October 2018

**Proposal to Close Sixth Form Provision at University Academy Keighley**

I refer to the above proposal to close sixth form provision at the school. The school has made the decision to discontinue sixth form provision for a number of reasons:

**Breadth of Provision**:  For a school to be able to offer a meaningful breadth of provision in sixth form, it needs a threshold number of students.  This is usually around 200 students. Due to the small numbers of students in Year 11 over recent years, the numbers of total students within sixth form have been well below this threshold level and as such has not been able to offer proper breadth of provision. Total numbers within Year 11 this year and also in following years is lower than has been found historically, so there is little prospect of numbers in sixth form increasing to meaningful levels.

**Sixth Form Strategic Direction within Bradford Local Authority:** A recent sixth form review conducted by Bradford Local Authority made the recommendation that schools should discontinue sixth form provision. Instead, they should seek to forge strong links with specialist sixth form providers who could offer greater specialist knowledge, as well as having a more cost efficient structure to be able to support the reduced funding for sixth form students.  As a result of this report, several new specialist sixth form providers have come into the city to make up for the anticipated loss of school sixth forms – which has already happened at several schools.

**Quality of Provision**: Teaching courses within sixth form, notably Advanced level courses, requires a great deal of specialist knowledge and expertise. Learning this specialist knowledge and expertise, especially at a time of significant curriculum redevelopment, takes a great deal of effort and energy and often detracts from a teacher’s ability to develop their teaching for GCSE courses. Therefore the discontinuation of sixth form at UAK will help eliminate this ‘opportunity cost’ for teachers and enable them more time to improve their teaching at GCSE, which will have a positive impact on many more students.

**Financial Efficiencies:** All schools nationally have and will be facing challenging financial circumstances in at least the medium term, primarily due to a significant rise in costs over several operational areas. Within this context, the school has to make efficiencies to ensure it can continue to operate as a financial going concern.  With its smaller class numbers and lower relative funding, sixth form provision is far more expensive in relative terms than Years 7-11, so discontinuing KS5 provision will help safeguard funding and quality of provision in key stages 3 and 4.

Should the sixth form be closed at UAK, the school will continue to offer advice and guidance to ensure students have access to the best and most appropriate progression pathways available to them.  This will include speakers from local sixth form providers, impartial and comprehensive careers advice and visits to further and higher education establishments.

This consultation will close on Friday, 30th November 2018, and we invite your comments on our proposals, by email to [jdn@uak.email](mailto:jdn@uak.email)

Yours sincerely

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