

RAAC: the tip of the iceberg for school building safety

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As issues with the presence in schools of Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete ([RAAC](#)) hit the front pages in late summer, discussions were sparked within the [education sector](#) around the wider issue of the deteriorating condition of the [school estate](#).

Concerns are widespread. The National Audit Office recently reported that around 24,000 school buildings are beyond their initial estimated design life, and around 700,000 pupils are being educated on a site likely to require significant refurbishment.

Lobbying to increase spending on school estates

It was inevitable that sector leaders would be expecting a swift and decisive response to RAAC concerns, while also lobbying for a general increase in spending on school estates.

That has proved to be the case. The National Education Union (NEU), stating that RAAC is just “the tip of the iceberg”, has been calling for reports, photographs and videos to be submitted as evidence of issues with school buildings.

Writing to members, in a message understood to be circulated further by opposition parties, the NEU’s general secretary Daniel Kebede said:

“We will use the evidence on social media, in communications with members and to lobby politicians to pledge the additional funds our schools desperately need.”

Petition demands

The NEU has also launched a petition demanding that the government:

- commits additional investment in school buildings
- publishes the full list of schools suspected of containing RAAC but awaiting further investigation
- makes funding guarantees for schools requiring alternative arrangements.

It is clear that RAAC is not an isolated issue, and that the safety and suitability of the school estate is a subject that sector leaders will be pressing for some time to come.

Further updates and new RAAC resources

In the meantime, and back on the subject of RAAC, the DfE’s Risk Protection Arrangement ([RPA](#)) has published a [helpful FAQ document](#), with guidance on availability of coverage.

The guidance restates the previously given position that the RPA will not cover the cost of works to investigate or replace RAAC; however, it confirms that the DfE has committed to funding capital mitigation works once the presence of RAAC is confirmed.

It goes on to state that there is no requirement to notify the RPA of any RAAC works undertaken; however, if mitigation works exceed £250,000 in value, members will need to obtain commercial insurance for their works or ensure that their contractor is suitably insured with the member as a named party.

If RPA members do suffer incidents of collapse, causing damage to property or injury to anyone present, they are directed to contact claims handlers to determine the extent to which cover will apply.

[RPA's dedicated claims portal](#) →

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