



**An Roinn Oideachais
agus Scileanna**
Department of
Education and Skills

Structural Assessments & Precautionary Measures

Questions and Answers

The Department of Education and Skills has prepared the following document to answer questions you may have about the programme of structural assessments conducted in recent days, as well as any precautionary measures that may be implemented at your child's school.

1. Is my child's school safe?

The Department's absolute priority at all times is the safety of students and staff in schools. This is why, over the past week, the Department arranged for your child's school to undergo a structural assessment.

This has determined that some schools, as set out in the attached list, require the implementation of precautionary measures before they reopen.

With the implementation of these measures, the Department is satisfied, based on the expert advice from structural engineers, that the buildings will be safe for your child.

Three schools, as set out in the attached list, will initially open at ground floor level only. Further assessments are currently ongoing to determine the Department's approach to facilitating the timely occupation of the other floor(s).

2. What form did the structural assessment take?

Sample opening up works were undertaken at each of the schools to allow engineers gather information, which was then referred back to their headquarters for assessment by senior chartered structural engineers. The outcome of the assessments were communicated to the Department.

The use of one structural engineering firm in conducting the assessments ensured that a consistent approach was applied to the assessment of each school. It is important to note that this engineering firm did not have any role in relation to the original design or construction of the buildings.

Detailed survey reports will be finalised following a further phase of investigation and remedial works.

3. What do the assessments mean for my child's school?

Following the assessments, schools have been included in one of four categories, as set out in the attached. The categories are as follows:

- 19 schools cleared to open in full without intervention
- 19 schools enabled to open in full following external precautionary measures in the form of a fence around the building (or part of the building) and protective decking
- 3 schools which will be enabled to open, initially at ground floor level only, following the implementation of internal engineering solutions and external precautionary measures
- 1 building (part of Ardgillan Community College) closed

Given the limited timeline for conducting the assessments, the overall approach taken was to err on the side of caution in relation to deciding whether internal or external precautionary measures were necessary in order to facilitate safe occupancy of the schools from Monday, 5 November.

4. My child's school requires external precautionary measures. What does this mean?

This means that, from the sample opening up works, there appears to be insufficient, or inadequate installation of, wall ties in the external wall cavity. This indicates a potential issue with the external wall, but the nature and extent of this issue can only be confirmed following further investigations.

In the meantime, the structural engineers have advised, as a precaution, that external measures in the form of a Heras-type safety fence around the building and protective decking at entrances to the building should be put in place.

The fencing will be erected at a distance from the school walls that is equal to or greater than the height of the building.

Examples of these measures can be seen in images at the end of this document.

5. My child's school requires internal precautionary measures. What does this mean?

This means that some inadequacies have been identified with how the internal leaf of the external walls are constructed and secured to the overall frame of the building.

Timber supports are being installed as a precautionary measure to ensure safe occupation of the ground floor. These will be secured to the internal face of the wall, adjacent to window locations.

Further assessments are currently ongoing to determine the Department's approach to facilitating the timely occupation of the remainder of these buildings. We expect

to have more clarity on this over the next week or so and will liaise accordingly with relevant school authorities.

Examples of internal precautionary measures can be seen in images at the end of this document.

6. How long will it take to carry out the precautionary works?

Contractors have already been mobilised to implement external and internal precautionary measures at all schools where this is required. This involves more than 250 workers in total.

It is the intention to have all precautionary measures implemented by Sunday, 4 November, to enable safe occupancy (of either the full building or ground floor, depending on category) from Monday, 5 November.

It is acknowledged that this is a challenging timeline. The Department will remain in close contact with relevant school principals over the weekend.

7. For how long will the precautionary measures be in place?

As a next phase of the process, the Department will undertake further investigations and implement any necessary permanent remediation measures at schools.

While we will endeavour to keep the duration to a minimum, it is not possible at this stage to confirm exactly how long precautionary measures will be in place.

We acknowledge the negative impact that some of the external measures, in particular, will have on the appearance of school buildings and, in some cases, on the play space available. However, the decision to implement such measures has been taken in the interest of ensuring the safety of all those who use the school building.

