

EDUCATION FOR LIFE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 4TH JUNE 2014

SUBJECT: UPDATE ON THE ASBESTOS REMOVAL PROGRAMME FROM CCBC SCHOOLS

REPORT BY: ACTING DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To update Scrutiny members of the current position of asbestos in all Caerphilly Maintained schools, providing a review of the category of asbestos in schools and details of the asbestos removal programme which has commenced to further reduce the level of asbestos products in school buildings, further building on the proactive work which has already been undertaken.

2. LINKS TO STRATEGY

- 2.1 The Local Authority is responsible for the strategic management of asbestos in Local Authority Maintained schools, as duty holder in line with its statutory duties under current legislation.

3. SUMMARY

- 3.1 The Authority is committed to reducing the risk to health from asbestos products within its school buildings. A programme of asbestos removal has commenced which will remove all amosite asbestos products from occupied areas of school buildings over the next two years. This policy would commit £800,000 of H&S budgets over two budget years undertaking removal and reinstatement work in 37 schools. The first phase of works which has commenced will address works required in the 24 Category 2 schools, which have amosite containing products in low level areas which are vulnerable to impact damage such as asbestos wall boards in classrooms. Currently the asbestos containing material is undamaged and school staff are fully aware of the procedure to follow should damage take place. On completion of the project 95% of Caerphilly owned schools will be free from amosite asbestos products within occupied areas of each school.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 In May 2011, a report to the Corporate Health and Safety Committee recommended that the surveying of asbestos within non-domestic premises be brought in house and managed by the Health and Safety Division. The reason for this recommendation was due to serious quality issues identified in asbestos surveys for several schools. In two schools, asbestos missed by the surveying company went onto be disturbed during planned works. The Health and Safety Executive commenced investigations into two asbestos surveying contractors, however, no enforcement action was taken against them. Based on the evidence provided, the Health and Safety Committee agreed with the officer recommendation to form an Asbestos Team within the Health and Safety Division. From September 2011, the Health and Safety Division developed a module on RAMIS to manage all information relating to asbestos in Council premises and since this time in-house asbestos surveys and investigation have been

undertaken on school buildings. Priority works identified by asbestos surveys have been undertaken using health and safety budgets. Appendix 1 provides asbestos improvement works undertaken in schools since 2010.

5. REPORT

- 5.1 Following investigations in April 2012, schools which were constructed in the 1950's/60's/70's which were of system construction, were advised that they must seek permission from the Health and Safety Division prior to undertaking work on the fabric of the school building. System constructed buildings were erected at a time when asbestos was routinely used as fire protection in the construction industry. The asbestos product was used to clad the internal vertical steel columns to protect the structure from the effects of fire. As the asbestos is concealed, any work undertaken may inadvertently disturb the asbestos product. Investigations also highlighted the risk of asbestos fibres being present in dust within ceiling and roof voids.
- 5.2 A letter to each school affected was sent by the Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Education, to advise Headteachers of the procedures which needed to be followed. The Health and Safety Manager met with Headteachers and Site Management staff of the schools concerned to advise why the precautions were required and answer any questions or concerns they had. In April 2012, following more detailed investigations in St Martins Comprehensive and St Cenydd Comprehensive Schools, meetings were held with staff and unions representatives and Governors to discuss the issues identified. The meetings provided reassurance that the risk from asbestos at the school was low and that all measures implemented were precautionary with a view of reducing the risk to as low a level as possible.
- 5.3 Towards the end of 2013, a programme of air monitoring was undertaken in various schools of system construction as described in 5.1 above. The air samples were taken while the schools were occupied to ensure a true reflection of air movement produced by human traffic and general use. Samples have been analysed using fibre discrimination techniques, although some samples were not readable, samples taken at six schools which were able to be analysed have returned amosite fibre levels below 0.0005 f/cm^3 . This level of amosite fibres in air is regarded by the Medical Research Council as a satisfactory level in schools with asbestos in good condition. The current air fibre level required in Health and Safety Regulations for safe occupation of a building is 0.01 f/cm^3 . This is a much higher level of fibres in air and is a total fibre count, not solely asbestos fibres. This level applies to exposure of adults when working on asbestos products. Due to the increased risk to children from exposure to asbestos fibres it is reasonable to expect a much lower background level in a school environment, the level to which amosite fibres are being tested in Caerphilly schools is 20 times lower than the current legal fibre level for safe occupation of a building.
- 5.4 The in-house asbestos surveys are of excellent quality and we now have sound knowledge of asbestos products in Council owned schools. This knowledge, together with the results of the air samples taken to date, provide reassurance that the risk posed by asbestos within Caerphilly school buildings is being well managed and therefore the risk from its presence is regarded as low.
- 5.5 In March/April 2014, Headteachers and school caretakers attended a mandatory health and safety briefing session on asbestos in schools to advise of reviewed asbestos arrangements for schools. Schools have worked closely with the Health and Safety Division on the precautionary measures put in place which has resulted in a proactive approach to managing the asbestos risk in the schools.
- 5.6 Appendix 2 provides an overview of asbestos products in each Caerphilly owned school building. Each school is ranked from 1 – 5 using the definition in table 1.

