



House of Commons  
Committee of Public Accounts

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# The condition of school buildings

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**Second Report of Session 2023–24**

*Report, together with formal minutes relating to the report*

*Ordered by the House of Commons  
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## Summary

The Department for Education (DfE) provides funding and support to those who manage the school estate, so that children can learn in safe and well-maintained buildings, maximising their chances of success. Given this, it is extremely concerning that DfE does not have a good enough understanding of safety risks across school buildings for it to fully quantify and mitigate these risks and keep children and staff in schools safe. This includes an understanding of how reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC), which may lead to a sudden building collapse, has been used alongside asbestos, which we have raised as a concern for several years.

Given how crucial it is to get safety matters right, it is shocking and disappointing that, at the time of our evidence session in September 2023, DfE could not provide basic information on, for example, how many specialist surveys to identify RAAC were outstanding, or how many temporary classrooms had been provided to schools affected by RAAC. Nor could it provide a clear and firm commitment on when RAAC issues would be addressed.

The emerging issues with RAAC add further weight to demonstrating the impact that short-term thinking and decision-making can have on long-term value for money. The school estate has deteriorated to the point where an alarming 700,000 pupils are learning in a school that needs major rebuilding or refurbishment, impacting their learning experiences and ultimately limiting their educational achievements. All pupils have an equal right to learn in safe and well-maintained buildings, but their chances of doing so are too often affected by factors such as their geographical location and the capability of those responsible for managing their school buildings.

It is encouraging to see that, alongside its annual maintenance and repair funding of £1.8 billion in 2022–23, DfE has packages of work to help address some of the most serious building issues, including a plan for refurbishment and rebuilding in 500 schools over 10 years. However, this work only touches the surface of problems across the school estate. DfE must do more to mitigate critical safety and value for money concerns, and then demonstrate that it has clear plans to address the scale of challenge and uncertainty it faces in the coming years.

## Introduction

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There are 21,600 state schools in England, educating 8.4 million pupils. Between them, these schools have around 64,000 buildings, which can vary in age and design even on the same site. The ‘responsible body’ in control of the school—usually the relevant local authority, academy trust or voluntary-aided body—must manage the condition of its buildings and ensure they are safe. DfE has overall responsibility for the school system in England, setting the policy and statutory framework and bearing ultimate accountability for achieving value for money from the funding provided to schools, including for school buildings.

DfE distributes funding to responsible bodies, collects data on the condition of school buildings, conducts surveys on specific issues, and itself delivers some estate-related programmes. It has a clearly articulated principle to rebuild schools in the worst condition while allocating enough funding to allow responsible bodies to maintain the rest of the school estate. DfE considers that exclusively spending money on the poorest condition buildings would not deliver best long-term value for money.

## Conclusions and recommendations

1. **DfE still has incomplete knowledge on the number and condition of schools with RAAC, with questions about the reliability of some of its information.** In mid-September 2023, DfE reported that 98% of schools had responded to a RAAC questionnaire that it issued in March 2022, meaning that several hundred responses were outstanding. However, this set of responses included some which were inconclusive, while other schools are resubmitting their responses given renewed media focus on RAAC. DfE's guidance about the questionnaire explained that an estates manager or appropriately qualified building surveyor should make the relevant judgements. But DfE is concerned about the potential for schools to have submitted 'false negative' responses, and it plans to conduct sample checks where schools suggest they do not have RAAC. Where a school responds to say it believes RAAC is present, it will take a number of weeks to conduct the specialist survey to confirm this. With RAAC now more widely recognised as a problem, there is a greater risk that experts who can help identify and manage RAAC will may be in short supply. NHS England, for example, has told us that there is a limited number of specialist engineers.

**Recommendation 1a:** *DfE needs to urgently assess the risks of inaccuracies within RAAC questionnaire returns and specialist surveys, so that it considers these risks in its overall approach, decision-making and guidance.*

b) *DfE should expedite its programme of specialist surveys where RAAC is suspected, and in due course publish the full set of results so that the extent of the RAAC problem is known.*

2. **DfE's risk appetite regarding the school estate, and how this aligns with its recent approach on RAAC, appears unclear.** Since summer 2021, DfE has recognised a significant safety risk across the school estate. In spring 2023, it continued to assess that its mitigations would not bring the risk likelihood down to acceptable levels, and considered that the most effective further mitigation would be an expanded School Rebuilding Programme. In late August 2023, DfE took what it considers to be a highly risk-averse approach of advising all schools with confirmed RAAC to avoid using spaces where RAAC was present, regardless of any assessment of its structural condition. It is unclear whether DfE took this action because it realised its RAAC assessment and assurance process was insufficient, or because it now no longer wanted to accept any risks across the school estate. Where schools have responded to the questionnaire saying they believe they have RAAC, but are still awaiting a specialist survey to confirm it, they are not being advised to take any mitigating action. DHSC has established a £685 million fund to 2024–25 to mitigate RAAC, and has committed to remove RAAC from the NHS estate by 2035. DfE has made no such financial or practical commitments.

**Recommendation 2a:** *DfE should clarify its risk appetite with regard to safety issues across the school estate and ensure that this feeds through into consistent decision-making, with a nominated senior official in charge.*

b) *In line with the approach already taken by DHSC, DfE should make clear when and how it plans to have eradicated RAAC from the school estate.*

3. **Schools are uncertain about the support they can access to mitigate RAAC-related issues, and how they will be reimbursed financially.** The temporary classrooms that DfE is providing will generally be for those schools that were known to be affected by RAAC before the late August 2023 change of risk approach. DfE could not provide us with a figure on how many were being provided. DfE has undertaken to pay for the capital costs incurred by schools, but its approach to revenue funding, and paying for surveys carried out by schools, is less clear, particularly if a school has significant reserves. DfE is still to set the funding application process, but has accepted the need for some checking and controls to be in place. While each school has access to a caseworker, anecdotal evidence suggests that many are struggling to understand DfE's approach, and are concerned about a lack of fairness in terms of access to temporary support and how that support will be paid for.

**Recommendation 3: DfE needs to re-examine its process for funding temporary mitigation measures, ensuring it achieves the right balance between accessibility and value for money, communicating this clearly and consistently to schools.**

4. **There remains a lack of transparency for schools, parents and communities on where RAAC exists and how long it will take to be fixed.** DfE was unable to provide answers to important questions such as how many specialist surveys to confirm RAAC are outstanding and likely to be carried out, or how many pupils were affected by RAAC-related school closures at the start of the 2023–24 school year. DfE says it is looking to release information in a managed and routine way as it does for other management information. After our evidence session DfE reported on 19 October that RAAC had at that point been confirmed in 214 educational settings, of which 202 were providing face-to-face education for all pupils. Despite suggestions in early September that the RAAC situation would be resolved in a matter of weeks, DfE is aware that some cases are too complicated to be dealt with in this timeframe, and that some schools will not even be identified as having RAAC until later.

