

# ASBESTOS IN SCHOOLS

## How to Check your School's Asbestos Management

### What to look for in a School Asbestos Management Plan

(If Your Child Attends the School Now)

This is not meant to be a definitive list. Its purpose is to give you enough background information so that when you see the school's asbestos management plan you will have a reasonable idea whether it is likely to be effective or not.

#### Plan should be Written Down

- A good asbestos management plan will have a ground plan of the school showing the location of all the asbestos. It will have a written record of surveys, inspections and repairs. It will detail the school's policy on asbestos and say how often future surveys and inspections are to be carried out. It will record the names of the staff, the surveyors and the contractors who carried out the actions. It will have a contingency plan for what to do if an incident occurs, and a record of any incidents and any person who might have been involved.

#### Member of Staff Delegated to Oversee All matters to do with Asbestos.

- The school should have delegated a member of staff to oversee every aspect of asbestos in the school. That person will often be the bursar or the school's health and safety officer, however they can be any person who has been trained for the job.
- It is essential that they know what they are doing and have been trained for the job. They should have attended an asbestos management course.

#### Proper Survey Essential.

- The law does not require a survey but in practice it is essential. If it is not carried out everything in the building has to be treated as if it was asbestos. This is clearly impractical. (But be warned this has been the policy of some LEAs)
- The law does require the school authorities to manage asbestos. In order to manage asbestos effectively a survey is essential as it takes an expert to identify material that contains asbestos and to take samples to identify the type of asbestos

#### Surveyor must be qualified and Experienced

- A business is allowed to carry out their own survey but it is most unlikely that a school will have any person with the correct qualifications and the experience to carry out a proper survey.
- The surveying firm must be accredited by the UK Accreditation Service as complying with ISO 17020.
- It is essential that the surveyor is both qualified and experienced.
- The basic minimum qualification that allows a person to carry out a survey is the British Institute of Occupational Hygiene qualification P402. Another course run by the same organisation is the S301 which gives a more general idea about asbestos. These are good courses, but the skills of a person who has passed and gained his certificates is on par with someone who has just passed their driving test. They both need experience. The "surveyor" should have shadowed a competent surveyor for at least six months before they are let loose on their own.
- The UK Accreditation Service also issues certificates to firms who run courses. These firms must be accredited under the EN45013.
- The firm carrying out the asbestos survey should hold a UKAS accreditation

#### Types of Survey

- **Type 1** This presumes that any suspect material is asbestos and treats it as such. This might work in an office, however it cannot in a school.
- **Type 2** The surveyor looks at all of the buildings, but does not look in places that are normally inaccessible, such as roof and wall wall, however, if access can be gained to these spaces they should be inspected. He takes representative samples of any material that he thinks could contain asbestos. Those samples are then sent to a laboratory for analysis. The location, type and condition of the asbestos is recorded. This type of survey is most acceptable in a school.
- **Type 3** This involves inspecting everywhere including the normally inaccessible places, and may involve some destruction of the fabric of the building. Samples are taken wherever possible and analysed. A record is kept. This type of survey is normally carried out before refurbishment or demolition. It is not a requirement of this survey to assess the condition of the asbestos. If the survey has been carried out and some asbestos remains in place, then its condition must be recorded.

#### The results of the survey

- Ask to see the results of the survey. All asbestos will be listed and a score made of the asbestos by type, location, and condition. (ie asbestos lagging, AIB, type etc the type of asbestos - amosite, crocidolite, chrysotile - and its condition - damaged, poor condition.
- The score is used as part of an assessment of the risk that the asbestos presents to staff and children. It will be assessed whether it is in a place where it is likely to be damaged and how many people are likely to damage it. For instance damaged asbestos insulating board walls in a busy corridor, where it likely to suffer even more damage as many children charge past, will have a very high score. An asbestos cement roof in a yard where no one other than the caretaker is allowed access will have a low score.

#### Air Sampling

- Air sampling is not normally part of an asbestos survey. A type 1 and 2 asbestos survey will only examine accessible spaces and therefore asbestos hidden behind walls, beneath floors and in inaccessible ceilings and ducting will not be detected. When the buildings were constructed it was common practice to sweep asbestos off-cuts and debris into the wall voids or leave them above the suspended ceilings. Also over the years much of

the hidden asbestos has deteriorated and is releasing asbestos fibres, however without air sampling it has been proved that damaged hidden asbestos goes undetected. It was for instance the only way that the problem of fibre release from hidden asbestos in System built schools was discovered.

- Comprehensive air sampling, with realistic disturbance, should therefore be a mandatory part of a school's asbestos survey, and the campaign will lobby for this. We suggested that you ask whether the school has carried out air sampling. In the case of System built schools DCSF guidance states that air sampling should be carried out once remedial work to seal the gaps in walls, columns and ceilings has been completed. Therefore ask the school authorities for the results of the air sampling. If they have not been carried out then refer the authorities to the "Asbestos Warnings" section of the DCSF web-site (Scape Formal Notice Appendix Methodology): <http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/management/resources/financeandbuilding/schoolbuildings/stat/asbestos/warnings/>
- A word of caution should be given about air tests, for unless they are carried out correctly they will give unrepresentative results. For if they are carried out while the school is empty and disturbance is not carried out that simulates normal school activities, then the results are guaranteed to be very low. It is a serious omission of the HSE that there is not an agreed protocol for air sampling in buildings to assess the levels of fibres released under normal conditions. Instead the protocols are all for specialist contractors carrying out work on asbestos. On many occasions following an asbestos incident in a school, or when an assessment is needed of the asbestos fibre levels in a classroom, "Reassurance" air sampling will be carried out. This kind of sampling was not designed for these circumstances and does not even require disturbance of surfaces, therefore it is invariably unsuitable.
- To determine whether a room is contaminated or whether asbestos fibres are being released from hidden asbestos more than one air sample should be taken in a room. Disturbance should be undertaken that simulates normal activity such as vigorous sweeping, and dusting of surfaces. The doors, walls, columns and window sills should be hit however as this could release high fibre levels it should only be performed by specialist contractors under controlled conditions. Air sampling should also be undertaken in the ceiling void, with disturbance, to determine whether fibres are being released into the void or whether they are already contaminated.
- Any asbestos materials should be regularly checked by a trained person to ensure that they remain in good condition. The asbestos management plan should record the frequency of these periodic checks. The fact that they have been carried out and the results should also be recorded on the management plan.
- In America the law requires the survey to be repeated every 3 years. This is not the law in this country however it is good practice.
- The law in America requires the parents and teachers to be annually updated on the school's asbestos management plan. This is an excellent practice and the policy of openness gives peace of mind to the parents and teachers and ensures that the school is following best practice.

**Good Practice**

**Any asbestos found by the survey will have to be made safe. The management plan must show how this is to be done.**

**Click the link to show how this should be done.**

**Actions after the Survey**

<a href="#">About us</a>	<a href="#">Checking asbestos management</a>	<a href="#">Teachers' Unions press releases</a>	<a href="#">Contacting MPs</a>	<a href="#">Asbestos exposure in Schools</a>
<a href="#">Campaign objectives</a>	<a href="#">Campaign for change and contacts</a>	<a href="#">Release of asbestos Fibres in System Built schools</a>	<a href="#">Asbestos Recommendations for System Built Schools</a>	<a href="#">Asbestos Policy Improvements</a>