



ST JAMES CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL, HEBBURN

14th December 2023

Dear Parents and Carers,

RAAC Update at St James Catholic Primary School

As we approach the end of what has been a most unprecedented term, I would like to take this opportunity to thank our children and you, their parents and carers, for your patience and understanding in this most unusual of circumstances. **We are delighted that we are now able to provide you with more detailed information about work at our school.**

As you know at the end of the summer holidays, we were advised that our school site was identified by the Department for Education (DfE) as having Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) and that the site should close. Since then, we have been working closely with our colleagues at the DfE, to clarify the works required to make the building safe, secure specialist contractors, and put in place a timeframe for the works. To date:

- Full inspections of the areas requiring work have been completed, RAAC has been identified in all areas of the school roof.
- A specialist structural engineer has been employed to design an appropriate and safe solution that will allow the school to become fully operational again.
- Suitably qualified contractors have visited the school to ensure they can competently deliver the work required.
- Renewed guidance was issued by the DfE on the 6/12 which benefits from lessons learned in other affected school buildings. This will further ensure that we deliver the most appropriate solution for our school.

In terms of work on our school, we anticipate a site presence from January 2024, with work expected to be completed in the Spring. Once work has commenced on site, given the complicated nature of the work, there is the chance that further issues may present. Because of this we would prefer to be cautious around predicting when we might gain back full access to our school building.

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Bishop Chadwick
Catholic Education Trust

We therefore suggest that current arrangements **may** need to be in place until at least **after the Easter holidays 2024**. We did explore the option of using temporary buildings on the school site, but this was ruled out as specialist providers were unable to meet our safeguarding requirements or our timeframe.

Obviously, this is not ideal, and we will be doing everything we can as a Trust to expediate any works and get us back together on one site and quickly and safely as possible. We will provide more clarification on time frame and work being carried out in January.

We share your frustrations at how long this process has taken, but as you will appreciate with over 150 schools across the country requiring this work, demand for specialist support is very high. We will also be working with other specialist contractors to ensure that any other maintenance work/improvements to the school building can be completed during this period to avoid any further disruptions once we can get children back in to our school buildings.

We are fortunate that schools within our Trust and our wider community were able to support us in providing alternate accommodation for our pupils. We are very grateful to our staff in school and the wider Trust and our partners for all their support with the logistically complex issues around relocating our children.

Our children have impressed us with their adaptability and high spirits, and we are eternally grateful for your continued support. Our school is not a building, it's a community, a family and a haven.

Kindest Regards

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