

Open Report on behalf of Executive Director Adults and Children's

Report to:	Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee
Date:	24 June 2011
Subject:	Proposal to close Holbeach, The George Farmer Technology and Language College and Crowland, The St Guthlac School to enable the formation of a new Academy

Summary:

This report seeks to advise the Executive Council on making a decision regarding the proposed closure of The George Farmer Technology and Language College and The St Guthlac School to enable the formation of a new Academy. The proposed closure of the schools on 31 August 2011 is conditional on them being replaced by a new co-educational Academy sponsored by the University of Lincoln. This proposal has the support of the Department for Education (DfE) and the federated Governing Body of the two schools.

The objective of this proposal is to provide the best quality of education for children in this area as well as to find a solution to the difficulties and educational challenges experienced by The St Guthlac School as a stand alone school. These include the inability to deal with falling rolls, future floor standards and the expectation of the English Baccalaureate. The Local Authority (LA) considers this proposal to be in the best interests of local children and educational provision in the area. It reinforces the priorities in the Children and Young People's Plan and supports the Council's aim of ensuring that as many children as possible can reach their full potential. It will retain the number of school places in the area whilst at the same time improve educational standards and opportunities for children and young people.

In accordance with the Education and Inspections Act 2006 (EIA 2006) and guidance of the DfE, previously the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF), Lincolnshire County Council has consulted on the proposal to close The George Farmer Technology and Language College and The St Guthlac School on 31 August 2011 to enable the formation of a new Academy on 1 September 2011. Following the first stage of the statutory process the decision was taken to publish a statutory notice on 21 April 2011 which initiated the 6 week statutory period during which representations (i.e. objections or comments) can be made.

Actions Required:

To support the recommendation to be put forward to the Executive Council to approve the proposal to close The George Farmer Technology and Language College and the St Guthlac School on 31 August 2011 to enable the formation of a new Academy on 1 September 2011.

1. Background

The George Farmer Technology and Language College and The St Guthlac School are both rural secondary schools in the south of the county operating within a selective education system. The George Farmer Technology and Language College is a popular school, which also has a sixth form, with a total number on roll of 999. The St Guthlac School is a small school for pupils aged 11-16 with a number on roll of only 339. Approximately 43% of pupils living in the natural catchment area of The St Guthlac School choose to attend the school with 23% attending grammar schools. Both schools serve deprived rural communities, being ranked 33rd and 30th respectively on the Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI) for Lincolnshire secondary schools.

The George Farmer Technology and Language College is regularly oversubscribed. In the last three years it has gone through a process of improvement and expansion including the acquisition of High Performing Specialist School status, the development of an Applied Learning Sixth Form and a unique school based Apprenticeship programme. The achievement of pupils at 5 GCSE A*-C including English and maths (5ACEM) over the last four years has maintained a strong upward trend of 25%, 35%, 36% and 47%. The Ofsted inspection in December 2010 states 'The George Farmer Technology and Language College is an extraordinary school providing a good quality of education due to provision and leadership that are good and outstanding.' There were 152 first preference applications for places for September 2011 with a PAN of 150.

The St Guthlac School is a significantly smaller school with a falling roll which is projected to be fewer than 300 by 2013. The results achieved by pupils at 5ACEM over the last five years are 19%, 26%, 32%, 39% and 44%; these improvements reflect the impact of the federation with The George Farmer Technology and Language College. The Ofsted inspection in December 2010 states the school was satisfactory with satisfactory capacity to improve. The Ofsted report recognised the federation as having 'helped to bring greater stability through the recruitment and retention of specialist teachers'. The impact of the federation was also acknowledged in the letter to students, 'Many of you benefit from the specialist facilities so that you can study a range of vocational courses'. The school obtained Grade 3 for all categories except pupil attainment which was a Grade 4. There were 37 first preference applications for places for September 2011 with a PAN of 80.

A number of schools in the area were approached to discuss the possibility of federation with St Guthlac, and The George Farmer Technology and Language College was the only one capable of considering the option at that time. The two

schools have worked together for a number of years leading to a hard federation in September 2007 and this strong support provided by The George Farmer Technology and Language College has led to improvement in standards and a wider curriculum at St Guthlac through young people being transported to Holbeach for Key Stage 4 courses. However, a long term sustainable solution is now essential. The formation of an Academy is the preferred option following an appraisal completed by the LA.

