

Education Committee

Foundations of Learning: replacing RAAC and securing school buildings: Government Response

Eighth Special Report of Session 2024–26

HC 1842

Education Committee

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Eighth Special Report

The Education Committee published its Seventh Report, [Foundations of Learning: replacing RAAC and securing school buildings](#) (HC 1399), on 11 February 2026. The Government Response was received on 9 April 2026 and is appended below.

Appendix: Government Response

Introduction

The Government welcomes the Education Committee's Seventh Report of Session 2024–26, *Foundations of Learning: replacing RAAC and securing school buildings* (HC 1399), and thanks the Committee for its thorough examination of Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) in schools and for the broader consideration of the condition, management and long-term resilience of the education estate.

The Committee's findings contribute meaningfully to our wider programme of work, set out in the [Education Estates Strategy](#), which sets out plans for an education estate that supports opportunity for all. It is backed by a 10-year plan for a decade of national renewal to transform schools and colleges in England.

High-quality and inspiring school and college buildings are essential to delivering world-class education and creating the conditions for all children and young people to achieve and thrive. We know the built environment is important – evidence suggests that learning in buildings that are in

poor condition can have a negative impact on attainment;¹ the physical environment can have a significant positive impact on the wellbeing and engagement for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND); and access to nature can improve educational outcomes, health and wellbeing.

At the core of our strategy is a shift to more proactive management, long-term strategic maintenance and more renewal of the existing estate. This is alongside building and rebuilding where renewal is not possible and ensuring there are high-quality places from early years to post-16.

We have committed to permanently removing RAAC from schools and colleges. By 2029, every school and college in England that is not being substantially rebuilt will be RAAC-free, and every school with RAAC needing to be rebuilt through the School Rebuilding Programme (SRP) will be in delivery.

This response sets out the Government's position on each of the Committee's conclusions and recommendations. We remain committed to working closely with academy trusts, local authorities and other responsible bodies as we work together to deliver a decade of national renewal for schools and colleges in England.

Managing safety risks in high risk buildings

The DfE should require all responsible bodies managing potentially problematic structures within the school estate to undertake a structured survey and risk assessment of higher risk building types at least every three to five years. (Recommendation, Paragraph 39)

Recommendation: Partially accepted

The most significant factor affecting the condition of school buildings is their maintenance history. The department is taking steps to address known issues in buildings using Intergrid or Laingspan construction or that have RAAC panels. It is not aware of any other historic construction materials or techniques that pose a high risk provided they have been well maintained.

Responsible bodies are responsible for the maintenance of their buildings and ensuring they are safe to occupy and operate. The department agrees that regular surveys are essential for responsible bodies to identify changes

¹ Reference based on literature reviews undertaken in the US and UK including: The Relationship Between School Building Condition and Student Achievement, Earthman (2017); A Critical Examination of the Literature; PwC (2000, 2007, 2009), Williams et al (2014), McCulloch & Thomson (2016).

in their buildings' condition and plan effective maintenance. The School Estates Management Standards, published in 2025, set an expectation that responsible bodies will have up-to-date condition surveys for their buildings. The frequency for updating a condition survey will depend on a building's characteristics such as age, condition and construction type. Responsible bodies should follow the recommendations of condition surveys including carrying out specialist structural surveys to investigate specific issues in their buildings. From autumn 2026, we will ask responsible bodies to make a light touch annual return via the new digital service Manage Your Education Estate to confirm they are meeting the School Estate Management Standards. For those who are not meeting the standards, we will put in place an estate management capability support plan – an informal agreement with the responsible body setting out actions and support to bring estate management up to the expected standard within 12 months.

The department has published guidance for responsible bodies on the monitoring and maintenance of construction types commonly found in the post-World War II estate. This guidance will be updated by summer 2026 to include findings from the research project discussed in the following recommendation.

The DfE should release the full results of its system-build research as soon as they are available and no later than its own timescale of Spring 2026 and set out clear actions based on those findings.

(Recommendation, Paragraph 58)

Recommendation: Partially accepted

The department is committed to publishing findings from the Older Buildings Research. We anticipate receiving technical findings in Spring 2026 and will assess how these can support delivery of the Education Estates Strategy. Before the summer we will publish a summary of a technical findings and outline the steps we will take to address them.

We recommend that the Government establish a long-term programme to replace or modernise system-built blocks most at risk, aligning investment with safety priorities. (Recommendation, Paragraph 59)

Recommendation: Partially accepted

The Education Estates Strategy, set out a long-term plan for the education estate. At its core is more proactive management, long-term strategic maintenance and renewal that prioritises condition need, risk and resilience alongside delivering high-quality new buildings where they are needed.