**Recommendation 4: DfE must write to the Committee, alongside its Treasury Minute response, with its latest assessment of the scale of the RAAC problem, its overall plan to deal with it, and the likely associated costs.**

5. **DfE has incomplete knowledge of the prevalence of asbestos across the school estate.** In May 2022, DfE agreed with our recommendation that it should urgently chase the 7% of schools that had not responded to the asbestos management survey it launched in 2018. In July 2023, DfE explained that the proportion of schools on which it was unsighted had since fallen to just over 4%, although this still represents almost 1,000 schools. Work on DfE's ongoing second Condition Data Collection programme (CDC2) will not specifically check for asbestos, but it will include a review of schools' asbestos management plans and compliance with guidance requiring schools to have an onsite asbestos register. The unexpected presence of asbestos has complicated ongoing work to address other issues such as RAAC. The two can both be present in the same building. Data from the Health and Safety Executive suggest, that since 2011, around 11 teachers or ex-teachers have died from asbestos-related conditions each year.



**Recommendation 5:** *As soon as possible, DfE should provide us with evidence that it has a full picture of asbestos across the school estate, having received survey returns from all schools and ensuring that every relevant school has an adequate asbestos management plan in place.*

6. **Unacceptable numbers of pupils are learning in poorly maintained or potentially unsafe buildings.** The quality of school buildings has an impact on pupils' learning experience, and ultimately on attainment levels and teacher retention. An estimated 700,000 pupils attend the 1,200 schools that have been considered for the School Rebuilding Programme, which aims to rebuild or refurbish those buildings in the most need given safety matters or their poor general condition (which could include problems with, for example, roofs, windows or heating systems). DfE will select 500 schools to be included in the programme. DfE's first Condition Data Collection programme (CDC1), conducted between 2017 and 2019, found that just over 2% of building components were in 'poor' or 'bad' condition, but this covers a large number of schools.

**Recommendation 6:** *Within the next year, DfE should develop a package of support and good practice to help those responsible for mitigating the negative impact on pupils and teachers of schools that are in poor condition but cannot yet be fixed.*

7. **DfE has focused on reactive measures addressing immediate building concerns that often fail to take account of longer-term value for money considerations.** DfE has committed to providing funding for all schools that face critical and immediate safety risks but are unable to carry out appropriate remedial work themselves. DfE has been allocated school rebuilding funding equating to £1.3 billion a year – allowing it to rebuild 50 schools a year, rather than the 200 a year that it set out in its Spending Review 2020 case. A significant number of the schools chosen for DfE's latest capital programme—the School Rebuilding Programme—have been selected in response to structural or safety issues that responsible bodies have identified as serious enough to mean buildings are at risk of closure or pose a risk to staff and pupils. DfE told us that many of the 100 schools still to be selected for the programme will be chosen because they have serious issues with RAAC. As such, many other schools will not get on to the School Rebuilding Programme even though a longer-term value for money assessment based on their poor condition would lead to the conclusion that they should be rebuilt. With regard to fire safety measures, DfE's cost-benefit calculations often lead it to opt for expensive retrofitting rather than initial inclusion in a new school design which is cheaper.

**Recommendation 7:** *Within the next year, DfE should set out its strategy for encouraging responsible bodies to carry out timely and effective repairs to better protect longer-term value for money. It should also reconsider its value for money analysis on fitting fire safety measures.*

8. **The School Rebuilding Programme is behind its initial schedule for getting contracts in place and schools built.** DfE announced the School Rebuilding Programme in June 2020. By March 2023, it had delivered one project compared with a forecast four, and awarded 24 contracts compared with a forecast 83. Price inflation and other market conditions have made it difficult to find contractors. DfE

has reacted by offering risk-sharing arrangements that are more attractive to the building sector and by standardising the design of buildings. DfE concedes that it will not be able to catch up on projects where it is already behind the planned timeframe, but it is confident it will stay on track for upcoming projects. We have seen how changes in the external environment, such as movements in inflation rates, may affect programmes and create complexities. These factors may mean a programme can no longer achieve its intended outcomes, or it is too costly to do so.

**Recommendation 8:** *DfE should provide us with assurance that it has a good understanding of how current and likely future challenges will affect the timetable and costs for the School Rebuilding Programme, including by carrying out appropriate scenario-planning should likely and significant risks materialise.*

9. **There is considerable variation across the school estate, including regional disparity in the condition of school buildings and differences in school types and governance models, which will influence the type of support DfE needs to provide.** The map of school building condition shows a broad north-south divide, with higher need in the north. However, a more granular assessment also suggests that schools in rural and coastal areas face particular difficulties. DfE does not currently have a mechanism for directing capital funding towards those areas identified as meriting particular support to tackle weak educational outcomes. For around one-third of the 1,000 schools with the highest level of need, the responsible body did not make an application for the School Rebuilding Programme. DfE has also found that a proportion of schools in most need do not apply for, or are unaware of, the maintenance and repair funding that is available to them. Voluntary-aided schools (which are typically faith-based) often have good relationships with their respective oversight bodies, but administrative and funding arrangements are inconsistent. Some small local authorities, which are responsible for only a few maintained schools, may lack estate management capability but are currently excluded from DfE's Capital Advisers Programme.

**Recommendation 9:** *DfE should review its guidance, support and financial allocations designed to help reduce variation in the condition of school buildings and the capability of those managing the estate, and make improvements where necessary.*

10. **It is unclear whether decisions concerned with addressing the condition of the estate are coordinated with those relating to the need for school places.** Historically, there have been instances of school closures just before another demographic wave of children that means more school places have to be created. More recently, in some areas—for example, London—we have seen diminishing school rolls which raises the question of potential closures. Both situations may complicate decisions about which schools to maintain or refurbish. There is no requirement for responsible bodies to work together to, for example, consider possible closures or amalgamations of schools on borough boundaries to ensure the most efficient option is chosen. Given the recognised autonomy of responsible bodies, DfE's regional directors do not typically play a strong role in school closure decisions, but they engage with schools and other bodies to discuss such issues. From a departmental perspective, when considering School Rebuilding Programme applications, DfE checks the forecast pupil numbers to ensure that the school merits a full rebuild. Ideally, DfE

would like more school places than there are children, to support parental choice in the system. In some places, sites no longer needed for primary schools might be re-purposed to provide more childcare and early years provision, or opportunities for more special and alternative provision.

**Recommendation 10:** *DfE should consider how local authorities can best be supported, and put in place the necessary measures, to ensure that the need for high quality places across the estate is considered when decisions are taken on reducing school places locally.*

# 1 Building safety issues in schools

1. On the basis of a report by the Comptroller and Auditor General, we first took evidence from the Department for Education (DfE) about the condition of school buildings in England in July 2023.<sup>1</sup> On 31 August 2023, DfE significantly changed its safety guidance for schools that were confirmed to have reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC) – a lightweight form of concrete susceptible to structural failure that could lead to a school building suddenly collapsing.<sup>2</sup> In response, we took evidence from DfE again in September 2023.

