



18 December 2023

Dear Parent/Carer

As we approach the end of what has been a most unprecedented term, I would like to take this opportunity to thank our pupils and you, their parents/carers, for your patience and understanding in this most unusual of circumstances.

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 some buildings on 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. To date:

- Full inspections of the areas requiring work have been completed, RAAC has been identified in four of our buildings (which usually deliver subjects such as Science, DT, modern foreign languages).
- We have liaised with partners to bring all pupils back to face-to-face learning and ensuring all the necessary logistical and safeguarding arrangements were in place.
- A specialist structural engineer has been employed to design appropriate and safe solutions that will allow these school buildings to become fully operational again.
- 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.

We are continuing to investigate the option of providing temporary buildings on site at St. Bede's to allow the delivery of the full curriculum – this is dependent on availability of suitable buildings meeting all the necessary requirements. We are also working with the DfE to ensure we have the required provision to support our sports curriculum and football academy.

We prefer to be cautious about when we will have all pupils back on one site and suggest that current arrangements may need to be in place until Summer 2024. Obviously, this is not ideal, and we will continually review the situation and any opportunities we have to bring pupils back to site earlier, in a safe and secure way, will be explored.

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 be in touch again once we have more clarity about the work and timeframes, thank you for your continued patience and support.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank Sunderland College for their support which allowed us to secure alternate accommodation for the remainder of our pupils. We are very grateful to our staff in school, the wider Trust, and our partners for all their support with the logistically complex issues around relocating our pupils.

Our pupils 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. Thank you.

Best wishes

A handwritten signature in grey ink that reads "Frances Cessford". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small yellow dot above the letter 'e'.

Frances Cessford
Headteacher