

   

 **JOINT UNION ASBESTOS COMMITTEE (JUAC) ASBESTOS CHECKLIST**

**The Joint Union Asbestos Committee (JUAC) campaigns to protect education workers and pupils from the dangers of asbestos in education buildings. All the education unions covering England and Wales are part of JUAC.**

**Our goal is Government-funded removal of asbestos from all educational buildings and until that happens, we do all we can to raise awareness of the dangers of asbestos and help schools and colleges manage it as safely as possible. This checklist aims to help in this respect.**

**Why is asbestos in education buildings dangerous?**

Asbestos consists of thin fibres which can be fatal if the fibres are inhaled and become stuck in the lungs and damage them.

The main types of cancers caused by asbestos are lung cancer and cancer of the lining of the lung (mesothelioma). These diseases can take from 15 to 60 years to develop. There is currently no cure for mesothelioma.

Asbestos in education buildings, including inaccessible asbestos, can be disturbed by everyday activities, as well as by maintenance and renovation activities.

Deaths of school staff have been increasing steeply since records began in 1980. Between 1980 and 2020, 418 teachers aged under 75 died in Great Britain from mesothelioma.

All individuals working and learning in schools are at risk, and children particularly so, given the long latency period for mesothelioma.

The Health and Safety Executive recognises that these records are a considerable underestimate – incomplete in respect of support staff deaths and with no record of former pupil deaths.

The 2021 JUAC report on CLASP system build schools in England [Continuing government failure leads to rise in school mesothelioma deaths: (the-juac.co.uk)](https://the-juac.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Continuing-Government-Failure-leads-to-rise-in-school-mesothelioma-deaths-JUAC-REPORT-02-07-2021-FINAL1.pdf) estimates, based on UK and US research, that between 1980 and 2017, between 3,890 and 9,000 former pupils and 1,000 staff died from mesothelioma due to asbestos exposure while at school.

Whatever your role in your school or college – whether you are a manager, a union health and safety rep, or a concerned staff member - using this simple checklist will help provide reassurance or highlight where improvements may be required.

**If there’s any box below that you can’t tick ‘yes’ to, or aren’t sure, then:**

* if you are a health safety representative discuss with management and contact your union
* If you are a leader, get in touch with your academy trust or local authority and your union.
* If you are a member of any of the JUAC unions, raise with your union using the member support protocols in place.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Asbestos checklist questions** | **Yes**  | **Further action****needed** | **N/A** |
| **Is the asbestos status of your school/college known to all staff?** Knowledge is key. Everyone should know **whether or not** their workplace contains asbestos. Ask your employer if you are not sure. More than 80% of education buildings in England and Wales do contain asbestos. Unless the whole of your school was built after 1999 it is very likely that asbestos will be present. |  |  |  |
| **Is it clear who the duty holder is for your school/college?**The duty holder has overall responsibility for the management of asbestos. The HSE says for most schools, the duty holder will be the employer. Who the employer is varies with the type of school. This [guidance](https://www.hse.gov.uk/asbestos/duty.htm#who) from HSE provides information on who has the duty to manage asbestos. |  |  |  |
| **Has your employer undertaken an asbestos survey?**If there is asbestos, it is important to know where it is and what condition it is in.  This is a legal requirement and needed to locate the presence and extent/condition of asbestos-containing materials in your building. Asbestos was widely used in the past and it can be found in walls and ceilings, floor tiles, window frames, columns, fascias and guttering, pipe lagging, corrugated roof panels and cisterns. |  |  |  |
| **Is the survey reviewed at least every 6 to 12 months?**The higher the likelihood of damage/deterioration, the more frequently the survey should be reviewed. |  |  |  |
| **Is information from the survey recorded on a register that is accessible to staff, visitors and contractors?**For example, via a noticeboard in the reception area, and on the website. |  |  |  |
| **Is there an asbestos management plan that is prominently displayed?** The asbestos management plan (AMP) should cover who is responsible for managing asbestos and how, a schedule for monitoring the condition of the asbestos and making sure that the risk and precautions are communicated. |  |  |  |
| **As part of the asbestos management plan, contractors must be told where any asbestos is located within a building *before* they start work. Does this happen routinely?**This is particularly important in the context of renovation and retrofitting of schools, particularly in relation to mitigating against the impact of climate change/improving ventilation and dealing with any reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC) |  |  |  |
| **Have all areas that may contain asbestos been labelled?** According to the HSE [Managing my asbestos - Tell people what you're doing (hse.gov.uk)](https://www.hse.gov.uk/asbestos/managing/tell.htm#:~:text=You%20should%20stick%20labels%20on,these%20from%20safety%20sign%20companies.) labels need to be attached to anything that contains or might contain asbestos if it is located where it is likely to be disturbed or damaged. Labels can be obtained from safety sign companies. |  |  |  |
| **Are all staff given regular asbestos awareness training, appropriate to their role, about asbestos risks, so that they know where it is and how to avoid disturbing it?** For example, avoiding pinning displays or decorations into walls which contain asbestos and lifting ceiling tiles. |  |  |  |
| **Do staff know to whom they should report any asbestos that appears to be deteriorating or exposed, or that is vulnerable to disturbance because of the behaviour of pupils?** |  |  |  |
| **Does the plan cover how to protect buildings occupants from the dangers of inaccessible asbestos, including in building columns, ceiling and wall voids and window and door surrounds?** Asbestos from these inaccessible locations can be disturbed by everyday activities, including columns being knocked, and doors and windows being opened and closed. |  |  |  |
| **Are there known procedures to record any exposure and inform any employees who may have been exposed?** |  |  |  |
| **If the employer retains its own record of employee exposure, has the incident been logged, and where?** |  |  |  |
| **Is there a process to ensure future incidents will be logged?** |  |  |  |
| **Are union health and safety representatives fully consulted on all aspects of asbestos management?** |  |  |  |