

HELP TO SAVE OUR SCHOOLS

WE STAND at a turning point in the history of education in Tamworth. We have only a matter of weeks to make our voices heard.

Local pupils have this term returned to our town's secondary schools facing a different future to the one they had been promised. The £100million of funding that was expected to rebuild our secondary schools is gone.

Only the new academy, to replace Woodhouse High School, and a new sixth-form centre to serve the whole town will now go ahead. The vital cash injection that was expected at Rawlett, QEMS, Belgrave and Wilnecote has been withdrawn.

The pupils of these schools are being expected to put up with conditions which just a few months ago were deemed in urgent need of improvement. We are faced with a two-tier education system, where some pupils enjoy the benefits of a brand-new school, while others put up with unacceptable conditions.

At Rawlett, plans to increase the size of the school's dining area will have to be shelved. Ambitious plans to improve the computer facilities available to children are at risk. Headteacher Tim Bassett told the Herald the cuts created an "inequality of provision in the town".

At QEMS, Tamworth's oldest school, buildings are crumbling. Some areas of the school have been demolished – the gymnasium and changing rooms – to make way for the new sixth form centre which will occupy an adjacent site. But after the plug was pulled on Tamworth's funding, it remains unclear how QEMS will replace these facilities. Headteacher Mike York told the Herald it was "fundamentally wrong that young people are being used as pawns in an economic game of chess".

Wilnecote High School is not big enough for the amount of pupils it serves. Pupils endure cramped conditions in classrooms, dining areas, corridors – every aspect of school life is hampered by its outmoded size.

And Simon Turney, headteacher at Belgrave, told the Herald of his anger at the "injustice and inequality of what will be an imposed two-tier system".

But this isn't just about our secondary schools. Every child in Tamworth will be effected in some way.

That is why headteachers at Tamworth's primary, junior and infant schools have pledged their support to our Save Our Schools campaign. Younger children will eventually move on to Belgrave, Wilnecote, QEMS, Rawlett or the new academy.

All children deserve a fair start in life. Unless funding is reinstated to address the inequalities apparent in Tamworth's schools, we are not doing the children of Tamworth justice. This is why we have launched the Save Our Schools campaign.

We are not interested in the politics behind the decisions that have left Tamworth's schools in this situation. We are not interested in apportioning blame. We simply want to put the situation right.

So what can you do?

In a few weeks' time the Conservative Party will hold its annual conference in Birmingham. Tamworth's MP, Christopher Pincher, who is backing the campaign, has agreed to present a Save Our Schools petition to education secretary Michael Gove at the conference.

Mr Gove and his team are looking again at all of the school building plans for the UK. Some money will still be allocated. We want Mr Gove to give Tamworth £42million – considerably less than was originally promised to our schools – to allow vital rebuilding work to go ahead and give our children a fair start in life.

So we simply ask you to sign the petition form attached. If you can, collect signatures. The petition will close on Friday, October 1. The more names we can add to our petition, the harder it will be to ignore the state of Tamworth's schools. This is not about politics.

This is not even about money. This is about giving our children a fair start in life.

Please give us your support.



Gary Phelps, Editor, Tamworth Herald