

2010

Moves to bring 'free school' to Crowland

Councillor keen to adopt Tory proposal

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CROWLAND could be home to one of the Government's new 'free schools' if a parish councillor's campaign takes off.

Coun Glyn Mayley has proposed setting up a new school for children aged three to 16 on the St Guthlac School site, in light of the threat of closure to the secondary school.

The St Guthlac School would close if the George Farmer Technology and Language College in Holbeach is successfully transformed into an £18 million academy.

The news was announced by Lincolnshire County Council but the decision was put on hold when the coalition Government decided to review the spending pledges of the previous regime.

The Tory education secretary Michael Gove favours setting up 'free schools', where groups of teachers, parents or members of the community

can establish their own schools, free of local authority control.

Coun Mayley, a newly-co-opted parish member, has delivered leaflets around the town to drum up support and cash in on the flagship policy.

The leaflet states: "Government policy is now to allow the establishment of 'free schools' so we have an opportunity to work together as a community to prepare an application and business case to retain secondary schooling on the existing site in the form of a three to 16 'free school'."

The move has met with a cool reaction from campaigners - who have already set up in opposition to the threatened closure.

Jim Astill has co-ordinated the response through a Facebook page, website and a 1000-plus name petition and says he was "disappointed" that the leaflets were delivered without contacting him first.

He said: "For me it is way too early to even consider the concept of a free school until we have all the information relating to the current proposals

from the Local Authority (LA) and governing body.

"In particular we need to understand why the LA and governing body feel that the current performance of St Guthlac is not sustainable in the longer term.

"We have been contacted by a group of teachers looking to set-up a free school. But the message to them is the same, in that it's too early to consider such a proposal. We do not even know at this stage if parents would support such a scheme."

Mr Astill stressed the two campaigns are not linked and his campaign aims to save the current school.

Free Schools would be bound by an Admissions Code but have the power to set their own pay and conditions for staff, control their budget, choose their own curriculum, change the length of terms and school days and be free from council control.

Today's budget is expected to give a clearer indication of the future of the Holbeach academy plans.

Save St Guthlac's School
<http://www.save-stguthlacs.co.uk/>

Campaign Team: Jim Astill, Jackie Colhoun, Paul Przyszlak