2009) which require a degree of co-working with other institutions, both within a Local Authority and across Local Authority borders to maximise educational opportunities for 14-19 year olds

   - **Professional support services**

     Local Authorities are able to provide support to teachers via their advisory services, and to facilitate contact between subject specialists across a range of schools which enhance professional development and have positive ramifications for educational standards

     Furthermore, Local Authorities as employers provide a central point of expertise on employment issues which is difficult to replicate at single-school level; the burden on governors is substantially increased under Foundation Status; whilst the current Governing Body may be in a position of strength, and may currently enjoy a high level of expertise, this situation cannot be guaranteed for the long-term future

2. Furthermore, we believe that the stated benefits of Foundation Status are not as convincing as they might appear:

   - **Control over admissions**

     UCAC does not see any need for a school to control its own admissions; as a union we are entirely opposed to selective admissions; although the Public Notice states that 'It is not proposed that the admission arrangements will make any provision for selection by aptitude, or for pupil banding', we are concerned to see the Governing Body's answer in response to the following question from the teaching unions:

     > **Q11:** Would the school continue to be an inclusive school or would admission criteria be set to become a selective one?
     >
     > **Answer:** The governors would control the admissions criteria, so either situation could develop.

- **Employment of staff:**

  We note the Governing Body's own statement that "there would be a greater responsibility for the governing body in matters such as employment and health and safety" and emphasise the level of responsibility that this represents, the level of expertise necessary, and the amount of time that will need to spent – by volunteers – on these matters.

  Furthermore, we are not convinced by the large numbers quoted by the Governing Body in terms of potential job losses. We acknowledge that Authority-wide there are likely to be job losses from the school workforce as a result of reorganisation; however if all schools remain within the Local Authority planning system, those numbers can be minimised, and redeployment opportunities within the Authority can be maximised. Artificially protecting one school will have damaging knock-on effects on other schools within the Authority, which would be anything but beneficial for staff morale or educational standards.

3. To conclude, Foundation Status has a tendency to isolate and distance a school from (a) other schools and teaching staff in the area (b) the Local Authority and the services and support that it can provide (c) the Welsh Assembly Government.

   Whilst Foundation Status may increase the level of autonomy and control of the governing body, it inevitably places greater responsibility and a far greater burden of work on those volunteers who make up the governing body.

   We understand that one of the principal reasons for the drive towards Foundation Status is discontent with Cardiff Council's current School Organisation Proposals. UCAC has no stated view on Cardiff's proposals, but have urged Whitchurch High School's Governing Body to engage constructively with Cardiff Council on any aspects of the proposals over which it has reservations and concerns.

For all of the above reasons, UCAC strongly believes that Whitchurch High School would be better placed to achieve its stated aims of 'protecting and improving the educational opportunities' and 'supporting staff in developing teaching and learning opportunities' at the school by remaining within the current Local Authority structures.

We strongly urge you to ensure that Whitchurch High School continues as a Community School – for the benefit of Cardiff's learners, its teachers, Whitchurch High School's future governors, and for the benefit of the education system in Cardiff as a whole.

Yn gywir / Yours faithfully,

Elaine Edwards.

Elaine Edwards
Ysgrifennydd Cyffredinol / General Secretary