

ASBESTOS IN SCHOOLS and GOVERNMENT POLICIES

A Summary

Michael Lees

My wife, Gina, was a primary, infant school teacher for 30 years. She died of mesothelioma of the pleura at the age of 51. The verdict at her inquest was "Death from Industrial disease." Gina taught in 25 schools and the majority contained asbestos. Some had no asbestos management plan and had not carried out an asbestos survey. Some were not aware of any asbestos, and yet were full of it. Some contained asbestos in a damaged, dangerous condition.

Since Gina's death eight years ago I have carried out a comprehensive investigation into the whole problem of asbestos in schools. These notes are a summary of the key aspects. All the facts can be cross referenced to authoritative sources, with many of the documents being obtained under the Freedom of Information Act. A referenced analysis is at www.asbestosexposureschools.co.uk

THE PROBLEM

Throughout the country staff and pupils have been exposed to asbestos in our schools and because of the inadequacies of present policies it is inevitable that they will continue to be exposed. The Government, local authorities and school authorities have a duty of care for their staff and pupils but on too many occasions there have been failures in that duty of care. The problem is a national one, however the policies of successive governments have failed to adequately address it.

Department for Education documents show that they and HSE are concerned that if the full extent of the problem of asbestos in schools was known there would be public alarm. Consequently the following has happened:

- There has been no centrally collated audit of the full extent and condition of asbestos in the country's schools.
- Because of the cost and the fear of public alarm the Department for Education has not insisted that schools carry out thorough asbestos surveys. Consequently, according to DCSF, many schools are unaware of the extent and condition of their asbestos.
- A risk assessment has not been carried out to assess the risk from asbestos in schools and the particular risks to children.

Because the scale of the problem and the risks have not been assessed, resources have not, and cannot, be allocated in proportion to the risk. The result of this is that successive Governments have adopted a policy of management rather than phased removal. This policy is flawed for the following reasons:

- Successive Governments have followed policies of political and short term financial expediency instead of looking at the long term problems of leaving asbestos in place and managing it.
- Asbestos management has to be guaranteed to work for the life-time of the school. Even the best system of asbestos management can fail, and when it does fibres are released. Frequent asbestos incidents in schools have proved this to be true. Because of this, management can only be considered as a short-term expedient.
- Because many schools have not carried out thorough asbestos surveys, they do not know where their asbestos is, so they cannot manage it.
- Even if a thorough survey is carried out it will not be able to confirm the presence, type and condition of hidden asbestos. This asbestos cannot therefore be managed.
- Decades of under-funding has resulted in schools being inadequately maintained, consequently the fabric of the buildings, including the asbestos has deteriorated.
- Effective management is very expensive but sufficient funds have not been allocated to enable it to be effectively implemented.
- Successive Governments and in particular the Department for Children, Schools and Families, have not accepted that the safety of the occupants of schools is ultimately their responsibility and instead have abdicated that responsibility to the local authorities, school governors and headteachers

- Increasing numbers of schools are outside LA control and hence governors and headteachers are responsible for the fabric of the buildings, including the management of asbestos. Many are not competent in asbestos matters because they have not been adequately trained.
- Because many governors and headteachers are not aware of the very real dangers from asbestos, they have understandably allocated their limited resources to other seemingly more pressing priorities.
- There is lack of adequate guidance written specifically for schools.
- The asbestos laws are drafted for people who work on asbestos, and only by default apply to the occupants of buildings, consequently asbestos fibre levels applicable to asbestos contractors wearing protective equipment are applied to teachers and children. These levels are not safe.
- An ineffective system of regulation has allowed unsafe practice in some LAs and schools to continue unchecked.
- There is a lack of effective leadership at all levels, particularly at the DCSF and HSE.