Educational challenges faced in the area

The educational challenges faced by The St Guthlac School as a stand alone school, detailed below, are not temporary in nature; they are features of the size and nature of the school and the context within which it operates:-

Number on roll

The number on roll is falling with recent figures indicating that there are 339 pupils on roll which represents an average of 68 per year group with the Published Admission Number (PAN) standing at 80. The number on roll in the current years 7 and 8 is well below PAN and there are 37 first preferences for admission into the September 2011 intake. Based on these figures the total number on roll would fall below 300 in the next Academic Year. Under DfE guidance the recommended number on roll for a secondary school to be educationally and financially viable is 600 or more. Only 43% of pupils living in the natural catchment area of the school currently attend.

Standards of pupil attainment

There has been a trend of improvement in standards achieved following the support of The George Farmer Technology and Language College, however, in 2010, 44% of St Guthlac's pupils achieved the measurement of 5 A*-C including English and maths (5ACEM). This is still below the average for all schools and should be compared with an average of 54% for all schools in England and 59% for all Lincolnshire schools. In considering the school's capacity to reach government floor standards in the future it is important to consider the general nature of the school roll. There is a high proportion of pupils with special educational needs and this together with a low level of attainment of the cohort on entry in Year 7 mean that the school will find it increasingly difficult to reach rising floor standards and in particular standards based on the new English Baccalaureate (EBac).

Breadth of curriculum

The St Guthlac School has a net capacity of 400 for this 11 – 16 school whereas the actual number on roll at October 2010 was 339. In the government's planning terms, the smallest viable secondary school is one with an annual intake of between 120 and 150 pupils. This enables a school to provide the minimum number of curriculum options to meet pupil aspirations and provide viable group sizes to stimulate learning through social interaction to promote the sharing of

ideas, information and experiences as well as enabling pupils to participate meaningfully in team games, sports and other community activities.

The secondary curriculum is increasingly broad and complex, and is largely structured around subject families, making it difficult to compare schools offering different subjects and different number of options. This is very challenging for any small school as the options available may not provide the breadth of choice within subject families which may be enjoyed by pupils at other schools. Furthermore the recent DfE White Paper encourages schools to offer a broader set of academic subjects to age 16.

The St Guthlac School is finding it increasingly difficult to provide an appropriate range of viable option choices for Y10 and Y11 and is now very heavily dependent on KS4 provision at The George Farmer Technology and Language College with more than 50% of Year 10 and 11 currently following options at the site. Modern Foreign Languages (MFL) was not offered in 2009/10 and only 5 students are currently study MFL in 2010/11. This is uneconomic and cannot be maintained with current funding within the existing model.

The school cannot offer a broad, balanced curriculum which is either suitable for the needs and aspirations of students or fit for purpose in terms of the new EBac proposals. A secondary school with a projected annual intake of 80 pupils will face an increasing challenge in providing a staffing structure able to deliver an appropriately broad and balanced curriculum, even in collaboration with other educational institutions.

Current provision at The St Guthlac School is often via single person departments and so teaching and leadership is often vulnerable and has no capacity to absorb illness or absence.

Recruitment of teaching staff

Most secondary schools on or near to Lincolnshire's east coast experience difficulties from time to time in recruiting qualified teaching staff with appropriate subject specialisms. The St Guthlac School has had recruitment problems leading to staffing difficulties for many years including the appointment of Headteachers. The small size of St Guthlac is reflected in the small size of subject departments. Many subjects are single person departments and there are thus fewer departmental role models for emergent leaders. This seriously limits the opportunity for professional dialogue and the scope for career development. Whilst there is a high degree of loyalty to the school qualified teachers who wish to further their careers may need to look for posts elsewhere.

Financial sustainability

The school budget for The St Guthlac School is already in significant deficit. The school has been in receipt of a range of additional government funding, some of which is due to terminate in the near future, placing increasing pressure on the school budget. This deficit is estimated to increase markedly year on year with an anticipated deficit of £1.3 million in 2012/2013. Furthermore, as the rest of this

report demonstrates, current levels of spending in the school have not been sufficient to offer a broad curriculum and to ensure that the percentage of 5ACEM is at an appropriate level. There is therefore a strong financial case for change and the longer it takes to implement the change the bigger the deficit will be.