We are investing almost £20 billion in the School Rebuilding Programme through to 2034–35, delivering rebuilding projects at over 750 schools. There are over 519 schools already in the programme, with well over half

in delivery, and a further 250 schools will be selected by early 2027. Places will be prioritised for schools and sixth-form colleges in the worst condition and in the local areas where places are needed now and in the future. The nomination round is open with guidance and criteria on GOV.UK. Due to the variety of building methods and materials in the estate, we do not anticipate including any specific system or construction types as a matter of course.

The Government has also committed to investing almost £3 billion per year by 2034–35 in capital maintenance to improve the condition of the school and college estate. This is alongside a new Renewal and Retrofit Programme backed by over £700 million to 2029–30. This will deliver renewal projects to improve the condition of school and college buildings and increase resilience to climate change so buildings can last for decades to come and are net zero ready.

Asbestos Management and Compliance

We further recommend the Government commission a national digital register of asbestos in the education estate and annual reporting on HSE compliance and asbestos removal achieved through capital programmes. (Recommendation, Paragraph 40) Wider concerns about the condition and maintenance of the school estate.

Recommendation: Do not accept

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is continuing its work to deliver on the accepted recommendations of the 2022 Work and Pensions Select Committee report into HSE's approach to asbestos management.

The existing legal requirement set out in the Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012 requires duty holders to identify and locate asbestos within their premises and share this information with everyone who may possibly, in the course of their work activity, be at risk of exposure to asbestos.

This existing information would be duplicated in a new central digital register of asbestos in non-domestic buildings, which would require significant resource from duty holders and government to implement with no clear indicator that asbestos exposure risks would be improved. It could also undermine the active requirement on duty holders to manage asbestos in non-domestic premises on an ongoing basis.

However, understanding the size and scale of Great Britain's asbestos legacy is an important step to developing an asbestos removal strategy and HSE is working to better understand this through the exploration of a census/survey approach, initially focussing on the scale of asbestos in the

central Government estate. This will help to provide a more objective and reliable evidence base to inform future decision making and a longer-term strategy for the management and removal of asbestos. DfE will of course support whatever emerges from this and feed in data we hold.

Building Capability in Responsible Bodies

We recommend that the DfE provide targeted guidance, training, and funding to ensure all responsible bodies, particularly smaller Multi [1] Academy Trusts, can meet estate management standards effectively.

(Recommendation, Paragraph 51)

Recommendation: Accept

Effective and proactive estate management is key to maintaining a high-quality estate and preventing issues materialising that can disrupt education. To support responsible bodies to manage their estates well we will set clear standards and expectations alongside making it easier for responsible bodies to access guidance, tools and information.

We have already set out clear expectations in the School Estate Management Standards, published in April 2025. The School Estate Management Standards are designed for all schools and responsible bodies to manage their estate effectively, and to navigate, prioritise, and build on good practice requirements and expectations. The standards include a ‘fully effective’ standard for estate management that every responsible body for schools should aim to meet. From autumn 2026, we will ask responsible bodies to make an annual return via Manage Your Education Estate to confirm they are meeting the School Estate Management Standards. For those who are not meeting the standards, we will put in place an estate management capability support plan – an informal agreement with the responsible body setting out actions and support to bring estate management up to the expected standard within 12 months. We are developing an equivalent estate management standard for FE colleges by this summer to ensure all responsible bodies are fully supported to manage their estates well.

We have launched a new digital service, Manage Your Education Estate for responsible bodies, schools and colleges to bring together the department’s estates-related guidance, data, tools, programmes and funding in one place. In addition to making it easier to access resources through Manage Your Education Estate, we will provide additional materials such as a digital self-assessment tool, templates, relevant data and practical examples of how to meet the Standards.

The Government has given a long-term commitment backed by long-term funding through to 2034–35 to improve the condition of schools and colleges. The government is investing almost £3 billion per year by 2034–35 in capital maintenance, rising from £2.4 billion in 2025–26.

Strategy, Delivery and Transparency

The Government should publish and implement its promised estate strategy without delay, setting clear milestones for reducing the maintenance backlog and replacing life-expired buildings.

(Recommendation, Paragraph 50)

Recommendation: Accept (already implemented)

On 11 February 2026 the Government published the Education Estates Strategy: a decade of national renewal. At the core of the education estates strategy is a shift to more proactive management, long-term strategic maintenance and more renewal of the existing estate. This is alongside continuing to deliver high-quality build and rebuilding projects where they are needed, tackling the worst condition buildings and creating suitable places for children and young people to achieve and thrive. In the short-term we will need to increase capacity in our rebuilding programmes to tackle the backlog of poor condition and life expired buildings whilst also increasing preventative maintenance to slow the flow of buildings becoming life expired. The Strategy sets out clear milestones for implementation and includes detailed milestones in annex A for responsible bodies, schools and colleges.