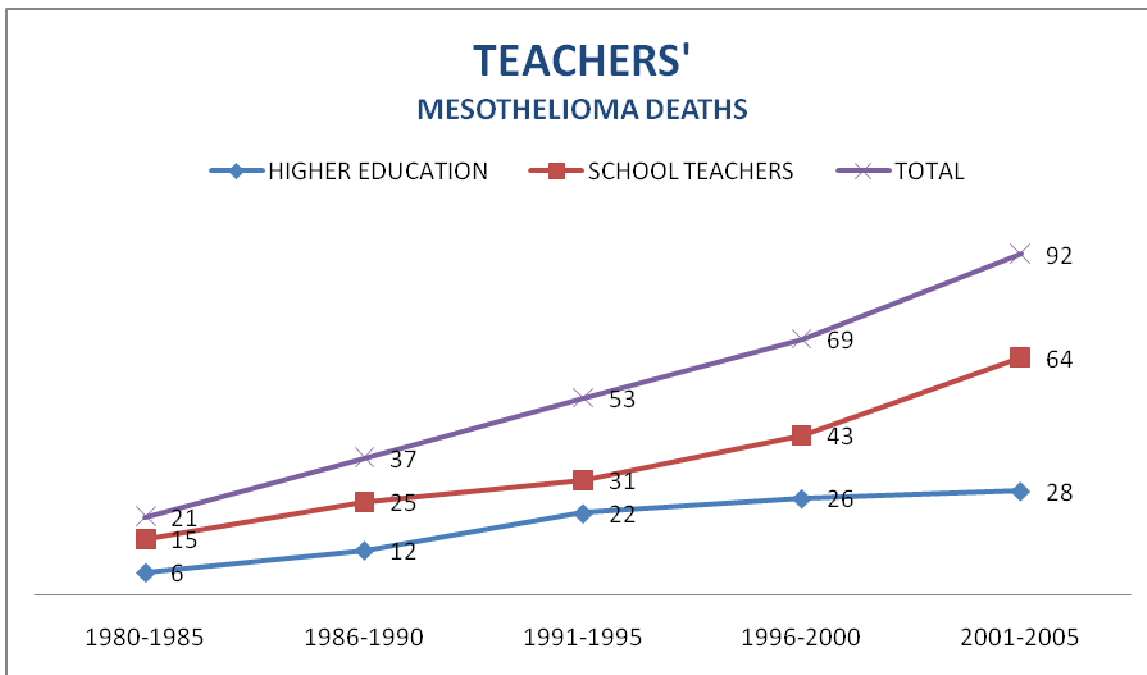
If asbestos removal is carried out correctly then the risks and expense of managing the asbestos are eliminated forever and no longer is there an ever-present risk to the health and safety of staff and children.

SCALE OF PROBLEM

SCHOOLS ARE A SPECIAL CASE

1. In 1967 the Government were warned that low levels of asbestos exposure could cause mesothelioma, they were made aware of the danger of asbestos in schools, and the particular risk to children.
2. As knowledge was not complete they were advised to take a precautionary approach and implement preventative measures. This still applies today.
3. DfES issued a warning to schools, but watered it down. Under pressure from the asbestos industry the warning was almost nullified.
4. DfES have played down the dangers ever since.
5. Despite the warning schools continued to be built until the mid 1980's using large amounts of asbestos.
6. As the condition of the schools deteriorate then so does their asbestos, exposing staff and pupils. It is not known how many children have died as a result but the teachers' mesothelioma deaths are known.

NUMBER OF TEACHERS DYING IS THE TIP OF AN ICEBERG.



(Southampton coding, SOC90 and SOC2000 coding)

7. 178 school teachers died of mesothelioma between 1980 -2005
8. 272 died of mesothelioma between 1980-2005, if school teachers and college lecturers are included.

9. Teachers mesothelioma deaths, and in particular school teachers deaths have been increasing over the years.
10. Mesothelioma deaths for the **ten** years 1991–2000 in the Education sector: 145 died if assistants, childcare and higher education are included. (SOC 90 coding)
11. Mesothelioma deaths for the **five** year period 2001-2005 in the Education sector: 103 died if assistants, childcare, and higher education are included (SOC90,2000 coding)
12. The teachers' deaths are the tip of an iceberg, for they are but an indication of how many children are likely to have been exposed to asbestos at school and will subsequently die of mesothelioma.