Alternatives considered

Alternative 1

That the proposal is not approved and no further action is taken regarding the formation of a new Academy. This would mean that both The George Farmer Technology and Language College and The St Guthlac School would remain open as they are currently constituted, a new Academy would not be developed and pupils would continue with their education on the same site and at the school at which they are currently on roll.

However, this alternative would have the following disadvantages:

The school would struggle to meet rising government floor standards (expected to rise from current 35% to 40% and beyond according to The Schools White Paper – The Importance of Teaching, published in November 2010). In addition it will have major difficulty meeting the requirements of the English Baccalaureate and both of these points make it vulnerable in the future.

This would retain the current educational standards of The St Guthlac School which are below the average for all Lincolnshire schools.

This would result in the loss of £8 million of capital funding investment into education provision in the area.

This would mean that The St Guthlac School would continue to experience difficulties in recruiting qualified teaching staff with suitable specialisms, consequently it would be unable to provide a staffing structure capable of delivering an appropriately broad and balanced curriculum thus limiting the range of opportunities available for students.

As a stand alone school The St Guthlac School cannot balance its budget and the current deficit of around £300k is likely to increase significantly year on year with an anticipated deficit in excess of £1 million in 2012/2013.

This would make it more difficult to provide a wider range of services and facilities to the local community.

It is unlikely that The George Farmer Technology and Language College will continue the federation with The St Guthlac School

This may not provide enriched provision and integrated services for children and young people in the area.

Alternative 2

That the proposal is not approved and consideration is given to an alternative structure for The St Guthlac School. However, an independent review has been undertaken to consider 3 potential alternative models for The St Guthlac School to continue as a stand alone school on its current site and this has confirmed that none of the 3 options would result in an economically viable solution providing a broad and balanced curriculum to equip students with the necessary skills for today's world. (See a summary of the independent review in Appendix A).

Reasons for Recommendation

The LA would not be actively participating in this process if it did not see significant advantages for children and young people, their parents/carers and the local communities in the Crowland and Holbeach area. The proposal sustains provision in the wider area and will enhance the quality of provision as detailed in the reasons for the recommendation below.

- The Academy will be able to provide a full range of courses to meet students' academic and vocational needs. This greater curriculum choice, including wider access to specialist vocational facilities across the federation, will provide the opportunity for young people in the area to achieve their maximum potential.
- Access to a comprehensive menu of study support activities throughout the year will also be provided as an integral part of this wider curriculum.
- The proposal will receive funding from the DfE to improve facilities within the secondary sector. This proposal will be able to take advantage of capital funding in excess of £8 million which will not otherwise be available. This will enable investment in the facilities and help to address existing shortfalls.
- The Academy will benefit from the expertise and leadership of a Headteacher who has successfully managed a popular and oversubscribed school which has demonstrated over time the capacity for sustained improvement through a balanced curriculum, consistently good quality teaching and learning, high quality extended provision and excellent leadership.
- The Academy will benefit from extensive links with the lead Sponsor, the University of Lincoln, which will be further enhanced through the support of key business partners who are major sector employers in the area. The Sponsors' vision is the creation of an integrated education hub, with the Academy working in a dynamic partnership with the University's National Food Manufacturing Centre which is already situated adjacent to the Holbeach site on the University's Holbeach Campus. Over time, the University will also seek to develop a national centre for agro-science and agro-engineering provision within the Campus and locally. The evolving partnership between the Academy and the University's National Centre will play a major role in raising aspirations, widening curriculum opportunities and strengthening progression opportunities for students at the Academy.

- The Academy will provide significant stability to the education of young people in the local area and will ensure that secondary provision remains sustainable for the future.
- The Academy will enable wider access to a range of extended services and improved opportunities for community and family learning.
- The Academy will offer wider development opportunities for all staff, particularly with the links with the University, which will help maintain stability and provision of high quality teaching and learning whilst securing the quality of staffing. It will also enable a greater focus on the development for senior and middle leadership models so increasing leadership capacity.
- If the Academy goes ahead, other educational opportunities are likely to arise for Crowland if the site is not retained for use as a secondary school in the future.

Factors to be considered by Decision Makers

In reaching a decision the Executive Council must have regard to statutory guidance issued by the Secretary of State as detailed in the appropriate guide (copy attached in Appendix B).

