



North Tyneside Council

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

11 March 2024

RE: Findings from initial structural reports

Dear Parent/Carer,

As you may be aware, investigation works in your school are taking place after a small part of concrete block fell from the ceiling in Fordley Primary School in December 2023.

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

Since then, Narro, the structural engineers commissioned by the Council, have produced their first report which focuses on Fordley Primary School as they were the first school identified. They carried out tests including drilling into the floor to take core samples and removing and testing blocks. The findings of this report 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 for the overall stability and safety of the building.

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

The weak concrete mix means the blocks are brittle and susceptible to cracking. This 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 next to them. 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 these investigations.

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

What does this mean for Grasmere?

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 Grasmere to provide further clarity.

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.

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

Kerry Lillico
Headteacher



Grasmere Academy