CHILDREN ARE AT PARTICULAR RISK TO ASBESTOS

13. Everyone attends school. For every teacher there are 20-30 children in the class.
14. Over a 5 year period of exposure, a child of 5 is 5.2 times more likely to develop mesothelioma by age of 80 than their teacher of 30, purely because of the long latency.
15. In addition because of their physiology children are thought to be more vulnerable to the dangers of asbestos.
16. Because of the long latency the children will die many years later and their deaths will be recorded in whatever occupation they had at the time. Therefore there are no statistics for the number of children who were exposed at school and subsequently have died of mesothelioma.
17. In 1980 the USA carried out a risk assessment. Their best estimate was that over a thirty year period 1,000 people would die because of asbestos exposure at school. They stated *"About 90% of these deaths are expected to occur amongst persons exposed as school children."*
(Subsequently a national audit found four times more schools contained asbestos. US schools predominantly contain chrysotile, whereas many UK schools contain amosite, and some crocidolite)
18. It is known how many teachers have died in the UK. As the risk is greater for children and there are many more children than teachers, it must be assumed that a considerably greater number of children are exposed to asbestos at school and subsequently die of mesothelioma.

MAJORITY OF SCHOOLS CONTAIN ASBESTOS. CRUMBLING SCHOOLS

19. There are about 21,600 primary schools, 4,000 secondary schools, 1,500 special schools and 2,500 independent schools in the Great Britain.
20. Majority of the schools in the UK contain asbestos. 13,000 were built during the period 1945-1975 when asbestos use was at its height. Many more were refurbished using asbestos. Schools continued to be built and refurbished after 1975 using asbestos.
21. Crocidolite was used until 1970. In some schools the whole of the area above the ceilings is AIB containing crocidolite. Amosite was extensively used in UK schools until the early 1980's. Chrysotile was also used until 2000.
22. Chrysotile can cause mesothelioma. Amosite is 100 times more dangerous and crocidolite 500 times.
23. Many of the permanent schools built post war to the mid 1980's were System built. Asbestos was extensively used in their structure.
24. Types of System built schools include CLASP, SCOLA, HILLS, METHOD, VIC-HALLAM, CLAW, Onward Mace, SEAC and many others.
25. As an example there are 3,155 CLASP buildings in the UK. Most are schools. 2,000 SCOLA schools and 400 HILLS.
26. In addition many schools had, and still have, temporary classrooms. Many older temporary classrooms contain asbestos, in some all the walls and ceilings are AIB. In 1980 it is estimated there were 100,000 temporary classrooms in England and Wales.
27. The asbestos is deteriorating through age, vandalism, fair wear and tear, leaking roofs, decades of under-funding, lack of maintenance and botched maintenance, lack of adequate asbestos management.
28. In 1993 the NUT published a Safety Bulletin called "Our Crumbling schools." They stated *"Years of neglect of school buildings have left an appalling legacy of decay."*
29. 2003 David Miliband talking about PFI and school rebuild and refurbishment stated *"We have only been digging ourselves out of a hole."*
30. 2004 David Miliband wrote to the NUT and stated *"We accept that asbestos found in schools has not always been dealt with in a professional manner."*
31. 2004 HSE *"A significant minority of authorities have still not established complete control of asbestos in their premises."*
32. BSF will replace or refurbish all the secondary schools in England. If a school is replaced it will solve the asbestos problem. However Government policy allows the asbestos to remain in situ when the schools are

refurbished. If it is left in situ it will pose a potential danger that will have to be managed throughout the life of the school.

33. Starting in 2005 BSF was planned to take place over 10-15 years, but is now behind schedule. 50% of the 3,400 secondary schools will be rebuilt, about 35% will have a major refurbishment, another 15% will only have minor work carried out.
34. The Primary Capital Programme (PCP) was scheduled to start in 2008 and was planned to continue until about 2023. It will replace 5% of the 20,000 primary schools in England, refurbish and modernise 45% and undertake minor works on the remainder.
35. The Minister stated in 2009 that asbestos would be removed during major BSF refurbishments. However increasing evidence shows that as the projects are more difficult to finance and asbestos removal is very expensive that it will be left in situ in other projects unless the work is likely to disturb the asbestos.
36. The NUT, ATL and Voice have called for all asbestos to be removed during BSF and PCP refurbishment.
37. Even if BSF and PCP ran to schedule, a child starting school now could spend the whole of his school life in a classroom that contains asbestos.
38. Until all asbestos is removed, schools will have to rigorously manage their asbestos.

