

Save St Guthlac's School - Press Article

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Straight Talk



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Have an open mind about school closure

ALL eyes will be on Chancellor George Osborne's budget today, particularly those with an interest in the controversial proposed closure of Crowland's St Guthlac School and academy status of Holbeach's George Farmer Technology and Language College as he reviews Labour's spending plans, including the academy schools initiative.

More than 1,000 people have signed a petition against the closure of St Guthlac and campaigners have met MP John Hayes over the issue.

Yet I fail to see what they are against. Who wouldn't want their children to go to a school with state of the art facilities and ever-improving GCSE results?

If the proposals take place then the George Farmer will receive around £18million to effectively rebuild the old part of the school and bring it in line with the great facilities in the new or redeveloped part of the school.

The campaign group 'Save St-Guthlac School' does put forward some reasonable arguments, however - especially the effect of moving schools on exam results for pupils in 2014. Although it can be hard and stressful moving into a totally alien environment in the most important year of your education, surely it isn't that much of a critical factor. The teachers will presumably move with the students and they'll still see their friends, and make some new ones too.

The 30-mile round trip is also a burning issue, particularly frustrating if you only lived next door to the old St Guthlac's site. But, I ask, if the choice to go to Spalding Grammar or Spalding High School aroused, would the journey really be such an issue?

The one issue, however, I do sympathise with the campaigners on is the lack of information available. This merge does leave unanswered questions. However, in a letter to the parents, Chris Penney, the chair of governors did say a range of consultations including public meetings will be organised.

One of these unanswered questions is about free school transport, with currently the local authority only providing transport to the nearest school, which campaigners say could be Spalding school, and not the Holbeach-based academy. But under academy status the school would be free of local authority control, so I would guess the 'academic sponsor' would be responsible for this. Maybe the public meetings will clear this up.

Throughout all of this though it's worth remembering one thing - the two schools affected are in federation. Since this happened in 2007 exam results for the Crowland based school have improved, as have the George Farmer's.

Being a former pupil of the George Farmer I know the team in charge is motivated and talented and I feel that people should have an open mind - the federation was a success and if academy status follows then I'm sure that it will follow suit.

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

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