



St John Vianney Catholic Primary School

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Mrs A D Thorpe
Head Teacher

13th June 2023

Dear Parents / Carers,

Following our letter dated Saturday 10th June, we wish to update you on the current situation at St. John Vianney Catholic Primary School. After further investigations this week, it has been decided that the school building will need to remain closed for the rest of this week (Monday 12th June 2023 – Friday 16th June 2023) and for at least Monday 19th June and Tuesday 20th June next week. This is to allow for further investigations and recommendations to be made. Obviously, the safety and well-being of our children and staff is of the utmost importance. We are working through various emergency planning scenarios and we will update you via email as soon as decisions have been made.

This temporary closure is due to the presence of RAAC (Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete) which has been found to be present in parts of the school building. RAAC is a lightweight form of concrete with an estimated service life of around 30 years. This material needs to be managed effectively and monitored by a RAAC specialist to ensure buildings remain safe.

The presence of RAAC is not an immediate health risk to pupils or staff. However, it is a substandard building material which can cause weakness to the structure of the building and ceiling panels. The report has indicated major signs of weakness **in some parts of our building** which are considered to be a risk if they are not repaired, maintained or replaced. Therefore, the school building must remain closed, whilst we review our options to make the building safe.

Another school within our BBCET Trust is also in the same position and has had to temporarily close whilst structural investigations take place. Parents may have also seen reports in the media that nationally, public buildings such as schools and hospitals that contain RAAC, are being reviewed at present. During these national investigations, it has been found that historic RAAC panel failures have included significant collapses of whole roof structures, occurring suddenly with very little warning. Whilst this hasn't happened at St John Vianney Catholic Primary School. The decision to temporarily close has been issued with the safety of children and staff in mind.

We know that this must be extremely difficult for families; we appreciate that finding childcare at short notice for parents is challenging with work and other commitments. Home Learning is being offered as a short-term measure only. We are aware that children learn best when taking part in face-to-face teaching so we are working as quickly as possible to resume this for our pupils. Initial plans suggest that we may well be able to consider a partial and temporary re-opening arrangement from Wednesday 21st June. Further information will follow during the course of this week, via email, explaining how this could possibly take place. A Frequently Asked Question document is being drawn up to try to provide answers to some of your queries, we aim to send this information to you on Thursday 15th June.



At this present moment, we are working closely with our partners at DfE, Our Trust BBCET and Newcastle LA to make an emergency action plan for the immediate return of face-to-face teaching, followed by a longer-term plan to manage the RAAC within the building. We apologise once again for this unexpected difficult situation which has arisen and shocked our community.

We thank you for all your continued support and kind words which have been sent in, whilst we work at pace to solve this unprecedented issue.

Please do not hesitate to contact school via email at office@stjohnvianneynewcastle.org

Yours sincerely,

A.D. Thorpe

Mrs A.D. Thorpe
Head teacher