



PRESS RELEASE

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Government Response to GTA Statement

HM Government of Gibraltar fully respects the views of those 47 teachers from Westside School, who expressed their views in a statement issued by the GTA Executive on Sunday.

The Government would like to make clear that there is no blanket ban on the use of schools, or any other Government premises, by representative organisations. The decision to make school premises available for meetings must be made by head teachers, with the support of the Government, on a case-by-case basis. Against the background of the controversy surrounding GTA statements - which were questioned by some of their members - the differences of opinion that were clear at the time and other circumstances that were relevant, not all of them in the public domain, it was a legitimate decision to consider that such a meeting should not take place at that time in a particular location.

The Government welcomes that the GTA now accepts the move of Westside School. The location of the schools beside each other will of course bring up issues that need to be managed - in consultation with all stakeholders, most particularly the teachers. Equally, there will be advantages of the two schools being close together. The Government has stated clearly that the schools will not be merged, and the way that they are being designed will in any case make this difficult to achieve in practice. As has been explained, the sharing of resources will only happen in the Library - which was a request from the schools - and in a common recording facility for Music. All other facilities will be completely separate.

The Government's design team have already addressed some of the concerns raised by the GTA, and the Government looks forward to working co-operatively with the entire teaching profession as the designs develop. However, the Government considers that GTA's criticism is premature as there is still much more work to be done that will cascade into all levels of the teaching profession. Indeed, this was clear in this week's Westside School bulletin where details were given of the Phase 3 consultation with an ever increasing group of staff. However, consultation has to be through contact points, and not every individual staff member may get to be asked directly, but all are welcome to express their views and the Government strongly encourages them to do so, regardless of current post.



It is also a fact that the building of new schools provides the only opportunity in at least a generation to bring about changes in key stages, co-education and curriculum, all of which will require changes on the ground that are best done together and not piecemeal; Changes that would otherwise very possibly never get off the ground otherwise.

Minister for Education, John Cortes, said, "I am convinced that the vast majority of teachers are up for the challenge. I also know that many have the worries and concerns that are natural at a time of change. We must work together to resolve these worries. We will listen to everything that is being said and attend to as much as we can – always in the interests of the children. Indeed, most of these points were fully covered in my letter to the GTA of 18 December, which is attached. People can make up their own minds as to whether or not my letter answered the GTA's complaints but they will see that the tone was clearly one reflecting a sincere wish of working together with the profession. Significantly, the GTA have made a number of public statements since then but have not responded directly to this letter nor to any of the points that it makes.'