

ASBESTOS IN SCHOOLS

How to Check your School's Asbestos Management

Your Right to Information

State Schools

By law teachers and ancillary staff should be told of the whereabouts of any asbestos that they might damage but there is no legal obligation to tell you (the parent of a child who might damage asbestos) that there is asbestos or where it is. You are therefore only likely to find out asbestos is present after an incident unless you take the active steps we suggest below.

Unfortunately teachers are frequently not told where asbestos is in spite of the law. Such teachers are in no position to effectively protect your child and you, of course, will not know that. We are campaigning for parents to have the same status under the law as teachers and ancillary staff. Parents should have the legal right to know in order to assess compliance with the law where their child's safety is concerned.

If you are a parent in a well managed school or LEA, they will be happy to show you the school's asbestos survey and management plan. If they make excuses or refuse then you, under the Freedom of Information Act, have a right to see the survey and plan. If your child attended the school some while ago you also have a right to determine whether the school managed their asbestos safely during that period, and you have a right to assess whether release of asbestos and possible exposure might have taken place.

To do so write a simple letter to the Chairman of Governors or the local LEA, tell them that you are/were employed by the school or that your child attends/attended the school. Tell them the dates that you are interested in. Ask for a copy of the relevant asbestos management plan and survey. It is important to tell them that the request is made under the Freedom of Information Act. By law they are required to give you access to the paperwork. If there are a lot of requests at the same time then it would be quite reasonable for the school to give copies of the paperwork to parent/teacher associations or representatives of the parents and teachers.

Independent Schools

An employee in a school should be told the location and condition of any asbestos that they might disturb. You, as parent of a child who might disturb asbestos, do not have the same right. If the school refuses you access to the information then write to the Chairman of Governors. State that by law, under Regulation 4 paragraph 9(c)(i) of the Control of Asbestos Regulations 2002, you should be given information about the location and condition of any asbestos that you might disturb.

As a teacher or parent, a well run school that has followed the guidance will be most willing to show you their asbestos surveys and management plans. However, because they are commercial organisations and not a Government body, then the Freedom of Information Act does not apply to them. This means that by law the school authorities do not have to show their plans, survey or records to you. This even applies to cases where asbestos exposure has happened and the parents have been unable to determine the extent of their child's exposure to asbestos. Writing to the Chairman of the Governors and the Proprietors is the first step.

If the school still refuse you access to the survey and plans, then the regional office of the Health and Safety Executive can be contacted, particularly if it is suspected that an asbestos exposure might have occurred. However they have a policy not to disclose information about the survey or management plan to a parent, even when they are aware that a failure in management has caused exposure of staff and children. They also have a policy that they will not investigate any asbestos incident in a school to determine the levels of exposure so that parents and teachers can be informed.

The final course of action is to make the matter public knowledge.

The next stage is to know [what to look for in the asbestos management plan](#) and that is covered in this link

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