MANAGEMENT IS SHORT TERM EXPEDIENT. PHASED REMOVAL IS SAFEST LONG TERM SOLUTION

39. In 1984 the NUT stated "*In the union's view only the complete removal of all asbestos-containing substances will ensure health and safety in schools. The Executive will seek to achieve the following: Immediate and thorough surveys of all educational establishments... a programme for its removal to be drawn up...*"
40. In 1985 the Association of Metropolitan Authorities (AMA) stated in a policy document: "*Progressive removal is thought to be both the safest and most cost effective solution, given that any asbestos is a hazard, however slight, and that buildings will be occupied and have to be maintained, and inadvertent disturbance is a continuing risk.*"
41. In 1987 the policy of the Inner London Education Authority was "*Total removal of all asbestos, except where this would effect the structure of the building.*"
42. Since 1984 the National Union of Teachers, NUT, has lobbied strongly for the phased removal of asbestos from schools, because of the particular vulnerability of children and because of the very nature of a school there is an increased likelihood that any asbestos could be damaged.
43. In 1996 the National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers, NASUWT, stated: "*At best, repair and maintenance can only be a temporary expedient.... The only satisfactory solution is to remove the asbestos altogether.*"
44. In 2007 the NUT stated: "*For more than 20 years, NUT policy has called for the removal of asbestos from all schools. If it is removed then that is a permanent solution and that asbestos will never have to be managed again.*"
45. In 2008 PAT stated: "*It is now time for all schools to be checked and appropriate action taken. Where safety dictates, the asbestos must be removed and disposed of safely.*"
46. In 2008 the Association of Teachers and Lecturers, ATL, stated: "*ATL members will be asked to support a demand that the Government conducts a survey of all educational establishments to determine whether asbestos is present, and ensures all asbestos is removed....*"
47. In 2009 the NASUWT General Secretary, said: "*Some schools and colleges are not taking health and safety issues like this seriously, and many local authorities are failing to comply with their statutory responsibilities.... There is no safe level of exposure to asbestos and a long-term strategy for the complete removal of asbestos from all buildings used for educational purposes must be the goal.*" The NASUWT conference voted unanimously for the complete removal of all asbestos from schools.
48. In comparison Government policy does not advocate removal. HSE and DfES stated policy is: "*If asbestos is in good condition and unlikely to be disturbed, it is safer to manage it than remove it.*"
49. Despite their stated policy DfES privately admit: "*HSE consider it safe to reoccupy buildings after asbestos has been properly removed.*"
50. The policy of managing might work in an office, but cannot be relied upon to work in a school. Indeed DfES and HSE privately acknowledge that one system of management, encapsulation, can fail in a school. A 1993 Ministerial briefing stated "*Techniques of asbestos encapsulation... may not provide sufficient resistance to accidental damage or mischievous damage from children.*"
51. In 2008 the HSL project leader investigating the release of asbestos fibres from AIB cladding encapsulated behind a steel casing in system built schools stated "*A release from an enclosed source of asbestos was unexpected and of particular concern as this is one of the recommended methods for remediation.*"

52. Other Government arguments against removal are cost and disruption. However although there is a considerable cost in removal, effective management is also expensive and is a permanent drain on resources throughout the life of a school. Frequent asbestos incidents in schools have caused widespread exposure, anxiety, disruption and expense. These incidents have proved that when systems of management fail then it is far more expensive and disruptive to carry out the clean up and remedial actions after an incident, than it would have been if the asbestos had been permanently removed under controlled conditions in the first place.
53. The policy is to survey and remove from the Palace of Westminster and Government Departments. At the October 2008 meeting of the Parliamentary Asbestos sub-Committee the chairman made a statement that the Palace of Westminster would be closed for the removal of asbestos.
54. Whereas in comparison in schools the policy is to leave the asbestos in place and manage it. It is easy to say that it is safer to manage than remove, however the words need backing up with resources. This has not been done

AUDIT.

55. Without knowing the overall scale of the problem the Government cannot allocate resources in proportion to the risk.
56. In 1989 the NUT called for a nationwide audit of asbestos in schools.
57. In 1993 the NUT had meetings with the Schools' Minister and called for all schools to carry out asbestos surveys. The results to be centrally collated so that an audit could assess the overall scale of the problem.
58. The Minister refused then and successive Governments have refused ever since, including this Government. The reason; Cost. Not the Government's responsibility it was that of governors and LAs. An audit "*could lead to a panic reaction*" and calls for removal of all asbestos.
59. Twenty years ago the USA surveyed all their schools and carried out an audit. Then implemented stringent asbestos regulations for schools. Because of this they allocated proportionate resources so that schools were able to manage their asbestos.
60. 2000 Southern Ireland surveyed all schools and because of the vulnerability of children have been removing asbestos "*even if this would not normally be considered necessary*", and the process is almost complete.
61. 2004/5 Northern Ireland surveyed all their schools and have carried out an audit. Removing priority asbestos.
62. In 2008 PAT stated: "*There has been no official national assessment of the extent of the asbestos problem in schools. ...The DCSF, HSE and others are doing good work on the sensible management of risk, but, in relation to asbestos, we don't know what the risk is and this is totally unsatisfactory.*"
63. The Government's latest refusal to carry out an audit was in answer to a Parliamentary question on 12 November 2008 stating that "*The Government believe that no significant benefit would be gained...*"

