

16 January 2024		ITEM: 6
Children’s Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee		
Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RACC) Update		
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: N/A	
Report of: Sarah Williams, Head of Education Support Services		
Accountable Head of Service: Michele Lucas, Assistant Director Education and Skills		
Accountable Director: Sheila Murphy, Executive Director of Children’s Services		
This report is Public		

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. Recommendations

- 1.1 That the Children’s Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee note the content of the report which provides an update in relation to Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RACC) within Thurrock Schools.**

2. Introduction and Background

- 2.1** RAAC (Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete) is a lightweight, ‘bubbly’ form of concrete commonly used in construction between the 1950s and mid-1990s. It is predominantly found as precast panels in roofs (commonly flat roofs, sometimes pitched) and occasionally in floors and walls.
- 2.2** Given all our schools are either standalone Academy’s or part of Multi Academy Trusts the council does not have a statutory duty to monitor the condition of school buildings. The council recognised the seriousness of the situation around RAAC in schools and has a duty of care to the pupils being educated within them. The condition of buildings is monitored and managed by the schools governing bodies as they are academies, except for Grays Convent which is a voluntary aided school.
- 2.3** The Education Support Service (Thurrock Council) communicated to all schools in July 2023 to understand whether any schools had found RAAC in any part of their school building. In addition, schools responded to a questionnaire sent by the Department for Education (DfE). Based on the

responses provided by the schools governing body, the DfE commissioned specialist surveying companies to visit several schools to verify whether RAAC is present.

2.4 On 31st August 2023, the Department for Education announced new guidance about reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC) in schools. The announcement outlined a policy shift meaning that urgent action would need to be taken for any schools with known RAAC.

2.5 The Department for Education confirmed the following schools have RAAC found within their buildings:

- St Cleres School
- East Tilbury Primary School
- Arthur Bugler Primary School
- Thameside Primary School
- Ortu Corringham Primary

The Osborne Co-Operative Academy and ORTU Federation Trust communicated to the Council and to all parents to inform them of the mitigation plans being put in place for the start of the academic year.

The school Trusts and DfE are working extremely hard to make sure staff and children are impacted as little as possible. Parents have been updated regularly and are supportive of actions taken to date.

- Thameside Primary delayed their opening to 11th September whilst they prepared additional teaching spaces.
- Arthur Bugler Primary delayed their opening for years 4, 5 and 6 to 7th September whilst they prepared alternative teaching spaces.
- Corringham Primary moved their year 4 and year 6 pupils to alternative teaching spaces.
- East Tilbury Primary have moved their pupils across a number of years groups to alternative teaching spaces within the school.
- St Cleres had a considerable number of teaching spaces affected by RAAC in their original building. This meant there was a hybrid solution put in place which was a mixture of both face to face and remote learning for years 8, 9 and 10 students. All students have now returned to face to face learning as of 13th December 2023.

2.6 The Department for Education is working directly with those academies to provide support in relation to short and long term mitigation plans. Weekly meetings have been taking place between the DfE and Academy Trusts with regular updates being provided to the council.

2.7 To manage the communication around this, all members were provided with briefing notes on:

- 30th August 2023
- 31st August 2023
- 6th September 2023
- 24th October 2023
- 23rd November 2023

2.8 Following the request of Children's Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 16th November, visits were organised at Arthur Bugler Primary, Thameside Primary, East Tilbury Primary and St Clere's for all committee members which took place on 4th and 6th December. Positive feedback was received.

2.9 Current position as of December 2023:

St Cleres School

All students returned to face to face learning on Monday 13th December 2023.

Instead of placing a considerable number of demountable classrooms to provide 30 teaching spaces onsite, the school have sourced and installed three large, impressive Losberger units.

Two of the units are providing a total of 20 classrooms, which include a staff room and toilet facilities.

The third unit comprises of six classrooms and hall for assembly and dining.

Within the main building, the sports hall has been converted into four classrooms. Therefore, providing a total of 30 classrooms.

The trust continues to work with the DfE on mitigation plans in the main building on a phase programme. The kitchen has now had mitigation works completed and is fully operational. Phase two will see the specialist classrooms brought back into use. It is anticipated that the longer term solution will be announced by the DfE mid January 2024. A briefing note update will be provided to all members once a decision has been made.

East Tilbury Primary

All students have received face to face learning within alternative spaces within the school since the start of the academic year. Remediation works to the RAAC affected areas is due to start in the spring term with completion in the summer term.

As a temporary measure a high quality, heated marquee was placed on onsite to provide additional facility to enable planned Christmas activities to continue.

Without this facility pupils would not have been able to take part in these important activities. There is no teaching taking place within the marquee.

Thameside Primary

A double temporary classroom has been installed to provide two teaching spaces along with temporary internal alterations to provide additional teaching spaces.

Remediation works to the RAAC affected areas is due to start in the spring term with completion in the summer term.

A high quality, heated marquee has been installed and is being used one hour per day so that the school could continue to provide the breakfast club for disadvantaged pupils.

A second marquee has been placed on onsite as a temporary measure to provide additional facility to enable planned Christmas activities to continue. Without this facility pupils would not have been able to take part in these important activities. There is no teaching taking place within the marquee.

Arthur Bugler

All students have received face to face learning within alternative space within the school since the start of the academic year. Remediation works to the RAAC affected areas is due to start in the spring term with completion in the summer term.

As a temporary measure a high quality, heated marquee was placed on onsite to provide additional facility to enable planned Christmas activities to continue. Without this facility pupils would not have been able to take part in these important activities. There is no teaching taking place within the marquee.

Corringham Primary

The remedial works to the affected RAAC area within the school are in progress and are due to complete by the end of January 2024.

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

- 3.1 None. Both short and long term remedial works are being managed between the Department for Education and Academy Trusts.

4 Reasons for recommendations

- 4.1 For Children's Overview and Scrutiny to have oversight of the impact RAAC has had in the identified schools.

5. Consultation (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)

5.1 No consultation is required.

6. Impact on corporate policies, priorities, performance and community impact

6.1 None.

7 Implications

7.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **David May**
Head of Financial Management

There are no financial implications for the Council. The Department for Education is funding solutions and alternative accommodation where required.

7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Nicola Monerville**
Principal Solicitor – LBBDD

This report provides Children's Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee an update in relation to Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RACC) within Thurrock Schools.

The responsible body in control of the school, usually the relevant local authority, academy trust or voluntary aided body, must manage the condition of its buildings and ensure they are safe.

The DfE is accountable for providing those bodies responsible for school buildings with the funding and support to enable them to meet their responsibilities to ensure the school buildings are safe and well maintained.

The report confirms that Thurrock Borough Council schools are either standalone Academy's or part of Multi Academy Trusts and therefore there is no statutory duty to monitor school buildings.

The report is of note. There are no legal implications arising.

7.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Rebecca Lee**

Team Manager, Community Development

At this stage there are no direct diversity and equality implications. The Council does not have any statutory duty in relation to Academies and the monitoring of the condition of school buildings. It is noted children and young people have continued to receive education since the start of the academic year with alternative accommodation provided within each of the schools. Students at St Cleres received a mixture of face to face and remote learning for years 8, 9 and 10 students, however all students have now returned to face to face learning.

8. Background papers used in preparing the report

- All briefing notes provided to all members.
- Department for Education RAAC Identification Guidance

9. Appendices to the report

None.

Report Author:

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Children's Services