

## **Sixth Form Consultation: Frequently Asked Questions**

### ***Is this decision being made too quickly and has it been properly thought through?***

- The future of Post 16 due to the sustained fall student numbers has been discussed by the Governing Board for several years.
- Over the past three years, we have made a concerted effort to increase Sixth Form enrolment by dedicating time and resources to various initiatives. These efforts have included enhanced marketing, visits to local schools, taster days, an open evening, and expanding our curriculum offerings at Key Stage 5. Despite these measures, we have not achieved the desired impact in terms of numbers.
- The College has undertaken a needs assessment and impact analysis which has shown that there is insufficient demand for a Post16 provision at CVCC. We only retain a small percentage of our own student cohort (14% this year) and recruit only a handful of external students. Closing the Sixth Form does not limit students' opportunities to make good academic progress or limit their future opportunities, and whilst we accept that we offer a high quality provision and smaller more nurturing environment for those who may not succeed at a large College there are nonetheless plenty of other Post 16 options in the local area, including other school Sixth Forms. More details on this can be found in the Impact Assessment document on the website.
- There has been a financial review to understand the cost implications of retaining the provision and of closing it down. Whilst initially there will be some loss of income this is about the long term financial sustainability of the whole school provision and it is undoubtedly the case that the Sixth Form is significantly subsidised by Years 7 to 11.
- The timescales we are now following are in line with the Statutory process we must follow. Our aim in proposing a 'phased closure' is to provide assurance to those students who have already opted to attend in Sept 2024 whilst also providing plenty of time for those students who will be exploring Post 16 options from Sept 2025 to explore their options fully.

### ***Is this short sighted considering the amount of house building taking place in the local area?***

- No, the issue isn't a lack of potential students in the local area. We currently have 180 students in our Year 11, yet only a small percentage choose to stay on for Post-16 education. While we do attract students from local schools, the problem isn't the size of the pool but rather students' choices. They opt not to continue at our Sixth Form for reasons outside of our control, despite the local demand.

***Are we sure numbers won't increase now the College is oversubscribed and has recently been graded 'Good' by OFSTED?***

- The College has always had a strong local reputation, but Post-16 numbers have remained unsustainably low for years, as detailed in the consultation document. We have no evidence suggesting a future increase in numbers. Exit interviews with Year 11 students indicate that they are drawn to other local providers because the location may be more accessible, offer a broader range of courses, or offer more enrichment opportunities as well as the chance to socialise more widely.

***Has there been enough marketing of Post 16, many people did not know it existed?***

- Yes, within the constraints of how much money we can commit of our school funds which should be targeted on improving the quality of education for all our students, not on marketing. We cannot compete with the marketing power of some other local providers.
- The Sixth Form is publicised and celebrated in our College communications to all stakeholders, we have a prospectus, it is on the website, we hold an open evening, attend Post 16 evenings and deliver assemblies at other local schools.

***Some parents have selected CVCC because it has a Sixth Form, will losing the sixth form reduce pupil numbers lower down the school and impact funding?***

- We understand that the loss of the Sixth Form might influence some parents' decisions. However, since we retain only a small percentage of our Year 11 cohort, it's unlikely to be a major factor in parental choice. By focusing our limited resources on improving the quality of education and opportunities available for the majority of our students we aim to enhance their experience and outcomes. This will be key to ensuring we retain our good reputation in the local area and continue to be over subscribed. In September 2024 the College had 406 applications for 180 places, 199 of which were first preference.

***Could you have tried harder to find a way to keep the sixth form open? Is there anything parents/carers of current students can do to ensure this provision remains at the College?***

- We have for many years subsidised our Post 16 provision because we value it. However, we do not believe we will be able to increase student numbers to the point whereby it will be financially viable. Despite parents' support, we have been unable to change students' preferences, as reflected in the low numbers. Unfortunately, there is little that parents or carers can do at this stage to alter this outcome.

***If this was financially viable would the College want to retain the Sixth Form?***

- Absolutely. We view the potential loss of the Sixth Form as a significant blow to both the College and the local community. The decision to propose its closure was made after careful consideration. We recognize that having a Sixth Form is attractive to prospective students and their families, and it plays a key role in recruiting and retaining high-quality teachers. While this would be a significant loss, we believe the decision will allow us to focus on enhancing the quality of education for our 11-16 students and ensure the College's long-term financial stability. The College has thrived in recent

years, with a distinctive culture and ethos that promotes a safe and happy learning environment. Our responsibility is not only to preserve this but also to build upon it for the future.

***Could you operate a hybrid model whereby the smaller classes were partially funded by parental contributions or sponsorship from local businesses?***

- While schools and colleges request parental contributions, this approach does not align with our ethos and values. As a mainstream academy committed to inclusive education, our priority is to ensure that education remains accessible to all students, regardless of financial circumstances. Introducing a fee-paying element would risk creating inequities and would contradict the ethos of inclusivity that underpins our approach. Additionally, relying on parental contributions or sponsorship is not guaranteed income and we cannot operate with this level of uncertainty when making significant financial commitments such as staffing a KS5 curriculum. As a state-funded school, moving to a hybrid model, even partially for Post-16, could also present challenges related to our funding agreement.

***Would joining a Multi Academy Trust reduce financial pressures enough to keep the Post-16 provision?***

- Joining a MAT could offer financial benefits, including access to economies of scale, centralized services that reduce administrative costs, and better access to resources and additional funding streams. However, a MAT would likely be reluctant to take on a school with a struggling sixth form, as this could pose a financial risk to the Trust and potentially compromise the effective allocation of resources across its schools.

***Has collaboration with other Post-16 providers, including the use of digital technology for remote learning across sites, been explored?***

- *Yes, this has been considered, but there are significant challenges. Firstly, there is little incentive for other local providers to support our efforts to retain a Sixth Form; in fact, it could benefit them if we no longer offer post-16 provision, as they may be able to attract more students from our school. Secondly, every local provider offers different courses. Recently, we explored collaborating with another Sixth Form when a last minute staffing change prevented us from offering a specific course. However, we couldn't find a local provider offering the same qualification. Even if we had, coordinating timetables across different schools or colleges to accommodate a shared course would have been highly impractical and would not have provided students with a high-quality teaching experience.*