SURVEYS. AIR SAMPLING

64. HSC advocate a thorough survey is an essential part of any management.
65. In 1983 ILEA started surveying all its schools for asbestos.
66. In 1984 the NUT and in 1985 AMA called for all schools to survey for asbestos.
67. 1986 DETR, AMA, DfEE advised schools to carry out a diligent and determined search to identify the presence of asbestos by extent, type, condition and vulnerability to damage. Then implement a system of management, which would include monitoring the condition of the asbestos.
68. In 1987 it was found that slamming a door five times in a System built school released levels up to 33 times greater than the Clearance level, and kicking and hitting a wall released levels up to 87 times greater. A survey had identified the asbestos which appeared to be in good condition, however it was only air sampling that proved that dangerous levels of amosite fibres were being released.
69. (The Clearance level is an airborne fibre level below which rooms can be legally reoccupied after work on asbestos. HSE state that it is "*not an acceptable permanent level.*" For every hour a person inhales about 6,000 fibres. Despite this most LA's allow classrooms to be reoccupied at the level (0.01f/ml).
70. In 1997 during the consultations for the Control of Asbestos at Work Regulations, CAWR, DfES actively and successfully lobbied against mandatory asbestos surveys in schools.
71. DfES wrote to HSE "*I must admit like you we would not be very keen on the idea of all schools surveying for asbestos. It would not be fair to single out schools implying that they are more at risk.*"
72. CAWR consultation meeting minutes of DfES argument:
 - "*Surveyors running around would cause "panic". Increased financial burden. If asbestos was found lead for calls for removal. Alarm people New York experience.*"
73. Result: Asbestos surveys are not mandatory under CAWR and the Control of Asbestos Regulations, CAR.

74. In 2006 DfES and HSE admitted that because most schools have only carried out visual surveys *"in most cases it will not be known whether or not asbestos is actually present."*
75. In 2006 in CLASP schools damaged off-cuts of AIB were found in ceiling and wall voids that had been there undiscovered for forty years.
76. In 2008 HSL stated about System built schools *"It is not unusual for asbestos debris to be left in areas around the tops of columns...from the original installation..... If for some reason the surveyor did not access the suspended ceiling as he should have done... A type 1 or 2 survey as described in MDHS 100, requires that the ceiling void of suspended ceilings are accessed to check for ACM's and asbestos debris"*
77. Other asbestos materials were damaged but hidden and only identified when air sampling showed increased asbestos fibre levels when the doors were slammed and walls and columns hit. Only then was column cladding removed which revealed damaged deteriorating asbestos. Until this happened the asbestos had not been identified, and therefore it could not be managed.
78. Rigorous asbestos surveys are essential. However on their own they only identify the visible asbestos, and are unlikely to identify damaged hidden asbestos. Only comprehensive air sampling with representative disturbance will identify if hidden asbestos is releasing asbestos fibres.
79. Asbestos cannot be managed unless its extent, type and condition is known. Therefore in many cases schools have not, and cannot, effectively manage their asbestos.