A System shaped by Parents

The Government's aim is to create a schools system shaped by parents which delivers excellence and equity by implementing a dynamic system in which weak schools that need to be closed are closed quickly and replaced by new ones where necessary and the best schools are able to expand and spread their ethos and success. The LA has put forward the current proposal as the best and preferred option to meet these criteria for two reasons. Firstly, taking all factors into consideration, it is highly unlikely that The St Guthlac School, as a stand alone school, would be able to meet or sustain the current government floor standard of 35% 5ACEM in the long term. It is only in recent years, since the active involvement of The George Farmer Technology and Language College, that this measure of attainment has been above 30%. Therefore under this proposal a school which is not meeting these targets is being closed as recommended by the Government. Secondly, the proposal will allow the expansion of a popular school with an excellent reputation and which has demonstrated over time the capacity for sustainable improvement through a balanced curriculum, consistently good quality teaching and learning, high quality extended provision and excellent leadership.

The Executive must take into account the extent to which the proposal is consistent with the LA's duty to respond to representations from parents about the provision of schools. There were two submissions from parents in the Representation Period one being in favour of the proposal and one against. Of the responses received in the consultation period approximately 65% were from parents and out of a total of 285 parental responses 42% were in favour, 35% were against and 23% were neither for nor against. All responses have been made available to the Executive and must be fully considered together with this report.

Diversity is covered under its own heading later in this report.

Standards

The Executive should be satisfied that the proposal will contribute to raising local standards of provision and will lead to improved attainment for children and young people paying particular attention to the effect on groups that under-perform with the aim of narrowing attainment gaps. As detailed earlier in this report the likely future standards of attainment at The St Guthlac School as a stand alone school are one of the main justifications for its proposed closure. The LA and the school improvement service believe that this proposal will have a positive impact on standards leading to improved levels of attainment and present the children and young people of the area with the best opportunity to reach their full potential. The benefit of working with The George Farmer Technology and Language College has already been seen in the improving trend of results since the federation. One of the reasons that the proposal has the support of the DfE is the expectation that it will drive up the standard of education and opportunities for pupils in the area.

Academies

Under the current proposal a new Academy will be formed to replace two existing schools. It is proposed that all pupils attending The St Guthlac School, Crowland and The George Farmer Technology and Language College, Holbeach on 31 August 2011 will be offered a place at the new Academy which will be established with effect from 1 September 2011 on the two existing sites. Parents may also seek admission to other schools which have places available should they wish to do so.

The closure is dependent on the Academy being in a position to take over the education of the pupils in September. That in turn is dependent on the funding agreement being approved by the Secretary of State. It is therefore proposed that approval of the closure of the two schools is conditional on such an Agreement being entered into.

The Academy will benefit from extensive links with the lead Sponsor, the University of Lincoln, which will be further enhanced through the support of key business partners who are major sector employers in the area. This will play a major role in raising aspirations, widening curriculum opportunities and strengthening progression opportunities for students at the Academy and will also offer development opportunities for all staff. In addition the Academy will share its facilities and expertise within the community and enable wider access to a range of extended services and improved opportunities for community and family learning.

Diversity

The Government's aim is to create a more diverse school system offering excellence and choice so that every child receives an excellent education whatever their background and wherever they live. The Executive should consider how the proposal will affect local diversity, taking account of the range of schools in Crowland and Holbeach and surrounding area, and the impact on the aspirations

of parents, and whether the proposal will help raise local standards and narrow attainment gaps. As referred to above the LA believes that the proposal will lead to improved standards of attainment and therefore contribute to the narrowing of attainment gaps. Further, there remains significant diverse provision in the area to meet the aspirations of young people and their parents providing a wide range of activities and facilities.

Every Child Matters

The Executive should consider how the proposal will help every child and young person achieve their potential in accordance with Every Child Matters principles and wider Children's Services. This should include considering how displaced pupils will continue to have access to extended services, opportunities for personal development, access to academic and applied learning training, measures to address barriers to participation and support for children and young people with particular needs (eg looked after children or children with special educational needs and disabilities). The LA believes that the proposal will provide greater curriculum choice including wider access to specialist vocational facilities at the Academy together with an increased range of extended services including speedy referral to support services and a comprehensive menu of study support activities throughout the year. The community will also benefit from the expertise and facilities provided by the sponsor together with improved opportunities for community and family learning. The community will also benefit from the enhanced sporting facilities being planned for the Academy.

