



Department for Education

Dear Principal,

URGENT INFORMATION FOR FE COLLEGE SCIENCE DEPARTMENTS: CERAMIC GAUZE MATS CONTAINING ASBESTOS

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has brought to our attention an issue relating to asbestos content in ceramic gauzes routinely used in school and college science laboratories, which from some suppliers have been found to contain asbestos. Further details are provided by HSE on its website www.hse.gov.uk.

HSE's assessment is that the risk associated with any contaminated gauzes is low, but you should nonetheless take **immediate** steps to remove current supplies from use until you have established whether the gauzes used in your school or college have been provided from an asbestos free source. Information about how to store potentially contaminated gauzes and dispose of gauzes that are contaminated is provided on the HSE website, with further advice, including Q&A briefing on what to do, provided by CLEAPSS on its website www.cleapss.org.uk. It is important that you follow this advice carefully.

You should immediately contact any supplier of scientific equipment your school has used to purchase ceramic gauzes and ask them to provide you with reassurance that the gauzes they have provided are asbestos free. Do not rely on verbal reassurance. Ask your supplier for a copy of a recent test certificate from a UKAS accredited test company. Advice on buying replacement gauzes is provided by CLEAPSS in Guide GL285.

We appreciate that following these steps may affect your school or college's delivery of the science curriculum and science departments may need to reschedule practical science lessons until such time that they can secure a fresh supply of gauzes. The safety of staff and students is of the utmost importance and we urge all schools and colleges to act on HSE's notice and follow guidance from CLEAPSS with immediate effect.