SYSTEM BUILT SCHOOLS

80. About half of the schools in the country are System built. Most contain asbestos, some in large amounts.
81. In 1987 a door was slammed five times in a System built school in Wandsworth releasing fibres at 33 times greater than the Clearance level. This level was averaged over an hour, therefore if at the change of each lesson the door was slammed the level would be maintained throughout the day.
82. When the walls were hit and kicked the level was 87 times greater. Cumulatively such levels can cause mesothelioma.
83. If warning were sent out they were not heeded for the release of asbestos fibres from common everyday activities continued.
84. In 2006 the problem was rediscovered when the doors were slammed, walls and columns were hit in System built schools in Wales, airborne fibre levels were above the Control limit at 44 times greater than the Clearance level.
85. A series of air samples were taken in CLASP schools when the walls were hit, doors and windows banged and the window-sills were sat upon. The majority were above the Clearance level, the mean level being nine times greater. Some samples were more than forty times greater and exceeded the Control limit, which is designed for asbestos contractors wearing breathing apparatus and protective clothing. One level was 237 times greater. It is likely that these levels had been present for years, perhaps many years.
86. DfES, Local Government Employers and the HSE issued guidance to duty holders of all the System built schools in the country advising them to seal in the damaged, deteriorating asbestos within the columns, ceiling and wall voids. This problem applies to all System built schools of a similar construction.
87. HSL carried out further tests in selected offices and schools and found exceptionally low levels of asbestos and other fibres, both before and after remediation. These are controversial tests which were carried out in buildings owned by the shareholder of a commercial company. In April 2009 the Government were asked to release all the details of the tests for public scrutiny and peer review.
88. Other tests showed raised asbestos fibre levels even after sealing had taken place. The various series of tests prove that if asbestos is in good condition it will release low levels of fibres, whereas if it is in poor or bad condition it will release high levels of asbestos fibres. In many schools the asbestos is in poor or bad condition.
89. In December 2007 as part of an ITN investigation, a door was slammed and a column hit in a classroom of a System built school. The fibre levels were dangerously high and all above the Control limit at 44 times greater than the Clearance level in the classroom, 72 times greater in the ceiling void and 253 times greater on a personal sampler. All of which were on a par with the 1987 ILEA tests and the 2006 tests in Wales.
90. The school was in a bad state of repair, and had failed to follow the guidance issued more than a year before. HSE had failed to identify the failure of the Local authority. HSE issued improvement notices on the council.

COMPETENCE. TRAINING.

91. Asbestos can only be managed if governors, headteachers, bursars, caretakers and school maintenance staff are qualified and competent. All should be trained in asbestos matters.
92. 1994 DfES expressed doubts about whether governors are equipped to look after the structure of a school.

93. 2006 HSE WATCH committee *"It should be expected that headteachers would not be competent in terms of asbestos management."*
94. 2006 trial of a Headmaster after a serious asbestos incident he stated *"I had no knowledge of asbestos its capabilities or where it would be found... it was a complete foreign language to me."*
95. 2007 The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) issued Liverpool City Council with an improvement notice because the council was providing "inadequate" information and training regarding the management of asbestos to staff.
96. An increasing number of schools are not under LA control. There are 6,400 VA, Foundation and Independent schools, with 1,800,000 children and 190,000 teachers.
97. In 2008 the Professional Association of Teachers, PAT, stated: *"There are now increasing numbers of schools outside local authority control with direct responsibility for health and safety resting with the governors. Our experience is that, in local authority maintained schools, head teachers, staff and governing bodies have been neither adequately informed nor adequately trained."*
98. There has been insufficient training in UK, whereas in comparison the USA have funded training since 1982.
99. Governors and headteachers should annually sign their school's asbestos management plan. This will ensure that they realise it is their responsibility.
100. In March 2009 a Parliamentary debate was held on the issue of asbestos in schools where the standards of training were criticised. The Minister agreed to talk to the National College for School Leadership to see how to improve the standards.

GUIDANCE.

101. Lack of effective guidance from DfES/DCSF. Until very recently the current guidance was written in 1986.
102. In 1993 the NUT called for the guidance to be updated. The request was refused by DfES as *"it could raise the profile of the topic and could give rise to a panic reaction and calls for asbestos removal."*
103. In 2004 the Schools Minister wrote to the NUT and said the guidance was *"dated and should be revised as a matter of urgency... schools needed clear guidance that should not dumb down the subject."*
104. In December 2006 HSE stated that they have no intention to revise the guidance as it was perfectly adequate. Their guidance is not adequate, for school authorities need a clear, one stop guidance written specifically for schools
105. In 2008 the Professional Association of Teachers (Voice) stated: *"Our concern about the asbestos issue is the lack of information and basic knowledge available to schools and governing bodies."*

REGULATION.

106. The failures in asbestos management have not been detected because of inadequate regulation. Too few inspections. Too few investigations.
107. In 2005 DfES stated *"I think that certain critical Health and Safety procedures should be checked by OFSTED as no one else is doing it really."*

SECRECY.