2. In January 2023, there were 21,600 state schools in England, educating 8.4 million pupils. Between them, the 21,600 state schools have around 64,000 buildings, which can vary in age and design even on the same school site. DfE has overall responsibility for the school system in England. It sets the policy and statutory framework and is ultimately accountable for securing value for money from the funding provided to schools, including for school buildings. It provides guidance and support, and collects information relating to building condition and safety, which it uses to inform funding allocations. DfE distributes funding to local authorities, academy trusts and voluntary-aided bodies. It also collects data on the condition of school buildings, conducts surveys on specific issues, and delivers some programmes itself.<sup>3</sup>

3. The ‘responsible body’ in control of the school, usually the relevant local authority, academy trust or voluntary-aided body, must manage the condition of its buildings and ensure they are safe. Responsible bodies use DfE funding to discharge these duties – maintaining and repairing buildings across their schools, and sometimes commissioning more significant rebuilding work.<sup>4</sup>

4. In its Spending Review 2020 case, DfE reported that £7 billion could represent the best-practice level of annual capital funding. It recommended £5.3 billion a year as the capital funding required to maintain schools and mitigate the most serious risks of building failure once it had expanded its School Rebuilding Programme. HM Treasury subsequently allocated an average of £3.1 billion a year.<sup>5</sup> Given affordability constraints, in recent years DfE’s overarching principle has been to rebuild schools in the worst condition while allocating enough funding to allow responsible bodies to maintain the rest of the school estate and keep buildings safe and operational. It considers that exclusively spending money on the poorest condition buildings would not be the best approach, as it would mean ignoring ongoing maintenance, leading to inefficiencies and poor longer-term value for money.<sup>6</sup>

## Incomplete knowledge about RAAC

5. In March 2022, DfE sent all responsible bodies a questionnaire to understand whether they had carried out work to identify RAAC in their schools. By May 2023, DfE had received a meaningful response from only 6,300 (42%) of the nearly 15,000 target schools

1 C&AG’s Report, [Condition of school buildings](#), Session 2022–23, HC 1516, 28 June 2023

2 Department for Education, [New guidance for schools impacted by RAAC](#), 31 August 2023

3 C&AG’s Report, paras 1.2, 1.4

4 C&AG’s Report, para 1.5

5 C&AG’s Report, para 6

6 C&AG’s Report, para 1.7

with buildings that may contain RAAC. Of the 65 schools where DfE had confirmed the presence of RAAC, 24 required immediate action to ensure pupil and staff safety, which may in some cases involve school closure.<sup>7</sup> In July 2023, DfE told us that in some cases RAAC may be present in a small and isolated part of a school, but in other cases it may have a much wider impact. It explained that it had investigated RAAC in over 300 schools, and that a RAAC survey was taking place in a school every two hours.<sup>8</sup> However, DfE was unable to tell us how many schools were closed because of RAAC.<sup>9</sup>

6. In September 2023, DfE explained that it had received a questionnaire response from 98% of the target schools, meaning that a few hundred responses were outstanding.<sup>10</sup> But DfE also told us that it had received some inconclusive responses, which it was following up with responsible bodies, and that some schools had felt the need to resubmit their responses in light of the significant attention on RAAC.<sup>11</sup>

7. We asked DfE how confident it was about the accuracy of the questionnaire responses. DfE told us it had issued guidance advising school estate managers on how to complete the questionnaire, and if they were unsure, they should seek assistance from an appropriately qualified building surveyor.<sup>12</sup> However, DfE also expressed concern about ‘false negatives,’ and explained that it planned to conduct a sample check of schools which had said they did not have RAAC, which would include surveyors going out to some sites. If that sample check were to show material numbers of false negatives, DfE would need to consider whether more surveying was required.<sup>13</sup>

8. DfE told us that it had increased its surveying capacity. As such, when a school responds to say it suspects that RAAC is present, DfE told us it could get a survey carried out to confirm this in a few weeks.<sup>14</sup> However, the increasing number of sectors in which RAAC is suspected to be present may place excess demand on the supply of people qualified to assess it. At our evidence session earlier in September on the New Hospital Programme, for example, NHS England told us that government bodies were approaching a limited number of specialist engineers for assistance.<sup>15</sup>

## DfE’s risk appetite regarding safety on the school estate

9. Since summer 2021, DfE has recognised the significant safety risk across the school estate – its corporate risk register shows as ‘critical and very likely’ the risk that building collapse or failure could cause death or injury. DfE’s main mitigations have involved gathering intelligence on the estate, funding maintenance and rebuilding, offering additional financial support in exceptional circumstances, and providing responsible bodies with support and guidance. It has assessed that these mitigations would still not bring the risk likelihood down to acceptable levels. It believes the most effective further mitigation would be an expanded School Rebuilding Programme.<sup>16</sup>

7 July 2023 session, Q 5; C&AG’s Report, paras 2.12, 2.14–2.15

8 July 2023 session, Qq 5, 13

9 July 2023 session, Qq 5–7

10 September 2023 session, Qq127, 134–136

11 September 2023 session, Qq 172, 187–188

12 September 2023 session, Q 172

13 September 2023 session, Qq 178–179, 186

14 September 2023 session, Q 127

15 Public Accounts Committee, oral evidence, [New Hospital Programme](#), HC 1754, 7 September 2023, Q 6

16 C&AG’s Report, paras 2.22, 2.24

10. In September 2023, DfE described three recent cases (only one of which was at a school in England) where RAAC that would have been, or was, considered non-critical on visual inspection had suddenly failed. DfE also clarified that the specialist surveys being carried out to assess the presence and condition of RAAC in schools are principally visual inspections, intended to identify whether the RAAC is in a critical or non-critical condition. However, sometimes more intrusive surveys are required to establish the presence of RAAC, for example in roof or wall voids. DfE explained that, in light of the three recent cases of failure, it decided that the measures advised for non-critical RAAC in schools—monitoring carefully, and looking out for cracks and defects—would be very difficult to achieve across the school estate, particularly where estate managers are not on site all the time. It told us it had therefore decided to take a more risk-averse approach, and advise that all spaces with RAAC, whether assessed as critical or non-critical, should be closed.<sup>17</sup> We asked DfE to explain further the reason for this change of approach, but its answers failed to clarify whether the change was due to DfE realising its RAAC assessment and assurance process was insufficient to provide the risk assurance needed, or whether DfE had changed its risk appetite in principle.<sup>18</sup>

