



North Tyneside Council

Quadrant, The Silverlink North,
Cobalt Business Park,
North Tyneside, NE27 0BY

12 March 2024

RE: Findings from initial structural reports

Dear Parent/Carer,

As you may be aware, the ongoing investigation works in Hazlewood Primary School are continuing to take place after a small part of concrete block fell from the ceiling in Fordley Primary School in December 2023.

Hazlewood is one of four schools in the borough that North Tyneside Council, working closely with your headteacher, quickly inspected to review the safety of the building. These checks unfortunately resulted in the closure of specific areas of the school whilst investigations are carried out.

Since then, Narro, the structural engineers commissioned by the Council, have produced their first report. They carried out tests including drilling into the floor to take core samples, and removing and testing blocks and the findings of this are summarised below. Narro are progressing with investigations at the other sites.

What is the issue?

In Fordley Primary School, the report has confirmed that there is currently no concern as to the overall stability of the building or significant collapse.

Early indications from this report suggest the issue is a historical isolated issue connected to the mixture of the concrete used when the school was constructed.

This weak mix was formed into hollow blocks – a common building method in the 1960s when the school was built – and then used as part of a technique which is sometimes referred to as Hollow Concrete Block and Plank.

A crack in a single block can cause weaknesses across the other blocks they are positioned next to. This does not create issues with stability for the whole building, just small, isolated areas, and individual blocks.

This method is no longer used in the UK and no specific information on structural performance or failure of this type of floor slab construction have been found during construction.

This first report allows us to determine the cause and possible solutions to this issue but makes it clear that we don't expect this to be easily resolved.

What does this mean for Hazelwood?

There is no concern to the overall stability or safety of the building and the parts of your school currently open can continue to be used safely.

The concern is limited to the condition of individual blocks, and we are waiting for structural reports specific to Hazlewood.

We would like to reiterate that all school buildings in North Tyneside followed Health and Safety laws, had regular checks and maintenance programmes and the issue identified is not something that showed up in any of the checks or audits.

Working together with the individual schools, the Department for Education, and structural engineers we will start to explore remedial works that will allow school buildings to reopen when it is safe and appropriate to do so.

Face-to-face learning

We are pleased that interim arrangements are in place for all pupils to have access to face-to-face learning, here is a clear guide as to where each year group are currently based:

- Nursery and Reception (x2): Early Years Block
- Years 1 (Mrs Snell), Year 1 (Miss Gould) and Year 2 (Miss Thorton): Classes situated in the back yard
- Year 2 (GK), Years 3 (LP), Year 3 (RS): Marquee.
- Years 4 and 5: Wideopen Library
- Year 6: Air Cadet building

- OOSC will reopen for Nursery, Reception, Year 1 & Year 2 families only (located in Early Years unit)

We know that this is far from an ideal situation, however our priority has always been the safety of students and staff which is why a significant proportion of the site remains inaccessible.

The temporary toilet facilities alongside the marquee are not what we ordered, and this has been addressed as a matter of urgency with the supplier. We expect a higher standard of toilet and washing facilities to arrive today.

We hope that today's information gives you a better understanding of why we've had to take the precautionary steps we have.

As plans for medium- and long-term solutions are developed, arrangements may change and will keep you informed of any proposals.

Thank you once again for your understanding.

Julie Firth
Director Children's Services



North Tyneside Council

Stephane Bommel
Headteacher



Hazlewood Primary School