Need for Places – Provision for Displaced Pupils and Surplus Places

When considering a proposal to close a school the Executive should be satisfied that there will continue to be sufficient capacity to accommodate displaced pupils taking into account the overall supply and likely future demand for places and considering the quality and popularity of existing provision. Similarly, when opening a new school or Academy the Executive should take care not to create unnecessary surplus capacity as this represents a poor use of resources which could be used more effectively elsewhere. It is proposed that all pupils attending both schools at the time of closure will be offered places at the new Academy so the number of school places will remain the same therefore continuing to meet the need for places in the secondary sector.

Impact on the Community and Community Cohesion and Race Equality

The Executive must consider the effect on the local community of the closure of any school which is the focal point for family and community activity. Although this proposal involves the closure of two schools both sites will continue to be used for by the new Academy. If the Crowland site is no longer required for secondary education in the future then the LA will look to retain the site to enhance primary education in the area which, at the same time, may also provide an opportunity to provide increased extended provision and improved community use facilities. The site will therefore be retained for educational use and the proposal should not have any negative impact on community cohesion but rather is likely to lead to improved access to extended services.

Travel and Accessibility for All

The Executive should be satisfied that facilities are accessible by being located close to those who will use them and that proposed changes do not adversely impact on disadvantaged groups. Proposals should not have the effect of unreasonably extending journey times or increasing transport costs or result in too many children being prevented from travelling sustainably due to unsuitable routes. The proposal should be considered on the basis of how it will support and contribute to the Council's duty to promote the use of sustainable travel and transport to school. Under the current proposal the new Academy will continue to use the two current sites and so pupils will not be displaced but will initially be able to continue their education at their existing site. There will therefore be no impact on the current transport arrangements or journey distance and times and the proposal should not lead to any significant increased car use.

The County Council home-to-school transport policy will continue to apply – this provides free home-to-school transport for pupils to their nearest designated school (if it is more than 3 miles away for secondary aged pupils). Any current pupil either at The St Guthlac School, Crowland or The George Farmer Technology and Language College, Holbeach who is entitled to transport will continue to receive transport whilst at their current address for the remainder of their education at the Academy no matter which site. Should parents not wish their child to transfer to the new Academy they may seek admission to other schools which have available places and then transport will be provided to their nearest school under the terms of the current transport policy. Overall, some children will have longer journey times and some will have shorter journey times.

Rural Schools

The Executive Councillor should have regard to the need to preserve access to a local school for rural communities. There is therefore a presumption against the closure of rural schools. Accordingly the case for closure should be strong and the proposals clearly in the best interests of educational provision in the area. Evidence should be sought that those bringing forward the proposals have carefully considered

- alternatives to closure including the potential for federation; the scope for an extended school or children's centre to provide local community services and facilities
- transport implications
- the overall and long term impact on local people and the community of closure of the village school and the loss of the building as a community facility

All of these have been considered and are referred to in detail in this report. The federated Governing Body of the two schools, the LA, the DfE and the School Improvement Service all support the proposal.

Equal Opportunity Issues

The Executive should consider whether there are any sex race or disability discrimination issues that arise out of the change being proposed. There needs to be a commitment to provide access to a range of opportunities which reflect the ethnic and cultural mix of the area while ensuring that such opportunities are open to all. There are no sex, race or disability discrimination issues arising from this proposal. The LA will continue to be committed to provide access to a range of opportunities which reflect the ethnic and cultural mix of the area while ensuring that such opportunities are open to all.

16 – 19 Provision

An effective organisation of 14-19 education should have the following key features:-

- standards and quality: the provision available should be of a high standard – as demonstrated by high levels of achievement and good completion rates;
- progression: there should be good progression routes for all learners in the area, so that every young person has a choice of the full range of options within the 14-19 entitlement, with institutions collaborating as necessary to make this offer. All routes should make provision for the pastoral, management and learning needs of the 14-19 age group;
- participation: there are high levels of participation in the local area; and,
- learner satisfaction: young people consider that there is provision for their varied needs, aspirations and aptitudes in a range of settings across the area.

The age range at The St Guthlac School is 11 – 16 and there is currently no sixth form provision. The impact of the Academy will be positive as there will be improved facilities together with a more diverse curriculum and a wider range of opportunities for pupils aged 16 – 19. The proposal will provide greater sustainability to the sixth form provision in the area.