11. The schools that have recently responded to DfE’s questionnaire saying they believe RAAC is present in their buildings are likely to be waiting a number of weeks for this to be confirmed by a specialist survey.<sup>19</sup> DfE’s guidance for these schools is not to close the spaces where they suspect RAAC to be present, but to make a contingency plan for what they will do if RAAC is confirmed.<sup>20</sup>

12. DHSC is providing £685 million of funding, to the end of 2025, to mitigate RAAC in hospitals. It has also committed to eradicating RAAC across the NHS estate by 2035.<sup>21</sup> DfE has not proactively set out funding commitments or eradication targets, and instead explained that its priorities are to identify RAAC, move children out from under it, and then mitigate it.<sup>22</sup>

### Schools’ uncertainty about the temporary support available to deal with RAAC

13. We asked DfE about the temporary classrooms it was providing for schools unable to use some of their space because of RAAC. It told us that it had three central contracts in place to supply temporary classrooms, but in general they would initially be provided to schools where the presence and critical condition of RAAC had been confirmed before the change in risk approach. DfE could not provide us with the number of temporary classrooms that had been supplied.<sup>23</sup>

14. DfE explained that it hoped to use the central contracts to enable speedier delivery of temporary classrooms to all RAAC-affected schools who needed them, and to pay for them centrally—including for specialist equipment within the classroom where

17 September 2023 session, Qq 117, 140–141

18 September 2023 session, Qq 121, 139

19 September 2023 session, Qq 127–133

20 Department for Education, [Guidance for Responsible Bodies and education settings with confirmed RAAC in their buildings](#), September 2023, page 3

21 Public Accounts Committee, oral evidence, [New Hospital Programme](#), HC 1754, 7 September 2023, Qq 4, 8, 19–20

22 September 2023 session, Q 195

23 September 2023 session, Qq 113–114



appropriate—out of its capital funding allocations. However, DfE conceded that in some cases responsible bodies had decided to procure temporary classrooms themselves because they felt the DfE route was not delivering what they needed.<sup>24</sup>

15. DfE told us that, where a school hires portable classrooms, this counts as revenue expenditure. In this case, DfE checks that the expenditure is reasonable and the school does not have high levels of reserves from which it should be providing the funding itself.<sup>25</sup> DfE also explained that it would talk to schools that wanted to be reimbursed for costs they had incurred for RAAC surveys. However, DfE implied that reimbursement might not be available for schools that had looked for RAAC as part of a broader structural survey.<sup>26</sup> DfE emphasised that it wanted the process for schools to reclaim costs to be streamlined, but the process needed to include appropriate checks that claims were proportionate and properly related to the issue. At the same time, DfE said that it would err on the side of generosity, and expected to meet all reasonable costs.<sup>27</sup>

16. DfE told us that it assigned a caseworker to each school affected by RAAC. Schools can liaise with their caseworker about buildings, finances or educational matters.<sup>28</sup> However, we challenged DfE with evidence that the system was not working perfectly. For example, it took some time for caseworkers to be given devolved authority to take spending decisions. And there were examples of schools having to engage in protracted discussions over who would pay for basic equipment such as temporary whiteboards.<sup>29</sup>

### **Lack of transparency about where RAAC exists and when it will be fixed**

17. We asked DfE some questions intended to shed light on the latest position with RAAC at the time of our evidence session on 11 September, such as the number of pupils who were unable to start the school year as normal, and the number of specialist surveys that were outstanding. In each case, DfE responded that it could not provide specific figures.<sup>30</sup> DfE explained that it intended to set out a strategy for publishing the future list of schools affected by RAAC, and the information that sits alongside that, to a ‘regular rhythm’ as it does with other important management information.<sup>31</sup>

18. On 19 September, the Secretary of State issued an updated statement on RAAC. It detailed that: DfE had received questionnaire responses in relation to 98.6% of schools with blocks built in the target era; every school that was awaiting a specialist survey when the previous statement was made on 4 September had been visited or would be visited in the week commencing 17 September; and RAAC had been confirmed in 174 educational settings (up from 147 on 4 September), of which 148 were providing face-to-face education

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24 September 2023 session, Qq 114, 116, 155

25 September 2023 session, Q 157

26 September 2023 session, Q 176

27 September 2023 session, Qq 158, 202

28 September 2023 session, Qq 153, 156, 198

29 September 2023 session, Qq 200–202

30 September 2023 session, Qq 111–112, 126

31 September 2023 session, Qq 130, 206

for all pupils.<sup>32</sup> A further update on 19 October disclosed that RAAC had been confirmed in 214 educational settings, of which 202 were providing face-to-face education for all pupils.<sup>33</sup>

19. We asked DfE about when all RAAC-related issues on the school estate might be resolved, given that members of the government had talked in early September about the timeframe being a matter of weeks. DfE expressed confidence that it would receive all the remaining questionnaire returns, and carry out the necessary specialist surveys, within a small number of weeks. It also expected that, where RAAC had already been confirmed, all pupils should be back in face-to-face learning within a couple of weeks. However, DfE also emphasised that some cases would be more complicated than others, and that timeframes would therefore vary.<sup>34</sup>

### Incomplete knowledge on asbestos

20. In March 2022, we noted that we had previously found DfE did not have a complete picture of asbestos in school buildings, or enough information to ensure that the risks were being properly managed. We concluded that DfE appeared unconcerned that the 7% of schools who were yet to respond to its asbestos survey launched in March 2018 could be the worst affected schools without the budget to resolve their asbestos-related problems.<sup>35</sup> We recommended that DfE should urgently chase these schools, and DfE subsequently agreed with the recommendation.<sup>36</sup>

21. DfE told us that its second Condition Data Collection programme (CDC2), which had covered around 40% of schools so far, allowed it to prioritise schools that had not responded to the asbestos survey. As a result, DfE remained unsighted on 4.4% of schools, which represents just under 1,000 schools. It said that surveyors visiting schools for CDC2 purposes in order to conduct a visual survey were also carrying out an asbestos assurance process. This involved checking that schools and responsible bodies have an asbestos register on site so that they are readily available if contractors come to do work, and that they have an asbestos management plan in place.<sup>37</sup>

22. In its written submission, NAHT (the school leadership union) emphasised that shared occupancy of school buildings by adults and young people can lead to a higher risk of asbestos disturbance than in other workplaces, and that even normal school activities can routinely disturb asbestos. It concluded that this leads to increased risk for everyone in the school environment. NAHT also expressed its concern that oversight of asbestos via the CDC2 programme would not be as detailed as in the survey launched in 2018, and would therefore not provide the same level of transparency.<sup>38</sup>

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32 UK Parliament, [School and Colleges update](#), 19 September 2023

33 Department for Education, Reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC): management information, 19 October 2023

34 September 2023 session, Qq 115, 127

35 Committee of Public Accounts, [Academies Sector Annual Report and Accounts 2019/20](#), Forty-Seventh Report of Session 2021–22, HC 994, 25 March 2022, pages 6–7

36 HM Treasury, [Government Response to the Committee of Public Accounts on the Forty-Third to the Forty-Eighth report from Session 2021–22](#), CP 678, May 2022, page 28

37 July 2023 session, Qq 26–27, 47–48; [Correspondence from DfE](#) to the Chair of the Public Accounts Committee, 7 September 2023

38 [TSB0002](#), NAHT, *The condition of school buildings*, 13 July 2023



23. DfE confirmed that its policy is not to remove all asbestos in the school estate, as this would be expensive and dangerous. However, we raised with DfE a case where a school thought it knew where it had asbestos, but much more asbestos was found when contractors demolished a block affected by RAAC, causing additional complications. DfE emphasised that it expects contractors to carry out a thorough asbestos survey before doing invasive work to deal with other structural problems.<sup>39</sup> Asbestos and RAAC can be present in the same building.

