

Dear Parent/Carer,

You will be aware from correspondence from Ms Cox that further investigation work was taking place to determine the extent and condition of Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) within the buildings of The Appleton school. We are now in a position to update you following additional survey findings.

Following more intensive surveys that have taken place across the school site, we have received confirmation that there is no RAAC present in some of school buildings meaning that the school is now able to consider bringing more children back on to site from Monday 25 September.

In the remaining buildings, the surveyor was unable to confirm there was no RAAC and therefore further investigation work will be undertaken in the next two weeks. During this time these buildings will not be in use. We hope that this work will confirm that they do not have any RAAC and we can then look to bring all pupils back to school in the coming weeks. The school is working with DfE to plan for contingency arrangements should they be needed.

The accompanying letter from Ms Cox details the arrangements for w/c 25 September where additional year groups will be returning to school.

We appreciate that while this news will be welcomed by all in the school community, you will still have questions and concerns which we hope this letter will address.

The DfE was alerted to the potential of RAAC by technical advisors working on the School Rebuilding Programme. The DfE then commissioned the survey on Appleton School on 10 August. The preliminary survey, the results of which were shared with the school on 4 September 2023, concluded that there was a high likelihood of RAAC present in a number of areas across the school. The Academy Trust then began to consider what mitigation work was needed.

The precautionary change in policy taken by the DfE on 31 August meant that due to the initial survey suggesting the presence of RAAC in the school, the school would need to vacate and restrict access to the spaces with RAAC, in order to put in place mitigations. The reduced capacity in the school meant that the school had to move to a hybrid learning pattern.

The decision to partially close the school site and move to a hybrid teaching arrangement was made on the basis of the information available to the school at the time. The decision was signed off by the Academy Trust and the DfE with Essex County Council being informed.

As has been reiterated in correspondence with parents to date, the safety of pupils and staff will always take precedence and the school were acting in good faith that partial closure was the safest option. Given the change in policy, the school needed further investigative surveys to understand the full extent of the issue and to enable appropriate mitigations to be put in place.

Essex County Council were asked to assist with commissioning a survey due to having available engineers who could come out to survey the school within a few days.

This took place on 8 September. The survey was more comprehensive, due to the engineers having a more informed position. This meant that they were able to assess multiple areas across the school site and cross reference with building plans.

The survey found no RAAC present in some of school buildings.

The school and Academy Trust, alongside colleagues from DfE and Essex County Council have reviewed both surveys to compare the inconsistencies, alongside reviewing building plans.

We are confident that the most recent surveys give us the true picture and therefore have confirmed with the Academy Trust that the school can now work towards reopening for an increased number of pupils from Monday 25 September.

Further intrusive survey work has been commissioned by the Academy Trust of the remaining buildings which will take place over the next few weeks and Ms Cox will keep you informed on the results and the implications.

We absolutely do not underestimate how difficult the last few weeks have been on pupils, their parents/carers and the school staff.

We hope that everybody recognises the cautious approach taken and the sensitivities involved and that the safety of pupils and staff were at the heart of decisions making.

Yours sincerely,

The Appleton School, The Department for Education, Essex County Council, Compass Education Trust.