The sponsor wishes to develop a 14-19 programme that will raise aspirations, support progression and reduce the figures for young people neither in education or training (NEET) by extending the innovative and successful curriculum already on offer at The George Farmer Technology and Language College. There will be strong business and community partnerships to help deliver a 14–19 curriculum that is grounded in “real work” contexts. The sixth form, which will be developed to complement other provision in the area, will become a centre of excellence offering a good academic and vocational balance. The Academy will ensure that clearly defined and seamless progression routes will be designed to enable more young people to progress into higher education.

The LA believes that the 14 – 19 organisation at the new Academy will meet the criteria above and provide effective provision for this age group.

Special Educational Needs (SEN) Provision

The Executive should consider the impact of the proposal on the Special Educational Needs provision taking into consideration the guidance laid down in the guide and be assured that the proposal is designed to improve on existing arrangements and enable all children to achieve the five Every Child Matters outcomes as now defined in the five priorities of the Children's Services core offer.

The following key factors must be considered in order to meet the requirement to demonstrate likely improvements in provision:

- a) improved access to education and associated services including the curriculum, wider school activities, facilities and equipment, with reference to the LA's Accessibility Strategy;
- b) improved access to specialist staff, both education and other professionals, including any external support and/or outreach services;
- c) improved access to suitable accommodation; and
- d) improved supply of suitable places.

As education is continuing on the two existing sites there is likely to be no impact on SEN provision other than an opportunity to improve the provision with better access to resources and consistently good quality teaching, learning and leadership under the new Academy. Consideration of pupils with SEN will be allowed for in any building work and will also take place should there be any relocation of pupils to an alternative site and physical access will be assured should a need be presented. The LA and the Academy will continue to look to make improvements in the standard, quality and/or range of the education provision for children with SEN.

Views of Interested Parties

The Executive should consider the views of all those affected by the proposals or who have an interest in them. This includes statutory objections and comments submitted during the Representation Period. The Executive should not simply take account of the numbers of people expressing a particular view when considering representations made on proposals. Instead the Executive should give the greatest weight to representations from those stakeholders most likely to be directly affected by the proposals. All representations, especially from the direct stakeholders, must be considered by the Executive in relation to this proposal prior to the decision being taken. All responses to the consultation and representation period have been received and made available to the Executive. (Summarised in Appendices C and D)

The proposal also has the support of the DfE and the federated Governing Body of the two schools. Details of the views expressed in responses received during both the consultation phase and the Representation Period are included later in the Consultation section of this report and in the attached appendices. (Appendices C and D)

The Decision

In considering the proposals the Executive can

- reject the proposals
- approve the proposals
- approve the proposals with a modification (e.g. the school closure date)

All decisions must give reasons for the decision whether rejected or approved.

2. Conclusion

The educational challenges faced by The St Guthlac School as outlined above are not temporary in nature; they are features of the size and nature of the school and the context within which it operates. Since the federation of the two schools the strong support provided by The George Farmer Technology and Language College has led to improvement in results achieved by pupils at The St Guthlac School but a long term sustainable solution is required.

It is recommended that the proposal is implemented to ensure the best educational opportunities for the children of Crowland and Holbeach. The advantages of implementing this proposal are detailed in the reasons for recommendation section of this report. The proposal has the support of the DfE and the federated Governing Body of the two schools. An independent review has also confirmed that providing a broad and balanced curriculum to equip students with the necessary skills for a technological world is not economically viable at The St Guthlac School on its own.

This proposal presents the children and young people of Crowland and Holbeach with the best opportunity to reach their full potential. The factors to consider in making this decision are within this report and all responses made during both the consultation and representation period must be considered.

3. Consultation

In order for the two schools to close to enable the formation of an Academy the LA must follow the necessary statutory legal processes as required by the Secretary of State in accordance with the Education and Inspection Act 2006 and the guidance of the DfE in "Closing a Maintained Mainstream School" (Appendix B). Under these guidelines the LA must ensure that sufficient time and information are provided for people to understand and form a view on the proposal and make a response. The consultation document must set out the problem that is being addressed and invite comment on one or more solutions. The LA must take all reasonable steps to draw the consultation to the attention of all those who might be interested and take into account their views.