24. We asked about the information DfE holds on the number of teaching staff who have died from asbestos-related conditions. DfE explained that the Health and Safety Executive reviews death certificates to produce data on the last known profession of people who have died. DfE stated that it reviews the ages of those who have died from mesothelioma and were recorded as teachers. It explained that there were around seven such deaths per year in the 2000s, but between 2011 and 2020 this rose to around 11 per year. While the number of people has increased in those more recent years, DfE said it thought they were mainly those who were exposed some decades ago. In DfE's view, because of the long latency period of the disease the problems seem to date from a period when asbestos was not as tightly regulated as it is now.<sup>40</sup>

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39 July 2023 session, Qq 9–11

40 July 2023 session, Qq 78–79

## 2 DfE's oversight of the condition of school buildings

### Pupils learning in poorly maintained or potentially unsafe buildings

25. DfE believes that poor quality school buildings have a negative impact in important ways, including by reducing pupil attainment levels and teacher retention. Stakeholders across the sector also emphasise how buildings being too hot or cold, insufficient ventilation, and disruption caused by parts of a school being unusable, can adversely affect pupils' experience, especially those struggling academically or those with special educational needs and disabilities. In its written submission, the Confederation of School Trusts stated that its members were clear about the direct impact of building condition on educational provision, particularly where the condition is poor. One of its members explained that "a well-presented, clean environment allows people to feel safe and cared for; a positive environment aids the teaching and learning experience." By contrast, one of its smaller trusts described a school going through two winters relying on plug-in heaters due to the failure of the boiler and a lack of success in applying for maintenance and repair funding. The Confederation also explained how less substantial issues can still cause significant disruption, such as activities needing to be relocated due to leaking roofs, and rooms with extensive glazing being too hot in summer and expensive to heat in winter.<sup>41</sup>

26. Around 700,000 pupils are learning in a school which the responsible body or DfE believes requires major rebuilding or refurbishment, given safety issues or poor general building condition (which might mean problems with a combination of items, such as roofs, windows and heating systems). This figure is derived from the 1,200 schools that responsible bodies have nominated, or DfE has selected, for the 10-year School Rebuilding Programme. While 1,200 schools were considered for the programme, DfE aims to rebuild or refurbish blocks in the most urgent need across only 500 schools.<sup>42</sup>

27. We asked DfE whether the 64,000 buildings on the school estate include temporary buildings, Portakabins and similar blocks. It replied that the first Condition Data Collection programme (CDC1), from which the total number of buildings was derived, did include such buildings. DfE later clarified that the CDC1 visits, which took place from 2017 to 2019, had identified 5,749 relocatable mobile blocks in use across the school estate. DfE also explained that many school rebuilding projects—especially for secondary schools—involve rationalising several old blocks, some of which are temporary, into a single new block.<sup>43</sup>

28. DfE told us that its CDC1 programme involved giving a 'grade' to every building component within each school. There were four available grades, from A to D, with grades C and D denoting a less than satisfactory condition. DfE explained that it gave a grade C to 2.1% of components, and a grade D to 0.3% of components. It accepted that, while these numbers seem low, they still represent a significant number of schools, and large numbers of pupils are learning in those schools. DfE said that it is using its second Condition Data

41 [TSB0007](#), The Confederation of School Trusts, *The condition of school buildings*, 13 July 2023

42 C&AG's Report, Figure 5; paras 2.9, 3.11

43 July 2023 session, Q 72; [Correspondence from DfE](#) to the Chair of the Public Accounts Committee, 7 September 2023

Collection programme (CDC2) to check whether it can address those components in the worst condition. But this still requires decisions about prioritisation, and there is also the risk that DfE is considering only the known issues in schools.<sup>44</sup>

### DfE's focus on reactive measures

29. DfE told us that its overarching principle is to act immediately if a building-related issue is putting pupils or teachers in danger but the school is unable to manage the issue itself. The issue might relate to asbestos, or more general structural problems.<sup>45</sup> In May 2023, DfE also announced that, where RAAC is present in schools, it would provide funding to ensure that it does not pose an immediate risk.<sup>46</sup>

30. In its Spending Review 2020 case, DfE recommended capital funding for the major rebuilding and refurbishment of around 200 schools each year. HM Treasury subsequently agreed to fund a 10-year programme to rebuild 50 schools per year, at an average cost of £1.3 billion a year. In selecting applications for its School Rebuilding Programme, DfE has prioritised schools where structural or safety issues meant that a building was at risk of closure or posed a risk to staff and pupils.<sup>47</sup> DfE told us that many of the 100 schools still to be selected for the programme will be chosen because it emerges that they have significant issues with RAAC.<sup>48</sup>

31. We asked DfE about longer-term risks to value for money. It described a set of schools that pose no safety risks and can be maintained to a reasonable condition. However, when considering the work needed to keep these schools in good condition over a five- to ten-year timeframe, DfE said that rebuilding would clearly present better value. DfE explained that funding constraints mean such schools are unlikely to be prioritised for rebuilding.<sup>49</sup>

32. In written evidence, the London Fire Brigade expressed concern that many schools are continuing to be built, or are undergoing major refurbishment, without automatic fire suppression systems (such as sprinklers), contrary to the 'expectation' set out in *Building Bulletin 100: Design for fire safety in schools*, published in 2007.<sup>50</sup> Zurich UK made a similar point, giving an example of a fire at a school in Derbyshire, where the cost of remedial work far exceeded the cost of a sprinkler system that would have saved the school.<sup>51</sup> DfE told us that schools are typically considered as relatively low risk buildings, which is why sprinkler systems have typically not been installed. It explained that there is an ongoing consultation on school fire safety, including a suggestion that sprinkler systems should be mandated in residential blocks, special needs schools and blocks over 11 metres. However, DfE accepted that the cost of fitting sprinklers systems to new buildings is significantly lower than retrofitting them to existing buildings. It agreed to look again at its value for money calculations in this area.<sup>52</sup>

