

Dealing with RAAC in schools

Advice for governing boards in schools and trusts

21 September 2023

Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) was used in the construction of schools and other buildings from the 1950s until the mid-1990s. RAAC is very different from traditional concrete and, because of the way in which it was made, much weaker.

In 2022, the Department for Education (DfE) sent a questionnaire to all schools to help understand the use of RAAC across the school estate. This resulted in 50 schools putting mitigation measures in place.

Over the summer, the DfE changed their assessment of the risk that RAAC poses and [additional schools](#) were asked to vacate spaces or buildings that are known to contain RAAC. This is an evolving situation and more schools may be found to contain RAAC. Governing boards (chairs in particular) should therefore maintain a dialogue with headteachers/CEOs.

For those schools that have not already done so, governors and trustees should ensure that senior leaders complete the [DfE RAAC survey](#).

How do schools identify RAAC?

[DfE identification guidance](#) details how schools can identify RAAC in their buildings (if this has not been done already). If RAAC is identified or suspected, a suitably qualified building surveyor or structural engineer should be appointed to confirm this. If confirmed, schools should inform the DfE immediately and refer to [DfE guidance](#) for schools with confirmed RAAC in their buildings.

The governing board's role

Irrespective of the legal ownership of school/trust buildings, all governing boards should seek assurance that senior leaders are aware of potential risks from RAAC and are addressing these.

While day-to-day building management and maintenance is the responsibility of school and trust leaders, governing boards must retain strategic oversight to ensure pupils and staff are kept safe.

Where schools have concerns about, or have already identified RAAC, governing boards should engage with school leaders through their usual monitoring routines, organising additional support and discussion where appropriate.

We recommend that boards pay particular attention to the following areas, referring to DfE guidance for further detail if required.

Ensuring continued education

- If the school has insufficient space once areas with RAAC are taken out of use, emergency alternatives should be considered such as space in a nearby school. Where necessary, longer-term temporary accommodation may also be needed.
- The expectation is that schools continue to provide face-to-face teaching – remote education is an option but must only be considered as a **last resort** and for a short period of time where the alternative would be no education provision.
- In exceptional circumstances, schools may need to limit face-to-face places – **priority should be given to vulnerable pupils, the children of critical workers and those taking exams.**

Budget impact

While governing boards are unlikely to be involved in discussion about specific expenditure (particularly for lower cost mitigation), they should be alert to the potential impact of this issue and continue to monitor expenditure as part of normal governance routines.

- The DfE will provide funding for all mitigation works that are capital funded.
- If schools have questions about funding additional revenue costs, they should discuss this with their DfE caseworker and the Education and Skills Funding Agency in the first instance.
- Schools should also consider contacting their commercial insurer or the Risk Protection Arrangement (RPA) if the school is a member.

Safeguarding

- Safeguarding must remain a priority for schools and governing boards and so the statutory guidance, Keeping children safe in education, should continue to be followed.
- Schools may need to undertake **additional risk assessments** as a result of making changes due to managing RAAC, particularly in relation to offsite learning and remote education.

SEND provision

- The school's statutory responsibilities in relation to pupils with SEND, including those with an Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan, continues to apply and so governing boards should seek assurances that the school continues to meet the needs of these pupils.

Impact on Ofsted inspections

This term Ofsted will avoid inspecting any education setting that is on the published list of those affected by RAAC.

Some settings are not on the list but are still impacted by RAAC – for example, hosting pupils from schools that have RAAC. Ofsted have updated their [deferrals guidance](#) to make clear that it may be appropriate for an inspection to be deferred in these circumstances.

In all cases, inspections will still take place where Ofsted has concerns.