8. How will we know that the precautionary measures have been implemented properly?

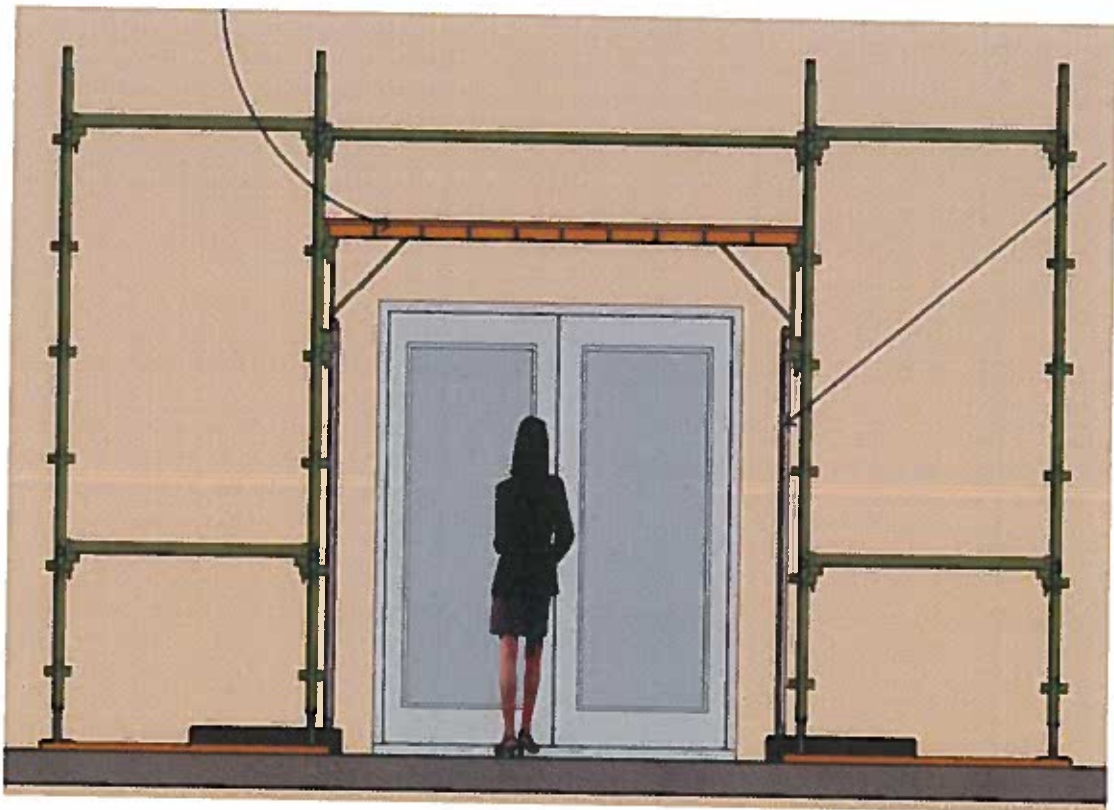
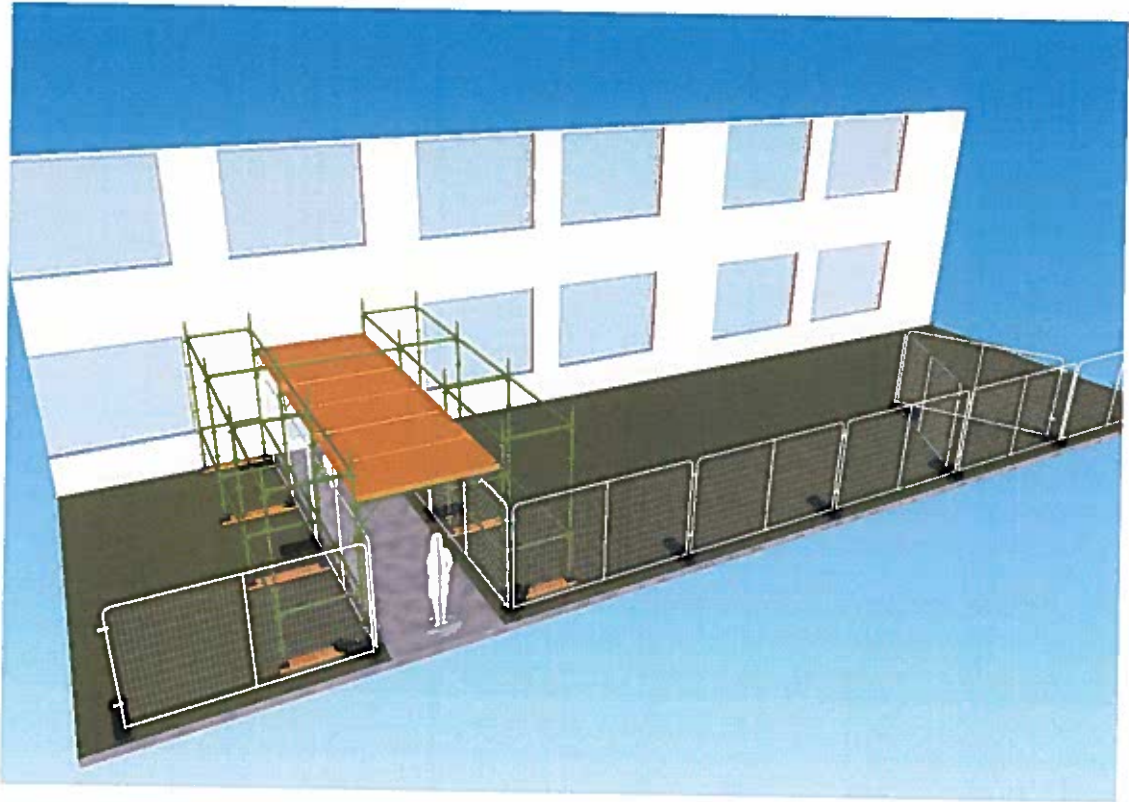
Once the measures have been completed and appropriately certified, confirmation of same will issue to the school.

Prior to handover and occupation of the building, written confirmation that the works have been carried out to the required standard will be provided to the school authorities by the following independent consultants:

- Punch Consulting Engineers, civil and structural engineering consultants
- AFEC, fire safety engineering consultants
- Project Supervisor Design Process (PSDP) Consultant

The Department will also provide written confirmation to the school authorities that it is satisfied that the building can be occupied on the basis of the above professional confirmations.

Images – Examples of external precautionary measures



Images – Examples of internal precautionary measures