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44 July 2023 session, Q 17

45 July 2023 session, Q 16

46 C&AG's Report, para 2.10

47 C&AG's Report, paras 3.3, 3.12–3.13

48 July 2023 session, Q 59

49 July 2023 session, Qq 56–57

50 [TSB0006](#), London Fire Brigade, *The condition of school buildings*, 13 July 2023

51 [TSB0004](#), Zurich UK, *The condition of school buildings*, 13 July 2023

52 July 2023 session, Qq 49–50

## Delays in the School Rebuilding Programme

33. DfE announced the School Rebuilding Programme in June 2020. As at March 2023, it had awarded 24 contracts, well below its August 2021 forecast of 83, with one project completed compared with its forecast of four. In addition, DfE was forecasting that it would complete fewer projects in 2023–24 than initially planned.<sup>53</sup>

34. DfE told us that in its building programmes, and particularly the School Rebuilding Programme, it had taken longer to agree contracts because of inflationary pressures in the building industry.<sup>54</sup> DfE explained that it had responded by amending its funding policies, and developing an ‘alliance model’ involving risk-sharing and greater elements of standardisation, which should help construction firms to manage cost pressures and improve their speed of delivery. DfE accepted that it would not catch up on the initial projects that had fallen behind, but in terms of the overall programme it still believed that it was on track.<sup>55</sup>

35. We have previously examined how external factors, such as inflation and higher price levels, can affect the cost schedule of projects and also the timeframes involved. We have seen how inflation can be largely driven by supply chain issues, meaning the consequences can be complicated and different for each project. We have asked project management experts about the early warning signs that a project may need to be reset. They replied that the signs include critical milestones not being met, significant cost pressures that cannot be recovered later in the project, and benefits being way off track in terms of realisation.<sup>56</sup>

## Variation across the school estate

36. We asked DfE about the geographical divide in the condition of schools which manifests itself in two main ways: schools in the north of England appear to generally be in worse condition than those in the south; and schools in rural and coastal areas face more significant challenges than those in urban areas. DfE acknowledged that there are places where it is harder for schools and academy trusts to attract investment, and that this is a particular feature in areas of higher deprivation. It also accepted that it does not currently provide education investment areas, which were identified in the Levelling Up white paper as local authorities where educational outcomes were weakest, with any additional capital funding. However, DfE asserted that areas with concentrations of school buildings in poor condition should already benefit from its rebuilding programmes and the capital funding formulas that it applies.<sup>57</sup>

37. DfE analysed the 1,000 schools with the highest level of need in terms of the condition of their buildings, and found that in 345 cases the responsible body did not make an application for the School Rebuilding Programme. In 2021, it also analysed why schools most needing maintenance and repair had not applied for the available funding. It found that some schools assessed their buildings to be in good condition, while others lacked the capacity to apply, and a small number were not aware of the funding.<sup>58</sup> We challenged DfE about how it might persuade school leaders to take a more active interest in the

53 C&AG’s Report, paras 3.11, 3.16

54 July 2023 session, Q 41

55 July 2023 session, Qq 60–64

56 Public Accounts Committee, oral evidence, [Resetting programmes](#), HC 1233, 5 June 2023, Qq 111, 131

57 July 2023 session, Q 70; C&AG’s Report, Figure 5

58 C&AG’s Report, paras 3.15, 3.26

strategic management of their estates. DfE replied that the size of the responsible body is a significant factor, given that larger responsible bodies generally have access to greater expertise. It emphasised that its academies handbook clearly sets out the relevant estate management responsibilities, aiming to ensure that academies' audit and risk committees take issues such as health and safety very seriously.<sup>59</sup>

38. In its written submission, the Catholic Education Service argued that multi-academy trust funding for school buildings should be given directly to dioceses, to replicate the economies of scale and scope for longer-term strategic interventions that have been achieved with voluntary-aided schools.<sup>60</sup> We noted how voluntary-aided schools (which are generally faith-based institutions) have good relationships with bodies such as the diocesan boards for education and the Catholic Education Service, who can provide higher-level expertise. DfE told us that it is in discussion with these bodies to determine whether different administrative arrangements would deliver improvements.<sup>61</sup>

39. We noted that there is a diminishing number of schools under local authority control, and that, given their number of schools, 10 local authorities would not reach the threshold to receive maintenance and repair funding directly if they were a multi-academy trust. We asked DfE whether it was providing these smaller local authorities with additional support, given that they may lack dedicated resources for school estate management. DfE explained that local authorities have estates responsibilities in other parts of their operations, which should help them access the appropriate expertise. It confirmed that, at present, its Capital Advisers Programme is targeted only at academy trusts, although it has not ruled out the idea of extending it to local authorities.<sup>62</sup>

## Making joined-up decisions about school closures and school condition

40. We expressed concern about whether decisions relating to falling school rolls and improving the condition of schools are sufficiently joined-up across different local authorities and trusts. Historically, there have been school closures due to falling rolls, followed soon after by another demographic wave of pupils which means that more school places need to be created. More recently, in areas such as London, where there are schools on borough boundaries, individual decisions on closure or amalgamation can make little sense locally, but there is no requirement for schools to work together. Where closures are being discussed, this may influence decisions about whether to maintain the condition of these or other buildings. For instance, a school with falling pupil numbers may not attract funding, but children could be placed in a nearby school that does not have falling numbers but has major problems with its buildings, which will cause further disruption if the buildings require work further down the line.<sup>63</sup>

41. For maintained schools, the lead decision-maker about educational provision and the upkeep of buildings is the local authority, which retains responsibility for sufficiency of school places. DfE told us that its regional directors do not typically play a strong role in decisions about school closures, although they engage with maintained schools and other

59 July 2023 session, Q 80

60 [TSB0001](#), Catholic Education Service, *The condition of school buildings*, 13 July 2023

61 July 2023 session, Qq 24–25

62 July 2023 session, Qq 82–86

63 July 2023 session, Qq 29–31

bodies. It also explained that it was looking at opportunities to use school space differently – for example, by using primary school sites for childcare and early years provision, or expanding the space for special and alternative provision.<sup>64</sup>

42. DfE reassured us that, when selecting schools for the School Rebuilding Programme, it considers the likely future pattern of pupil numbers, to avoid prioritising schools that are struggling to attract pupils and therefore do not warrant a full rebuild.<sup>65</sup> It also emphasised that, ideally, there should be more school places than children, to allow some parental choice in the system and to accommodate demographic rises. It explained that the free schools programme exists partly to give entry to those who have different ideas about how schools might be run, and also to offer that wider range of choice in the system.<sup>66</sup>

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64 July 2023 session, Q 28

65 July 2023 session, Q 29

66 July 2023 session, Qq 32–33

# Formal minutes

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**Thursday 9 November 2023**

## **Members present**

Dame Meg Hillier, in the Chair

Sir Geoffrey Clifton-Brown

Mr Jonathan Djanogly

Mrs Flick Drummond

Peter Grant

Ben Lake

Anne Marie Morris

Sarah Olney

## ***Declaration of interests***

The following declarations of interest relating to the inquiry were made:

13 July 2023

Olivia Blake declared the following interest: Chair of the APPG on SEND.