Table 1

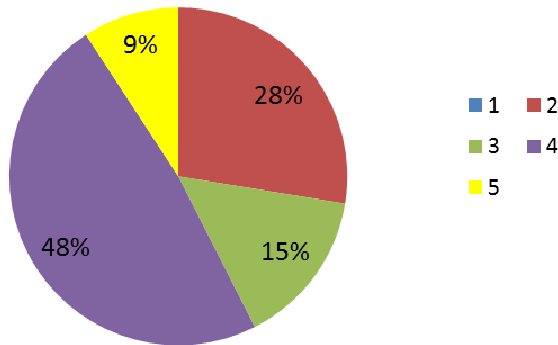
Risk Rating	Definition
Category 1	Damaged Amosite Containing Materials in occupied areas of the school buildings.
Category 2	Un-Damaged Amosite Containing Materials in occupied areas at low level, which is vulnerable to impact damage from normal school activities, such as asbestos wall panels. Impact of chairs or tables being knocked against the wall panel.
Category 3	Un-Damaged Amosite Containing Materials in occupied areas of the school building which is not in a location vulnerable to impact damage from normal school activities. Asbestos fibres can be released due to deterioration of the product over time or can be disturbed by maintenance activities, such as changing light bulbs in light fittings attached to asbestos ceiling tiles.
Category 4	No Amosite Containing Materials in Occupied Areas
Category 5	Asbestos Free Building

5.7 Appendix 2 shows that there are no schools assessed as category 1. However, there are 24 schools assessed as category 2 and 13 schools assessed as category 3. In order to further improve the safety of school buildings it is planned to remove asbestos insulating board products from occupied areas, which would include wall boards, ceiling tiles and any debris from pipe lagging affecting boiler houses. This proactive approach to asbestos removal in schools will reduce the risk of accidental damage to asbestos products as well as reducing the risk of the product deteriorating with age. This would significantly improve the risk categorisation of schools. Table 2 below provides an overview of the number of schools which fall into each category prior to undertaking the programme of works and the improvement in risk category after completion of the programme of works, the charts which follow also display the improvements to risk categories. Oakdale Comprehensive and Pontllanfraith Comprehensive will remain in Category 3, as asbestos materials at these schools which are vulnerable to impact damage will be over boarded and not removed until demolition of the school buildings following the development of the new school site. In addition St Martins Comprehensive and Heolddu Comprehensive have asbestos clad columns which cannot be removed as the asbestos containing boards are stuck with adhesive to the steelwork, this asbestos will be over boarded and edges sealed to protect from damage and potential release of fibres. Removal of asbestos from occupied areas will greatly assist schools in undertaking routine maintenance tasks and reducing the costs of building maintenance.

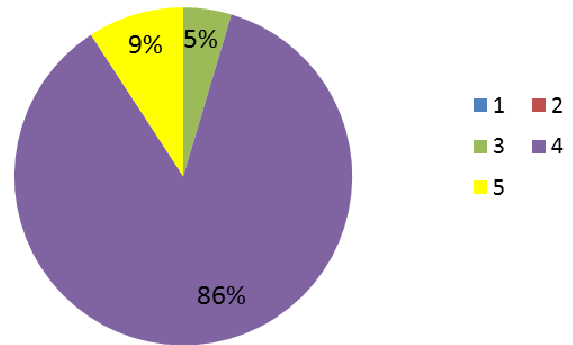
Table 2

Risk Rating	No. of Schools Per Category - Pre Works	No. of Schools Per Category - Post Works
Category 1	0	0
Category 2	24 - 28% of schools	0
Category 3	13 - 15% of schools	4 - 2% of schools
Category 4	42 - 48% of schools	75 - 89% of schools
Category 5	8 - 9% of schools	8 - 9% of schools

Current Category Rating



Best Recommendations Category Rating



- 5.8 Caerphilly Council is regarded by various asbestos contractors and consultants as a leading Local Authority in the management of asbestos, this is largely due to the investment made in asbestos management since 2011 and the proactive approach the Authority has taken to asbestos. Caerphilly are the first Authority to implement an IT system which provides a living record of asbestos products within its buildings, we are also the first Authority to undertake asbestos air sampling using new fibre discrimination techniques which are aimed at detecting and counting amosite fibres to the lowest levels of detection.
- 5.9 The Department of Education is reviewing its policy on asbestos in schools. The current policy to manage asbestos for the remaining life of the building rather than removing it is being re-considered based on evidence submitted from a number of sources including local authorities. Should the review conclude that a programme of asbestos removal in schools be implemented, it is possible that funding maybe available to support the programme, which would further assist the Authority in removing asbestos from school.

6. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no Equalities implications.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 It is estimated that the cost of the priority works including reinstatement works will be in the region of £800,000, more detailed costs for each school are currently being sought.
- 7.2 The cost of the priority works will be funded from unallocated Corporate Health and Safety reserve budgets, £500,000 and Education Capital Budgets allocated for health and safety schemes, £300K over two budget years 14/15 and 16/17.

8. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 There are no personnel implications.

9. CONSULTATION

- 9.1 Consultations have been undertaken and comments received are reflected in the report.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 10.1 Scrutiny members are asked to note the contents of the report.

11. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 11.1 To further protect pupils, employees, contractors and visitors from the risk of exposure to asbestos in Caerphilly owned school buildings.

12. STATUTORY POWERS

- 12.1 School Standards and Framework Act 1998.
Local Government Act 1972.

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Appendices:

Appendix 1 - Asbestos Improvement Works undertaken in Caerphilly Schools since 2010
Appendix 2 - Overview of Asbestos Products in Caerphilly Owned Schools