108. 2003 Jarvis - select committee written evidence on refurbishing schools; *"Much larger amounts of asbestos were found subsequently leading to delays and cost over-runs which could not be obviously explained to parents without causing alarm, and embarrassment to the client."*
109. 2004 HSC do not consider that parents should necessarily be told of the presence of asbestos in their children's school:
"HSC's approach is on a "need to know basis" therefore a "Right to know" basis might distort what HSE is trying to achieve."
110. For more than twenty years by law in the USA parents and teachers have to be annually updated on the presence and condition of asbestos and asbestos management. This is an effective system of self-regulation.
111. In 2008 PAT (Voice) stated: *"It is believed that most staff working in schools do not know the locations of asbestos in their schools and there is no Health and Safety Executive guidance compelling schools to tell staff and parents. Apparently this is because the HSE believes in protecting the public from things that may cause alarm. The HSE believes people should be informed on a need-to-know basis rather than a right-to-know. PAT believes there is a right-to-know."*

CAMPAIGN

112. 2004 HSE instigated a campaign to improve asbestos management in schools and *"dramatically reduce asbestos exposures"* of staff and pupils. The committee had executive powers.

113. 2005 the campaign was dropped so that HSE resources could be re-focused to achieve Public Service agreement, PSA, targets for building and maintenance workers. HSE recommended that DfES take over the lead role for this *"important project."* DfES/DCSF have failed to do so and will not accept that the safety of staff and pupils is their responsibility.
114. 2007 a strategic partnership was proposed between HSE and DfES to address staff well being, slips and trips, stress, work related absence, asthma, skin complaints and asbestos. In 2009 NUT stated *"there is currently no framework within which education employers, unions and government can work together towards resolving the problem of asbestos in schools, SEAC, the education sector health and safety forum, was disbanded in 2004; efforts to re-constitute it on a permanent basis have so far been unsuccessful."*
115. Since 2004 asbestos incidents in schools have exposed staff and children. This could have been prevented if the campaign had gone ahead.
116. In February 2008 the Chairman of the Parliamentary asbestos sub-Committee recommended to the Secretary of State for Schools that the campaign was reinstated. This request was refused.
117. In March 2008 the Schools Minister stated *"Schools are not the only buildings where asbestos is present and HSE is committed to preventing exposure to all those people who may be at risk. Analysis of mortality data based on last occupation has directed HSE's current effort towards maintenance trades... HSE does not propose to have an "asbestos in schools campaign."*
118. October 2008 HSE launch the campaign to reduce the asbestos exposures of building and maintenance workers. This campaign is essential, however it should not be at the expense of the campaign to improve the asbestos management in schools and reduce the exposures of teachers and children.
119. In October 2008 the Parliamentary Asbestos sub-Committee stated that they would resubmit their request to the Minister: that DCSF should accept that it is their responsibility, take the lead and reinstate the schools asbestos campaign.
120. In November 2008 the schools Minister replied, stating *"Neither DCSF nor HSE feel that a campaign on asbestos in schools is appropriate."*
121. In December 2008 an investigation in a school which reportedly had an exemplary system of asbestos management, found the very opposite, as the asbestos management was dangerously ineffective.
122. In March 2009 HSE intends to issue a summons to another school for failures in asbestos management that have led to widespread contamination.

EVERY MONTH ASBESTOS INCIDENTS IN SCHOOLS DEMONSTRATE THAT THE PRESENT POLICY IS NOT WORKING

WAY FORWARD

- All schools to carry out thorough asbestos surveys.
- Air sampling with realistic disturbance to be part of an asbestos survey.
- National audit to assess the full extent of asbestos in schools.
- A risk assessment to be carried out, particularly to assess the increased risk to children.
- The Government to allocate resources in proportion to the risk.
- Reinstate the campaign to improve asbestos management in schools.
- Specific asbestos guidance for schools.
- Train governors, headteachers and staff.
- Headteacher and the Chairman of Governors to annually review the school's asbestos plan and sign as their responsibility.
- Rigorous asbestos management.
- Policy of openness. This will ensure effective regulation.
- Remove all asbestos when refurbishing schools under BSF, PCP, PPP and PFI.
- Phased removal of all asbestos from all schools.

Only then will our teachers and children be safe.

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22nd April 2009

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