



Permanent Secretary

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Dame Meg Hillier MP
Chair, Public Accounts Committee
House of Commons
London SW1A 0AA

Sent by email

28 September 2022

Dear Meg,

Academies Sector Annual Report and Accounts 2019/20– 47th Report of Session 2021-22

The Committee's report, published on 25 March 2022, expressed concern about the presence of asbestos in the fabric of schools was expressed in the recommendation:

Conclusion 4: *We continue to be concerned about the Department's understanding of asbestos within the school estate.*

Recommendation 4: *The Department should urgently chase the remaining 7% of schools who are yet to respond to the asbestos management survey.*

The Department should write to the Committee within six months setting out its full understanding of asbestos across the estate, detailing the asbestos risk arising from the non-responders, along with its plans to manage the asbestos risk in schools.'

In the Treasury Minute, published on 6 May 2022, the Government agreed to write to the Committee in September 2022 with an interim report on the issue. The final report is expected in 2026 when the data will have been collected and analysed.

This interim update contains the government's position regarding asbestos management across the school estate, its understanding of asbestos and the risk posed. It uses available data collected at a national level, including the risk posed by the non-responders to the Asbestos Management Assurance Process (AMAP).

DfE's position - asbestos management across the school estate

The safety of pupils, their teachers and others on a school estate is paramount, and we expect all local authorities, governing bodies, and academy trusts to have

robust plans in place to manage asbestos in school buildings effectively, in line with their legal duties under [The Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012 \(SI 2012 No 632\)](#).

Schools and their responsible bodies are responsible for keeping pupils, and anyone using or working on the premises, safe by maintaining buildings in good order and complying with all relevant regulations.

DfE continues to follow expert advice from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), that, providing asbestos-containing materials are in good condition, well protected, and unlikely to be damaged or disturbed, it is usually safer to manage them in place.

DfE has taken significant steps to support schools in strengthening asbestos management and meeting their legal duties, including refreshing, and publishing [Managing asbestos in your school or college - Guidance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#) in autumn 2020 and launching the Asbestos Management Assurance Process (AMAP) in 2018.

In 2021, DfE wrote to all responsible bodies in England to remind them of their responsibilities to manage their school estate effectively by maintaining it in a safe working condition and complying with all relevant regulations. This included the advice and support we offered schools to help them comply with asbestos regulations.

DfE is proactive in promoting good asbestos management in schools. It convenes the Asbestos in Schools Steering Group (ASSG). ASSG membership includes, but is not limited to, representatives from multi-academy trusts, local authorities, the Joint Union Asbestos Committee (JUAC), National Education Union, National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT), Church of England, Catholic Education Society and the Health and Safety Executive.

Since 2015, DfE has allocated over £13 billion to those responsible for school buildings for essential maintenance and improvements, including £1.8 billion committed for the financial year 2022-23. Condition funding can be used for capital investment in buildings to address asbestos when it cannot be managed effectively in place; asbestos is also removed when buildings are replaced, or often as part of other works to buildings, such as roof replacements.

The School Rebuilding Programme will rebuild or significantly refurbish buildings in the poorest condition at 500 schools over the next decade. The first 161 schools have been announced. A nomination process closed in March 2022 and DfE plans to confirm another set of prioritised schools before the end of 2022. Evidence of severe need and safety concerns, including asbestos issues, are able to be submitted for consideration by the programme. Where a responsible body has a significant issue with a building that cannot be managed within allocated resources, DfE considers additional support on a case-by-case basis.

Asbestos and risk across the school estate

AMAP was a voluntary survey launched by DfE in March 2018 to better understand the steps schools and those responsible for their estate were taking to manage asbestos. DfE published a report of overall findings in 2019, [Asbestos management assurance process \(AMAP\) report \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#) which did not identify any systemic issues with the management of asbestos across the schools estate. A total of 88.4% of schools responded to the survey at that time. In 2021, DfE wrote to schools that had not taken part to encourage them to participate. By the time the portal closed in November 2021, 93.3% of schools had taken part. The final data from AMAP is shown in the table below.

DfE now collects asbestos data through the [Condition Data Collection 2 \(CDC2\) programme - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

From 2021 to 2026 the Condition Data Collection 2 (CDC2) programme plans to visit every government-funded school in England to collect data about the condition of their buildings. This data will provide a good picture of the overall condition of the school estate in England.

To date, CDC2 has collected data for 5,022 schools representing some 23% of the total number of schools. CDC2 will complete visits to all schools (around 22,100) by 2026. In August 2022, 77.9% of schools that had returned CDC2 data had asbestos on their premises and of those, 94.2% reported that they had a management plan, and 96.6% said they had a register in place. Details are in the table below:

	AMAP final data set		CDC2 data set *	
Number of schools	22,182	100%	5,022	100%
Responders:	20,691	93.3%	N/A	N/A
Non-responders:	1,491	6.7%	N/A	N/A
State asbestos is present:	16,691	80.7%	3,913	77.9%
<i>Of those who responded and stated asbestos was present:</i>				
Stated they have taken professional advice:	16,496	98.8%	3,766	96.2%
Stated an asbestos management survey in place:	16,491	98.8%	3,827	97.8%
Stated an Asbestos Location Register (ALR) is in place:	16,602	99.5%	3,781	96.6%
Stated an Asbestos Management Plan (AMP) is in place:	16,009	95.9%	3,685	94.2%
Stated they have risk assessed:	15,602	93.5%	3,750	95.8%
Stated they have reviewed risks:	15,736	94.3%	3,703	94.6%

Stated there are precautions in place for disturbance:	16,613	99.5%	3,809	97.3%
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**As at August 2022.*

To note- percentages are rounded to one decimal place.

The latest figures remain consistent with data published in the [2019 AMAP report](#) which concluded that from the data DfE did not identify any systemic failures with the management of asbestos across the schools estate. Latest CDC2 data also reflects a reported reduction of asbestos present across the school estate (77.9% as against 80.7% in AMAP), which can be attributed to the construction of new schools and, where appropriate, asbestos removal during wider refurbishment works.

AMAP Non-responders

Although AMAP was voluntary between 2018 and 2021, 20,691 (93.3%) schools responded to it. Using additional data available from CDC2, to date, 256 (17%) of non-responders to AMAP have been visited, reducing the number of non-responders from 1,491 (6.7%) to 1,235 (5.6%). DfE has also shared details of non-responders with its regional teams and the HSE to inform their risk-based approach to compliance including their future programme of inspections.

Next Steps

The safety of pupils, teachers and others on a school estate depends upon schools and responsible bodies ensuring they meet their legal duties and manage their estate effectively. The department supports schools and responsible bodies to do this by making available significant capital funding each year, delivering major rebuilding programmes, providing extensive guidance, support and targeted programmes, and working closely with schools, their representative bodies and other groups with a strong interest.

DfE continues to work with schools, HSE and sector representatives to raise awareness of the risks of asbestos if not managed effectively. We also, in collaboration with HSE and Regional teams, continue to follow up with AMAP non-responders and any concerning practice through CDC2.

CDC2 is expected to be completed in 2026 when a final set of asbestos data and conclusions will be available.

Yours Sincerely,



SUSAN ACLAND-HOOD

PERMANENT SECRETARY