



1st September 2023

Dear Parents and Carers,

**URGENT - NOTIFICATION FOR FAMILIES AND PUPILS OF
ST. BENET'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL, OUSTON**

TEMPORARY SCHOOL CLOSURE

You may have seen media coverage over the course of yesterday and subsequently this morning, regarding Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) and it being used between 1950s and 1990s to build schools. RAAC is a lightweight form of concrete; and, because it is weaker than regular concrete concerns have been raised in recent years about its long-term durability. It had an anticipated lifespan of 30 years at the time schools were built.

Department for Education (DfE) has only yesterday published and changed guidance to schools on the management of RAAC and have, with immediate effect, taken a more precautionary approach. As you may have heard from News broadcasters and in the Press, as a result of the change in DfE approach, some schools are, at this very late stage in the school holidays, having to vacate areas within school buildings where RAAC has been identified, until arrangements can be made for approved safety mitigations to be put in place.

I am writing to inform you that a DfE-commissioned survey recently identified that RAAC panels were used in the construction of the St Benet's Catholic Primary School building. As a result, the DfE directed the Trust yesterday afternoon that they have taken the difficult decision to temporarily deem St Benet's school as a site that must not reopen next week. As a leadership team, we are working with the DfE now to try and put appropriate safety measures in place, and to recommence the education of our St Benet's children as soon as possible.

As parents ourselves, we appreciate the concerns this may raise and for the urgency with which you are now needing to arrange childcare for next week. We understand the disruption this will cause, however we have not been left with any choice than to temporarily close as we put emergency measures in place. We also appreciate that our children will be disappointed at not coming back to school to see their friends with the usual excitement they have about coming back to school in September.

We are working extremely hard to ensure that the impact on our St Benet's children is kept to an absolute minimum. The DfE are committed to supporting us throughout and will also be assisting with longer-term remediation measures so that we can bring children back together once we are fully confident it is either safe to do so or, where it is deemed necessary, arrange temporary accommodation.



We appreciate that you will be upset at the timing of this decision, as we were yesterday afternoon, so close to the start of the autumn term. We were informed that this decision “has been taken out of an abundance of caution to ensure children and staff safety” and we will be doing all we can ensure that the impact is kept to a minimum and to recommence the education of our St Benet’s children as soon as possible.

I will be in touch again over the weekend once we have been able to work with Mrs Young and her staff team to formulate a plan of what we can do to ensure our St Benet’s community are looked after as best we can. Thank you for your patience and understanding in this matter.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'N. Hurn', with a horizontal line underneath.

Mr Nick Hurn, OBE
CEO

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