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Dear Principal

REINFORCED AUTOCLAVED AERATED CONCRETE (RAAC)

As you will be aware, yesterday, RAAC was identified at a primary school in Belfast during investigatory survey works. Whilst I know that this news will be a matter of concern, you have my continued assurance that the safety of pupils, staff and all those visiting school sites is the utmost priority for the Department of Education.

The Education Authority's programme of RAAC surveys is ongoing and no further action is required to be taken by school leaders. I will keep you updated on the findings and next steps as these surveys progress.

I have appended a list of Frequently Asked Questions to this letter to address any queries that you may have and also to help you navigate questions from parents and carers regarding RAAC.

Yours sincerely



Dr SUZANNE KINGON
Department of Education
Director of Investment, Infrastructure & Strule

INVESTMENT, INFRASTRUCTURE AND STRULE

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is RAAC?

RAAC is a lightweight, aerated form of concrete commonly used in construction between the 1950s and mid-1990s. It is typically white to light grey in colour containing steel reinforcement. It is commonly found in flat roofs, and occasionally in floors and walls.

Is RAAC dangerous?

The safety of buildings constructed with RAAC depends on various factors, including the quality of construction, maintenance, and the specific conditions they are exposed to. Over time, if not properly maintained, RAAC can deteriorate, potentially leading to structural issues. In most cases, the material is now well past its design lifetime.

The Institute of Structural Engineers (IStructE) has produced guidance on RAAC which provides further details.

[\(https://www.istructe.org/resources/guidance/reinforced-autoclaved-aerated-concrete-\(raac\)-inve/\)](https://www.istructe.org/resources/guidance/reinforced-autoclaved-aerated-concrete-(raac)-inve/)

What actions are the Department taking to identify RAAC in schools?

An initial tranche of 122 schools across Northern Ireland were identified as a priority for survey on the basis of building fabric, age and type of construction. Following completion of visual surveys at these schools, further investigations of areas of the schools with more restricted access are taking place.

The Department has also commissioned EA to carry out surveys at a further 180 schools. Once all these surveys are complete, a decision will be taken on the most appropriate next steps in regard to the remainder of the schools' estate.

How do I arrange for my school to be surveyed?

The Department or the EA have contacted all schools that are currently scheduled to be surveyed and will contact you, should your school require a survey.

What should I do if I am concerned?

You do not need to take any action at present. The Department or the EA have contacted all schools that are currently scheduled to be surveyed and will contact you, should your school require a survey.

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Is it safe for children to go to school?

Yes, unless advised otherwise by the Education Authority children should be in school.

If the Department is made aware of any building that poses a safety risk, we will take immediate action to ensure safety and mitigate the situation. Please be assured nothing is more important than the health and safety of children and staff.

How many cases of RAAC have been found in schools in Northern Ireland?

One case of RAAC has been identified to date in a primary school in Belfast.

What happens if RAAC is found in a school?

The impact on any school will vary depending on the extent of RAAC found. The Department and EA will assess each case individually and put in place appropriate contingency arrangements to ensure the safety of staff and pupils.