



Mrs A D Thorpe
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7th July 2023

Dear Parents / Carers,

We are delighted to announce that the builders are on track to finish all the remedial works to our school building by Friday 14th July 2023.

This means that, as I informed you earlier this week, we are able to open up in phases from Monday 10th July 2023. All pupils will have full-time face-to-face education from Monday 10th July, still facilitated by some split site work, please see letter dated 6th July 2023.

It is important to emphasise that the initial difficult decision to close on Saturday 10th June 2023, was a precautionary one to address issues raised by a pre-planned survey, which took place on the 9th June 2023, instructed by the Department of Education. The survey suggested that there could be an issue with the RAAC roofing. No accident had taken place and no roofing had failed. Leaders prioritised pupils and staff safety and secured structural specialists to come into school immediately to make it safe. Over the last 6 weeks those specialists have worked side by side with the construction company to ensure that every area of school is totally safe, before we allow anyone back into the building. As you are aware, we have taken a phased approach re-opening areas in the safest and most sensible way.

Grateful thanks must go to the team of builders from Baines Construction, the structural engineers from Arup, the leadership team at Bishop Bewick Catholic Education Trust and all the staff at St John Vianney. Without their swift action and hours of work, a reopening within such a short space of time would never have been achieved.

Baines Construction, under the advice and guidance of the structural engineers from Arup, have now made the building safe to occupy. This has been done by installing additional supports to the roof panels. As a result of this work, children will notice changes to some of the classrooms and communal spaces. The props that have been put in place to provide this additional support will be visible to children.

The main areas affected were: Reception, Year 1, Year 2, Year 3, Year 4, the hall, corridors, intervention rooms, offices and the entrance foyer.

Additional protection has been added to the props for health and safety reasons; this is a temporary measure. During the summer holidays, further work will be completed to make the props more aesthetically pleasing.

Staff have been working hard to ensure that the building, equipment and resources are ready for the children to return on Monday. Please note, school lunches will continue to be packed lunches until the end of term.

Our sincere thanks must go to the staff and pupils at Sacred Heart High School, Sacred Heart Primary, and West Denton Community Centre. Their kindness and hospitality ensured that our children settled so quickly into the new routines and we were all made to feel so welcome. We appreciate that the coach journeys haven't been easy, but we are very proud of the way in which our children have embraced the changes, shown such resilience and appear to have really enjoyed joining new communities. We will extend heartfelt thanks to Mrs Howell, Mrs Brown, Jo from the community Centre and everyone else who have offered support from across our wider Catholic schools and Non-Catholic schools, it has been amazing. Our presence in their schools has undoubtedly meant changes to their routines, but we have been welcomed with open arms; further demonstrating the great partnerships that exist within Bishop Bewick Catholic Education Trust.

Our calendar for the end of term Y6 planned activities will go ahead, with the caveat that the children have been rehearsing in a number of different venues! Staff have also managed to keep all the school trips going, despite the difficulties. The sports day events for every year group will unfortunately not be able to go ahead this term. Further information will follow to confirm all of these arrangements.

Once again, we would like to thank you as parents for your patience, understanding, kind messages and words of support during what has been a very difficult time for all in our community. We look forward to Monday 10th July when we will be back together again, in various forms.

Yours sincerely,

A D Thorpe

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Head teacher