

School asbestos exposure killed teacher

The widow of a senior teacher who died after exposure to asbestos in school science labs has been awarded £290,000 in compensation. The former chemistry teacher, who taught at the same school in East Sussex for 34 years, died from mesothelioma in September 2007, aged 61, just a year after retirement. The ATL member was exposed to asbestos in equipment used for science experiments and demonstrations in class. His widow, who has chosen to remain anonymous, is urging all school staff to be vigilant in protecting themselves against risks and to seek urgent medical help if they have concerns. The compensation payout from East Sussex council comes as renewed emphasis has been placed on the dangers of asbestos in school buildings. The Department for Children, Schools and Families is surveying local authorities on whether they are following rules to minimise the chances of pupils and teachers being exposed to asbestos. ATL general secretary Mary Bousted described the East Sussex case as "desperately sad". She said: "Although no amount of compensation can turn the clock back or bring back loved ones, at least this member's family has got some justice. We are seriously worried about the continuing risk to school staff and pupils from asbestos because so little is known about where it is." Dr Bousted said the ATL had 400 members nationwide who knew they had been exposed to asbestos and were living in fear of developing health problems. Even these figures are the "tip of the iceberg" because many people are unaware that they have been exposed to asbestos until they become ill, she added. Health and Safety Executive (HSE) figures record 182 people working in education in Britain who died from mesothelioma between 1980 and 2000. The real number is likely to be significantly higher, as HSE does not have an occupational breakdown on mesothelioma cases where the person who died was over 74 years of age. The rate of death from the condition is much higher in people over retirement age, and highest in the 75 and over age group.

- [The Argus](#). [TES](#). [Asbestos in Schools website](#). [HSE mesothelioma statistics](#) including [breakdown by age](#).