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Schools: Better learning in healthy air Updated guidebook for indoor air hygiene at schools

The new edition of *Leitfaden für die Innenraumhygiene in Schulgebäuden [Guidebook on indoor air hygiene in school buildings]* has been published. The Indoor Air Hygiene Commission of the Federal Environment Agency (UBA) has reworked it and added new current topics. The 140-page guide offers tips and advice about particulate matter, carbon dioxide, as well as other chemical substances and acoustic problems in Germany's schools. UBA President Troge said, "Education is important, and a healthy environment for it is imperative. Our new guidebook will help teachers, school supporters, supervisory authorities and parents in the battle against poor air in Germany's schools." Just a few simple actions can often make for better indoor climate, for example airing properly and regularly or using low-emissions products when redecorating. Proper cleaning in school buildings is also vital, and the guidebook has advice on this. It also includes advice on appropriate remediation and redecoration of school buildings.

Some of the causes of contaminated air in schools are excessively high levels of carbon dioxide as a result of sealed windows or inadequate airing. Too much humidity can cause mould. Add to that emissions of hazardous substances from building materials and cleaning agents. Particulate matter impairs pupils' health not only on their way to school but also in the classroom itself- regardless whether it originates from outside or within the school. The effects of poor air quality on both pupils and teachers are mainly headache, fatigue, and inability to concentrate. "Healthy air plays a considerable part in successful learning. Because education is important the authorities should take all measures necessary to guarantee clean air in schools. Regular airing by fits and starts during every short break can help a lot", continued Troge.

Troge also made an appeal not to allow urgently needed remediation work in schools to take second place to other supposedly more important tasks. "Many school buildings have technical defects that are unacceptable on health grounds", said Troge. It is true that a number of school buildings have been redeveloped in recent years, as it was suspected there was asbestos, polychlorinated biphenyls or other hazardous substances, but it is now time to face new challenges-- issues such as particulate matter, poor acoustics or persistent mould.

The *Leitfaden für die Innenraumhygiene in Schulgebäuden* [Guidebook on indoor air hygiene in school buildings] publication is available free of charge at http://www.umweltbundesamt.de/uba-info-medien/mysql_medien.php?anfrage=Kennummer&Suchwort=3689.

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