Sir Geoffrey Clifton-Brown declared the following interest: Chartered Surveyor.

## **The condition of school buildings**

Draft Report (*The condition of school buildings*), proposed by the Chair, brought up and read.

*Ordered*, That the draft Report be read a second time, paragraph by paragraph.

Paragraphs 1 to 42 read and agreed to.

Summary agreed to.

Introduction agreed to.

Conclusions and recommendations agreed to.

*Resolved*, That the Report be the Second Report of the Committee to the House.

*Ordered*, That the Chair make the Report to the House.

*Ordered*, That embargoed copies of the Report be made available (Standing Order No. 134).

## **Adjournment**

Adjourned till Monday 13 November at 3.30 p.m.

## Witnesses

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The following witnesses gave evidence. Transcripts can be viewed on the [inquiry publications page](#) of the Committee's website.

### Thursday 13 July 2023

**Susan Acland-Hood**, Permanent Secretary, Department for Education; **Jane Cunliffe**, Chief Operating Officer, Department for Education; **Jane Balderstone**, Capital Delivery, Department for Education

[Q1-107](#)

### Monday 11 September 2023

**Susan Acland-Hood**, Permanent Secretary, Department for Education; **Jane Cunliffe**, Chief Operating Officer, Operations and Infrastructure Group, Department for Education

[Q108-207](#)



## Published written evidence

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The following written evidence was received and can be viewed on the [inquiry publications page](#) of the Committee's website.

TSB numbers are generated by the evidence processing system and so may not be complete.

- 1 Catholic Education Service ([TSB0001](#))
- 2 Hampshire County Council ([TSB0005](#))
- 3 London Fire Brigade ([TSB0006](#))
- 4 Manufacturing Technology Centre ([TSB0003](#))
- 5 NAHT, school leadership union ([TSB0002](#))
- 6 The Confederation of School Trusts ([TSB0007](#))
- 7 UNISON ([TSB0008](#))
- 8 Zurich UK ([TSB0004](#))

## List of Reports from the Committee during the current Parliament

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All publications from the Committee are available on the [publications page](#) of the Committee's website.

### Session 2023–24

Number	Title	Reference
1st	The New Hospital Programme	HC 77

### Session 2022–23

Number	Title	Reference
1st	Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy Annual Report and Accounts 2020–21	HC 59
2nd	Lessons from implementing IR35 reforms	HC 60
3rd	The future of the Advanced Gas-cooled Reactors	HC 118
4th	Use of evaluation and modelling in government	HC 254
5th	Local economic growth	HC 252
6th	Department of Health and Social Care 2020–21 Annual Report and Accounts	HC 253
7th	Armoured Vehicles: the Ajax programme	HC 259
8th	Financial sustainability of the higher education sector in England	HC 257
9th	Child Maintenance	HC 255
10th	Restoration and Renewal of Parliament	HC 49
11th	The rollout of the COVID-19 vaccine programme in England	HC 258
12th	Management of PPE contracts	HC 260
13th	Secure training centres and secure schools	HC 30
14th	Investigation into the British Steel Pension Scheme	HC 251
15th	The Police Uplift Programme	HC 261
16th	Managing cross-border travel during the COVID-19 pandemic	HC 29
17th	Government's contracts with Radox Laboratories Ltd	HC 28
18th	Government actions to combat waste crime	HC 33
19th	Regulating after EU Exit	HC 32
20th	Whole of Government Accounts 2019–20	HC 31
21st	Transforming electronic monitoring services	HC 34
22nd	Tackling local air quality breaches	HC 37
23rd	Measuring and reporting public sector greenhouse gas emissions	HC 39

<b>Number</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Reference</b>
24th	Redevelopment of Defra's animal health infrastructure	HC 42
25th	Regulation of energy suppliers	HC 41
26th	The Department for Work and Pensions' Accounts 2021–22 – Fraud and error in the benefits system	HC 44
27th	Evaluating innovation projects in children's social care	HC 38
28th	Improving the Accounting Officer Assessment process	HC 43
29th	The Affordable Homes Programme since 2015	HC 684
30th	Developing workforce skills for a strong economy	HC 685
31st	Managing central government property	HC 48
32nd	Grassroots participation in sport and physical activity	HC 46
33rd	HMRC performance in 2021–22	HC 686
34th	The Creation of the UK Infrastructure Bank	HC 45
35th	Introducing Integrated Care Systems	HC 47
36th	The Defence digital strategy	HC 727
37th	Support for vulnerable adolescents	HC 730
38th	Managing NHS backlogs and waiting times in England	HC 729
39th	Excess Votes 2021–22	HC 1132
40th	COVID employment support schemes	HC 810
41st	Driving licence backlogs at the DVLA	HC 735
42nd	The Restart Scheme for long-term unemployed people	HC 733
43rd	Progress combatting fraud	HC 40
44th	The Digital Services Tax	HC 732
45th	Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy Annual Report and Accounts 2021–22	HC 1254
46th	BBC Digital	HC 736
47th	Investigation into the UK Passport Office	HC 738
48th	MoD Equipment Plan 2022–2032	HC 731
49th	Managing tax compliance following the pandemic	HC 739
50th	Government Shared Services	HC 734
51st	Tackling Defra's ageing digital services	HC 737
52nd	Restoration & Renewal of the Palace of Westminster – 2023 Recall	HC 1021
53rd	The performance of UK Security Vetting	HC 994
54th	Alcohol treatment services	HC 1001
55th	Education recovery in schools in England	HC 998
56th	Supporting investment into the UK	HC 996
57th	AEA Technology Pension Case	HC 1005

<b>Number</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Reference</b>
58th	Energy bills support	HC 1074
59th	Decarbonising the power sector	HC 1003
60th	Timeliness of local auditor reporting	HC 995
61st	Progress on the courts and tribunals reform programme	HC 1002
62nd	Department of Health and Social Care 2021–22 Annual Report and Accounts	HC 997
63rd	HS2 Euston	HC 1004
64th	The Emergency Services Network	HC 1006
65th	Progress in improving NHS mental health services	HC 1000
66th	PPE Medpro: awarding of contracts during the pandemic	HC 1590
67th	Child Trust Funds	HC 1231
68th	Local authority administered COVID support schemes in England	HC 1234
69th	Tackling fraud and corruption against government	HC 1230
70th	Digital transformation in government: addressing the barriers to efficiency	HC 1229
71st	Resetting government programmes	HC 1231
72nd	Update on the rollout of smart meters	HC 1332
73rd	Access to urgent and emergency care	HC 1336
74th	Bulb Energy	HC 1232
75th	Active travel in England	HC 1335
76th	The Asylum Transformation Programme	HC 1334
77th	Supported housing	HC 1330
78th	Resettlement support for prison leavers	HC 1329
79th	Support for innovation to deliver net zero	HC 1331
1st Special Report	Sixth Annual Report of the Chair of the Committee of Public Accounts	HC 50
2nd Special Report	Seventh Annual Report of the Chair of the Committee of Public Accounts	HC 1055

