

The Rt Hon Lucy Powell MP Secretary of State Department for Education

10 September 2026

Dear Secretary of State,

RE: Addressing the presence of Asbestos in school buildings

I am writing on behalf of the [National Asbestos Taskforce](#), which has been established by a coalition of partners committed to removing asbestos from the UK built environment.

Asbestos is the UK's number one occupational killer. It remains in large quantities across our school estate, continuing to pose serious health risks to both staff and pupils. The occupational evidence suggests that female teachers are about 5 times more likely to die from mesothelioma than would be expected in populations not exposed to asbestos,^[1] while pupils are known to be at an even greater risk of developing mesothelioma later in life.

There are currently 8,633 system-built schools in England, including 1,809 CLASP schools and 4,738 CLASP-type schools.^[2] These are prefabricated structures with steel-clad columns insulated with asbestos. Most of these buildings are now many years beyond their intended use, in deteriorating condition, and riddled with the most dangerous forms of asbestos. HSE guidance states that duty holders should presume asbestos may be present in inaccessible or hidden parts of system-built schools.^[3]

We are aware that the Government has prioritised the removal of RAAC. The taskforce strongly urges the government to take comparable action by prioritising the issue of asbestos in schools so that future exposure can be averted.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss how a truly safe, future-proof school estate might be achieved, and to demonstrate how analysis of asbestos in buildings, undertaken by Asbestos Information CIC, can enable a national database for all schools, like those introduced in other countries (see [Asbestos in Schools](#) in the Netherlands).

We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

Mark Morrin, ResPublica – *Secretariat for the National Asbestos Taskforce* **Chris Emmett**,
Chair of the National Asbestos Taskforce **Sarah Lyons**, National Education Union (NEU)
Pepe Di'Iasio, General Secretary ASCL
Professor Daniel Murphy, PREDICT-Meso Mesothelioma research consortium
Derek Maylor, Chair of Merseyside Asbestos Victims Support Group
Charles Pickles, Founder of Airtight on Asbestos
John Richards, Asbestos Information CIC
Richard Blunt, Campaigner
Saranjit Kaur, Campaigner
Dr. Gill Reed, Researcher

Steve Sadley, ARCA

Liz Darlison, CEO of Mesothelioma UK

Rhys Martin, The Society and College of Radiographers

Jamie McGovern, Communication Workers Union

On behalf of the National Asbestos Taskforce

About the National Asbestos Taskforce

The National Asbestos Taskforce is a new coalition of industry bodies, trade unions, charities and campaign groups. The taskforce is dedicated to eradicating asbestos from the UK built environment.