

Urgent need to address maintenance of education estate

2 years ago



According to a report by the National Audit Office (NAO) an estimated 700,000 children are attending schools requiring major repairs.

It also stated that the Department for Education (DfE) has assessed the risk of injury or death from a school building collapse as “very likely and critical” since 2021.

Despite the allocation of over £15bn in funding since 2015, essential repairs had remained outstanding and the NAO said the education estate is continuing to deteriorate.

The poor condition of many schools is attributed to shortfalls in pupil attainment and teacher retention.

Commenting on the issue, DMA Group managing director Steve McGregor said his company had “increasingly encountered some management teams in the education space looking to source cheaper parts themselves off the internet.

“It’s an understandable tactic, because parts can often appear less expensive online, but that’s not the whole story. If the wrong parts turn up, or they’re late, or faulty, it causes delays and further costs. The senior leadership teams across schools have shouldered immense, yet routine pressures in trying to reconcile the financial and operational challenges of delivering education in a cost-down environment.”

He stated that issues have been compounded by the unprecedented cost-of-living and energy cost crisis, which has led to educational establishments “scrambling by cutting costs wherever possible”, which has unfortunately been to the detriment of their buildings.

“Now it’s catching up. Purchasing lesser standard of parts will save money initially, but the increases in running, maintenance and replacement costs over the longer term will be a false economy. Buying the wrong or lesser quality kit will cost more, or even worse damage a premises, risk the health and wellness of its occupants, not to mention the reliability of the building,” said Mr McGregor.