

November 2019

Subject: Letter to Families about Open Spaces

Dear Families,

At the Department of Education, our top priority is keeping students safe and healthy so they can engage in learning, every day in every school. Today we write with an important update in relation to the Department of Education's aggressive lead remediation work in school facilities across the city.

Custodians are an integral part of our school communities, and are in our schools every day. They have always conducted visual inspections to monitor for peeling paint, and this summer another round of inspections was conducted in order to formally log the findings. By the first day of school this year, we successfully inspected and addressed any peeling paint found in classrooms serving kids under six and this fall, any necessary remediation of peeling paint was completed.

We also began our work in cafeterias and libraries earlier this fall, and these spaces were stabilized as necessary. Stabilization is an EPA- and NYC Department of Health-approved process by which deteriorating paint is removed, sealed, and repainted. This keeps these spaces safe for young children, as the impacted area of the wall is covered and inaccessible. Remediation is successful when dust wipe samples confirm the longer term safety of the room.

Our focus has always been on classrooms where students spend the most time, but we're committed to enhancing our protocols and have expanded our work to common spaces. Beginning next month, we're expanding inspections to include bathrooms, gymnasiums and auditoriums.

Although lead-based paint was banned in New York City in 1960, we take additional precautions and include in our monitoring any building constructed 25 years after that ban. Children under three years old are the most susceptible and vulnerable to the health effects of lead, and children under age six are at higher risk than older children.

Our response protocol keeps kids safe, and over the course of the year the DOE has increased oversight and transparency of this work. A centralized database is available online, and staff or parents can report any deteriorate paint via an online tool accessible 24/7 at schools.nyc.gov/lead-based-paint.

Please do not hesitate to reach out to PaintTesting@schools.nyc.gov with any questions about our ongoing efforts with respect to lead remediation.

Sincerely,

Office of the Chief Operating Officer