

15 October 2014

William Powell AM
Petitions Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay CF99 1NA

Dear Mr. Powell,

Petition P-04-522 Asbestos in Schools

Thank you for your letter regarding the above petition and your request for the views of the Wales TUC. Please find below the resolution that was passed unanimously at the Wales TUC conference in May this year;

'Conference reaffirms the position of the Wales TUC that the only safe option in relation to the control of asbestos in school buildings is to remove and dispose of the risk.

Conference welcomes the clarity provided in the House of Lords on 14 January 2014 that the development of policies for the management and control of asbestos in schools is a matter for the Welsh Government.

Conference, therefore, calls on the Welsh Government to embrace this responsibility and work with local government and the Wales TUC to develop a policy for the progressive, safe and effective removal of asbestos from all schools in Wales.

The 'Right to Know' Asbestos in schools in Wales submission to the Department for Education Policy Review at Westminster goes to the heart of the Wales TUC resolution and the problem with the reluctance of the Welsh

Government to face up to its responsibilities. The campaign is supported by the Wales TUC affiliates that represent the school workforce.

The Committee need look no further than the chaos and controversy that surrounded Cwmcarn Foundation School. The Caerphilly Authority ordered the School to be temporarily closed following the identification of asbestos while maintenance work was being undertaken. This shows that there needs to be a clear understanding of the impact of failing to take a proactive approach to address the removal of asbestos from schools.

The school is still trying to recover from being temporarily re-sited in Blaenau Gwent as this caused a significant drop in pupil numbers which, in turn, led to a reduction in the school workforce. Thankfully this was affected with the support of the Caerphilly Authority, through voluntary means and redeployment rather than compulsory redundancy. However, the school will continue to face an uncertain future if pupil numbers do not increase.

The Wales TUC maintains that the 'crisis management' used to address the situation at Cwmcarn, although welcome in the circumstances, would not have been necessary if a measured and controlled approach was initiated by the Welsh Government for the safe removal of asbestos from schools in Wales.

Thank you for your request for our views on this important issue and hope that the above Wales TUC policy is helpful.

Yours sincerely,

Julie Cook
National Officer