



# Cymdeithas Prifathrawon Uwchradd Dinas Caerdydd Cardiff Conference of Secondary Headteachers

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Nick Batchelar  
Director of Education and Lifelong Learning  
Cardiff Council  
County Hall  
Atlantic Wharf  
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CF10 4UW

5<sup>th</sup> September 2017

Dear Nick,

## **Re: Proposal to shorten summer holidays**

Further to a letter written by Stephen Jones to Neil Hardee on 5<sup>th</sup> July 2017, I write to formally express concerns on behalf of the secondary conference regarding the council's proposal to shorten the summer holidays.

News coverage of the proposal suggested that some 73% of school leaders in Cardiff supported the view. However, as a conference of secondary schools in the city we are concerned that this is both misleading and, if the proposal is taken forward, potentially very damaging to the outcomes of young people within the city and the performance of schools.

It is increasingly apparent that teachers within Cardiff are spending more of their own free time, during half term breaks; Easter holidays and, in some schools, weekends to help prepare students for examinations. However, by proposing to move a week from the summer holidays to either Easter; one of the half term breaks; or Christmas will reduce the teaching time available to schools in Cardiff which will make it more challenging for students to achieve the best possible outcomes.

At various forums officers, heads and representatives of wider stakeholder groups have shared their concern regarding the level of sickness and absence of school staff across the city. Increasingly this is closely linked to stress and anxiety as pressure is placed on them to 'deliver'. As headteachers, we recognise the need to hold staff to account for performance but the suggestion of reducing the time available for schools in Cardiff to deliver curriculums at GCSE and AS/A2 level may potentially further the anxiety and stress of teachers in our school. This, in turn, could lead to a backwards step in our journey towards achieving the Cardiff 2020 commitment.

I recognise that many primary school colleagues may support the view of a shortened holiday and my writing is to you is not designed to undermine their views as key stakeholders. However, I ask that you, as Director of Education, share the educational challenges with councillors of such a proposal would have on the young people and staff who work in our secondary schools. It is our view that such a proposal would increase the challenge of Cardiff's schools on further raising standards, while potentially, create a risk of our schools falling behind neighbouring authorities who have more time to deliver curriculums. As a conference, we do not want this to happen and I am certain this is a view shared by the city.

I am more than happy to discuss the matter further with you should you require.

Yours sincerely,

Marc Belli  
Chair