



Asbestos in Greater Manchester schools in 2025

Introduction

Asbestos was banned in the UK in 1999, but it is still present in many older buildings, including many of our schools.

Even low level inhalation of asbestos can cause the terminal cancer, mesothelioma.¹

Asbestos in schools therefore poses some risk, both to pupils and staff.²

In 2025, the Greater Manchester Asbestos Victims Support Group (GMAVSG) obtained Freedom of Information data from councils in Greater Manchester on asbestos in schools.

The 2025 data suggests that asbestos is present in around 80.2% (304 out of 379) of local authority maintained schools in Greater Manchester.

In 2013, figures obtained by the Manchester Evening News found that asbestos was present in around 86.6% (903 out of 1,043) state schools in Greater Manchester.³

A fall of 6.4% in the proportion of schools containing asbestos since 2013 is progress.

However, at this rate, many schools in Greater Manchester will still contain asbestos 100 years from now.

As our school buildings age, and reach the end of their intended lifespans, we urgently need to learn more about the risks to pupils and staff.

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/asbestos-properties-incident-management-and-toxicology/asbestos-toxicological-overview>

² <https://www.britsafe.org/safety-management/2024/asbestos-in-schools-we-need-urgent-action-now-to-protect-teachers-and-pupils>

³ <https://www.manchestereveningnews.co.uk/news/greater-manchester-news/asbestos-shock-in-schools-907175>

Data on asbestos in Greater Manchester schools

Local Authority	Number of local authority maintained schools containing asbestos	% of local authority maintained schools containing asbestos
Bolton	40 out of 48	83.3%
Bury	UNKNOWN	UNKNOWN
Manchester	46 out of 62	74.2%
Oldham	22 out of 31	71%
Rochdale	32 out of 37	86.5%
Salford	UNKNOWN	UNKNOWN
Stockport	50 out of 64	78.1%
Tameside	UNKNOWN	UNKNOWN
Trafford	32 out of 39	82.1%
Wigan	82 out of 98	83.7%

For the individual Freedom of Information responses provided by local councils, go to: <https://gmavsg.org/asbestos-manchester-schools-2025/>

What should be done?

In a 2022 report, the House of Commons Work & Pensions Select Committee concluded: *“We recommend that a deadline now be set for the removal of asbestos from non-domestic buildings, within 40 years. The Government and HSE should develop and publish a strategic plan to achieve this, focusing on removing the highest risk asbestos first, and the early removal from the highest risk settings including schools. This plan should, in the first instance, commit to improving urgently the evidence around safer asbestos removal and disposal, considering relative costs and benefits.”*⁴

Given the financial pressures on local councils⁵, it is unlikely they will be able to deal with the problem of asbestos in schools in future without help from central government.

The next step should be to introduce a government scheme to remove higher-risk asbestos materials from local authority-maintained schools. Such a scheme would require rigorous air testing of asbestos levels before, during and after the removal of these materials, to ensure the safety of pupils and staff.

The data gathered through this scheme would be of immense use to local authorities around the country, in their day-to-day efforts to manage asbestos, and to the government, if it is to formulate a strategic plan to deal with asbestos in public buildings nationwide.

⁴ <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm5803/cmselect/cmworpen/633/report.html>

⁵ <https://www.local.gov.uk/about/news/no-more-sticking-plasters-lga-survey-lays-bare-local-government-funding-crisis>