## Session 2021–22

Number	Title	Reference
1st	Low emission cars	HC 186
2nd	BBC strategic financial management	HC 187
3rd	COVID-19: Support for children's education	HC 240
4th	COVID-19: Local government finance	HC 239
5th	COVID-19: Government Support for Charities	HC 250
6th	Public Sector Pensions	HC 289
7th	Adult Social Care Markets	HC 252
8th	COVID 19: Culture Recovery Fund	HC 340
9th	Fraud and Error	HC 253
10th	Overview of the English rail system	HC 170
11th	Local auditor reporting on local government in England	HC 171
12th	COVID 19: Cost Tracker Update	HC 173
13th	Initial lessons from the government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic	HC 175
14th	Windrush Compensation Scheme	HC 174
15th	DWP Employment support	HC 177
16th	Principles of effective regulation	HC 176
17th	High Speed 2: Progress at Summer 2021	HC 329
18th	Government's delivery through arm's-length bodies	HC 181
19th	Protecting consumers from unsafe products	HC 180
20th	Optimising the defence estate	HC 179
21st	School Funding	HC 183
22nd	Improving the performance of major defence equipment contracts	HC 185
23rd	Test and Trace update	HC 182
24th	Crossrail: A progress update	HC 184
25th	The Department for Work and Pensions' Accounts 2020–21 – Fraud and error in the benefits system	HC 633
26th	Lessons from Greensill Capital: accreditation to business support schemes	HC 169
27th	Green Homes Grant Voucher Scheme	HC 635
28th	Efficiency in government	HC 636
29th	The National Law Enforcement Data Programme	HC 638
30th	Challenges in implementing digital change	HC 637
31st	Environmental Land Management Scheme	HC 639
32nd	Delivering gigabitcapable broadband	HC 743

<b>Number</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Reference</b>
33rd	Underpayments of the State Pension	HC 654
34th	Local Government Finance System: Overview and Challenges	HC 646
35th	The pharmacy early payment and salary advance schemes in the NHS	HC 745
36th	EU Exit: UK Border post transition	HC 746
37th	HMRC Performance in 2020–21	HC 641
38th	COVID-19 cost tracker update	HC 640
39th	DWP Employment Support: Kickstart Scheme	HC 655
40th	Excess votes 2020–21: Serious Fraud Office	HC 1099
41st	Achieving Net Zero: Follow up	HC 642
42nd	Financial sustainability of schools in England	HC 650
43rd	Reducing the backlog in criminal courts	HC 643
44th	NHS backlogs and waiting times in England	HC 747
45th	Progress with trade negotiations	HC 993
46th	Government preparedness for the COVID-19 pandemic: lessons for government on risk	HC 952
47th	Academies Sector Annual Report and Accounts 2019/20	HC 994
48th	HMRC's management of tax debt	HC 953
49th	Regulation of private renting	HC 996
50th	Bounce Back Loans Scheme: Follow-up	HC 951
51st	Improving outcomes for women in the criminal justice system	HC 997
52nd	Ministry of Defence Equipment Plan 2021–31	HC 1164
1st Special Report	Fifth Annual Report of the Chair of the Committee of Public Accounts	HC 222

### Session 2019–21

<b>Number</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Reference</b>
1st	Support for children with special educational needs and disabilities	HC 85
2nd	Defence Nuclear Infrastructure	HC 86
3rd	High Speed 2: Spring 2020 Update	HC 84
4th	EU Exit: Get ready for Brexit Campaign	HC 131
5th	University technical colleges	HC 87
6th	Excess votes 2018–19	HC 243
7th	Gambling regulation: problem gambling and protecting vulnerable people	HC 134
8th	NHS capital expenditure and financial management	HC 344

<b>Number</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Reference</b>
9th	Water supply and demand management	HC 378
10th	Defence capability and the Equipment Plan	HC 247
11th	Local authority investment in commercial property	HC 312
12th	Management of tax reliefs	HC 379
13th	Whole of Government Response to COVID-19	HC 404
14th	Readying the NHS and social care for the COVID-19 peak	HC 405
15th	Improving the prison estate	HC 244
16th	Progress in remediating dangerous cladding	HC 406
17th	Immigration enforcement	HC 407
18th	NHS nursing workforce	HC 408
19th	Restoration and renewal of the Palace of Westminster	HC 549
20th	Tackling the tax gap	HC 650
21st	Government support for UK exporters	HC 679
22nd	Digital transformation in the NHS	HC 680
23rd	Delivering carrier strike	HC 684
24th	Selecting towns for the Towns Fund	HC 651
25th	Asylum accommodation and support transformation programme	HC 683
26th	Department of Work and Pensions Accounts 2019–20	HC 681
27th	Covid-19: Supply of ventilators	HC 685
28th	The Nuclear Decommissioning Authority's management of the Magnox contract	HC 653
29th	Whitehall preparations for EU Exit	HC 682
30th	The production and distribution of cash	HC 654
31st	Starter Homes	HC 88
32nd	Specialist Skills in the civil service	HC 686
33rd	Covid-19: Bounce Back Loan Scheme	HC 687
34th	Covid-19: Support for jobs	HC 920
35th	Improving Broadband	HC 688
36th	HMRC performance 2019–20	HC 690
37th	Whole of Government Accounts 2018–19	HC 655
38th	Managing colleges' financial sustainability	HC 692
39th	Lessons from major projects and programmes	HC 694
40th	Achieving government's long-term environmental goals	HC 927
41st	COVID 19: the free school meals voucher scheme	HC 689
42nd	COVID-19: Government procurement and supply of Personal Protective Equipment	HC 928

<b>Number</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Reference</b>
43rd	COVID-19: Planning for a vaccine Part 1	HC 930
44th	Excess Votes 2019–20	HC 1205
45th	Managing flood risk	HC 931
46th	Achieving Net Zero	HC 935
47th	COVID-19: Test, track and trace (part 1)	HC 932
48th	Digital Services at the Border	HC 936
49th	COVID-19: housing people sleeping rough	HC 934
50th	Defence Equipment Plan 2020–2030	HC 693
51st	Managing the expiry of PFI contracts	HC 1114
52nd	Key challenges facing the Ministry of Justice	HC 1190
53rd	Covid 19: supporting the vulnerable during lockdown	HC 938
54th	Improving single living accommodation for service personnel	HC 940
55th	Environmental tax measures	HC 937
56th	Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund	HC 941