The Government must maintain and publish accurate, up-to-date data on the condition of the school estate, including progress against remediation and rebuild targets, to build public confidence and accountability. (Recommendation, Paragraph 52)

Recommendation: Accept

The Education Estates Strategy sets out how the government will go further on data and digital transformation to enable responsible bodies to use data and digital services to manage their estate effectively, and to provide both the department and responsible bodies better insights on the estate so that collectively we can make informed decisions on what interventions are needed.

This builds on the consistent and high-quality data collected through the Condition Data Collection Programme. The first Condition Data Collection (CDC1) programme ran from 2017 to 2019, and covered government funded schools in England. A summary of the CDC1 data can be accessed in the

CDC1 key findings report here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/condition-data-collection-2-cdc2-programme>. Individual reports were shared with schools and the full set of data is presented at school or regional level in the House of Commons library here: <https://depositedpapers.parliament.uk/depositedpaper/2285521/files>. The Condition Data Collection 2 (CDC2) will provide an update on the condition of the government funded school and FE college buildings. This will be completed later this year.

Going forward, we will support responsible bodies to collect data on their estates and adopt digital tools and solutions, with the ambition for all responsible bodies to be collecting and sharing data by 2029–30. We will start pilots in 2026–27 to test the approach of responsible bodies collecting their own data and using digital tools in line with common standards before national rollout planned from autumn 2027. We will publish common data and digital structures, standards and guides from April 2026 to help responsible bodies collect and commission data and digital services that meet a common minimum standard so that data is consistent and comparable across the whole estate. We will introduce two-way data sharing by 2028 providing both responsible bodies and the department better insights on the estate.

The government provides updates on delivery progress for programmes, including permanently removing RAAC from schools and colleges and for the School Rebuilding Programme. The most recent update was included in the Education Estates Strategy published on 11 February 2026 which set out that RAAC has been permanently removed from 71 schools and colleges, and that 51 schools have been rebuilt through the School Rebuilding Programme with well over half of those in the current pipeline in delivery.

Inclusive and Accessible School Buildings

Reflecting on the Committee’s wider recent work, particularly on SEND, we recommend that the Government seeks to ensure that when investment is being made to address safety concerns and to replace or refurbish the most outdated school buildings, it aligns this expenditure with its objective of ensuring that mainstream schools are inclusive of children with SEND and ensures that all investment delivers school buildings which are inclusive for children with a wide range of SEND needs and provide an excellent learning environment for all children.

(Recommendation, Paragraph 60)

Recommendation: Accept

The Education Estates Strategy sets out plans for an education estate that supports opportunity for all, from early years to post-16, with an education estate that is safe, suitable, sustainable and sufficiently sized. We want buildings to be inclusive by design so that all pupils, especially those with SEND, can learn in high-quality, comfortable and supportive environments.

We will support more children and young people with SEND to thrive in their local mainstream school. We are investing at least £3.7 billion in high needs capital funding between 2025–26 and 2029–30 to create 60,000 specialist places. This will support the expansion of inclusion bases and adaptations to improve accessibility and inclusivity in mainstream settings which can have a positive impact on attendance, behaviour and wellbeing, especially for pupils with SEND – for example, creating breakout rooms where pupils can access interventions and support, improving access to nature, and providing a more comfortable sensory environment. We will publish new dedicated guidance in spring 2026 to support the identification of targeted, high-impact adaptations in schools. This will cover inclusive design principles for adaptations to the existing estate that promote inclusion and accessibility and will support our wider plan to adapt the education estate so that more children and young people with SEND can thrive in their local mainstream schools.

All buildings delivered by the Department for Education follow our design specifications, delivering buildings that support inclusive and accessible provision for both mainstream and specialist settings. Buildings will not only be future proofed for climate change but will reflect inclusive approaches and best practice for accessibility to support children and young people with SEND. From this point forward, all School Rebuilding Programme projects will be assessed for the need for additional space for inclusion bases, alongside school-based nurseries or Best Start Family Hubs, as set out in the Education Estates Strategy.

Schools and sixth-form colleges that are being rebuilt through the School Rebuilding Programme follow our design specifications. As part of delivery, our inclusively designed projects should incorporate clear wayfinding, good colour use, comfortable lighting, acoustics, ventilation and temperature, and access to support spaces. Our new design specifications are also available across the sector.