



the National Parent Forum of Scotland

Dear James,

Many thanks for the opportunity to express our views on the issues around safety of school buildings, remediating these issues, and any lessons that should be learnt for the future.

Firstly, I think it goes without saying that parents expect their children to be safe at school. That cost cutting measures should never be put before safety in any situation involving our children.

I have discussed this with my forum and the following points have been raised:

- Self-evaluation of building projects is simply not appropriate. Parents want to know that a third party has ensured that the school building is safe. Glasgow have the largest school estate and yet the fewest problems, and believe this is due to having always employed a Clerk of Works. We would like to see this across Scotland.
- We are pleased that Local Authorities across Scotland have been checking their school buildings, it is encouraging that the possible problems are being taken very seriously and time is being committed to checks.
- In terms of lessons for the future, as with all school / local authority/ parent interactions, communication is key. Parents need to receive prompt, jargon free direct updates about anything that impacts on their child. Whilst parents can completely appreciate emergency situations happen, they should be prioritised in communications to limit anxiety and stress. If information held is limited there is still a need to communicate with parents to tell them that!
- The logistics of managing school closures are bound to be complex but parents would always look for minimising travelling distance.

I hope this is helpful for the committee,
Kind regards,

Joanna Murphy, Chair, National Parent Forum of Scotland

[5 June 2017]