The Education Act 2002 states the requirement for current pupils to be consulted and this was further extended by subsequent legislation to also include all pre-school children over the age of 3. The EIA 2006 specifically includes as interested parties the parents of registered pupils at the school and also the appropriate

District and Parish Councils for the area. The Headteacher has actively consulted with the students currently attending the two schools with assemblies being held at both sites. Pupils were also given the opportunity to discuss the proposal with their form tutors and via their school council representatives.

A letter (Appendix E) was sent out to interested parties (listed in Appendix F) on 26 January 2011 to commence a seven week period of consultation which was subsequently extended to an eight week period. The consultation period was originally planned to run for 7 weeks but was extended by an extra week to allow consultees sufficient time to consider the LA proposal alongside the documentation which was issued by the sponsor, the University of Lincoln, on 10 March 2011. A public meeting was held on 16 February 2011 at The St Guthlac School with a further public meeting on 17 February 2011 at The George Farmer Technology and Language College, both of which were attended by representatives of the LA and the federated Governing Body together with parents/carers and other interested parties. All attendees were given the opportunity to ask questions and notes were taken which were published on the County Council website www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/provisionplanning and are also attached here as Appendix G. Copies of the letter commencing consultation and the consultation document were also published on this website. There was the opportunity to provide a response to the consultation by letter, email or by returning the response form (Appendix H) attached to the consultation document by 16 March 2011. Following the extension of the consultation period to 23 March 2011 an updated response form was published on our website showing the new deadline. (Appendix I)

A paper was presented to the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee on 25 February 2011 when it was resolved to support the decision to consult on this proposal.

The written responses received during consultation have been provided to the Executive Councillor for consideration and are also summarised in this report in Appendix C) along with responses to the general categories under which they could be classified. In total there were 439 valid responses with 165 supporting the proposal, 196 against and 78 expressing views neither in favour nor against the proposal. 65% (285) of all the consultation responses were from parents with 42% of those responses in favour, 35% against and 23% neither for nor against. 10% (44) of responses were from teachers and non-teaching staff. Of those responses 77% were for the proposal, 14% against and 9% neither for nor against. Further statistics from the responses can be seen in Appendix C.

The Executive Councillor took the decision to proceed to Statutory Notice which was published in the press, at the school gates and within the local community on 21 April 2011. This also marked the start of a 6 week Representation Period giving a further opportunity for people and organisations to express their views to be taken into account when the final decision is taken by the Executive Committee on 5th July 2011. The LA, as decision maker, must be able to show that all relevant issues raised are taken into consideration in the decision making process and full consideration has been given to all responses. Points raised can be considered unpersuasive but must not be ignored altogether. The LA should not simply take account of the numbers of people expressing a particular view when considering

representations but give the greatest weight to representations from stakeholders likely to be most directly affected by the proposals.

Three written responses were submitted during the Representation Period, which ended on 02 June 2011, with one in favour and two against. In the interests of Data Protection the actual responses are not being made public but the issues raised are summarised in Appendix D.

Information regarding this proposal has been updated and made available through the County Council website since official consultation began on 26 January 2011. The local and district councillors have been actively involved in the consultation for this proposal. The local County Councillor has been kept informed of developments and proposals through the Executive Councillor for Children's Services who has been engaged throughout the entire process. The issue has also been thoroughly aired in the local media.

Details of the potential Academy have been consulted on through a separate process led by the sponsor and the Governing Body of both schools which ran alongside the consultation process carried out by the LA. This consultation document together with further details can be viewed at www.holbeachacademy.org

a) Policy Proofing Actions Required

An approved Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) has been completed for this report (see Appendix J)

4. Appendices

These are listed below and attached at the back of the report	
Appendix A	Summary of Independent Review
Appendix B	DCSF Guide "Closing a Maintained Mainstream School"
Appendix C	Summary of written consultation period responses
Appendix D	Details of Representation Period Responses
Appendix E	Letter to commence consultation
Appendix F	List of Interested Parties consulted
Appendix G	Questions and Answers at the public meetings
Appendix H	Response Form
Appendix I	Response Form for extended consultation period
Appendix J	Equality Impact Assessment

5. Background Papers

The following background papers as defined in the Local Government Act 1972 were relied upon in the writing of this report.

Document title	Where the document can be viewed
Consultation on the future of Holbeach The George Farmer Technology and Language College and Crowland The St Guthlac School (25 February 2011)	Lincolnshire County Council Committee Records (Reference Policy and Scrutiny)

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