

Lead Paint Is Found In School

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By JOE DAVIDSON
of The Bulletin Staff

When they were just toddlers, at least a few of the children now at the Brooks Educational Center in West Philadelphia, contracted lead poisoning from paint.

Today they are mentally retarded.

Those same children, and others, are scheduled to be transferred to the T. B. Read School in Eastwick. But Read has paint peeling throughout it and that paint has a very high lead content, according to the grandfather of a Brooks student.

"That building is a time bomb for these children," said James Reed, of 333 N. Wilton st., whose grandson is one of the children being transferred to Read.

Along with several other parents, Reed recently toured the Read School and while there, he collected paint chips from a basement stairway and first-floor hallways.

36 Pct. Lead Content

Delare Associates, a bacteriological and chemical research firm at 4300 Locust st., examined the samples for Reed. The lab report said the lead content was greater than 36 percent.

Paint that has a lead content of one percent is considered harmful, according to the City Health Department.

"We're going to have the paint tested," said Edward W. Deissler, director of architecture, engineering and construction for the school district, when questioned on the matter.

"If it contains lead it will be removed before it is repainted."

Read was last painted 10 years ago and a new paint job is scheduled for a yet undetermined time in the next fiscal year which begins July 1, a school district spokesman said.

The lead content in the chips could have built up over the years as successive paintings were done, Milton W. Ransom, Delare's chief chemist explained.

"The outer surface may have had modern paint (with a very low lead content), but certainly the undercoat didn't," he said.

Just a Little Bit

If the mentally retarded students attending Read have eaten enough of the paint chips, they're in danger of suffering more retardation, according to pediatrician Dr. Muriel Young, of John F. Kennedy Memorial Hospital.

"It really doesn't require very much," she added.

"We don't want them to be further retarded," she said. "Lead increases their retardation."



Bulletin Staff Photo

Paint chips at the T. B. Read School in Philadelphia contain great amounts of lead.

Once the lead poisoning sets in, all the treatment in the world isn't going to reverse the process," she explained.

If parental permission is granted, the students at Read School will be screened for lead poisoning. "Just as soon as possible," said Samuel Cravitz, administrator of school health services.

Brooks and Read each house about 80 trainable mentally retarded students.

Brooks, located at 57th and Haverford ave., now has students with an age range of 6 through 21. Students at Read, 78th and Bust Ave. in the Eastwick section of Southwest Philadelphia, are 12 through 21.

To Transfer All

To take better advantage of the vocational education workshop at Brooks, the school system will transfer older students there from Read.

In September, Read will have students aged six through 14 and Brooks will take the 15 through 21-year-olds.

The Brooks Home and School Parents Ad Hoc Committee said it would have no comment until a meeting with school officials tomorrow.

By HELEN BLUM

Two children who attended a public school found to have high levels of lead in its wall paint have shown evidence of abnormally high lead levels in their blood.

Tests show that the children enrolled in the T. B. Read School for retarded children, have a 40-microgram lead count in their blood. The city consumes 10 to 80 micrograms dangerous to health.

"The children will not require treatment," said Gerald Aaronson, M.D., of the School Health Service Department. "But they must have followups and be watched carefully during the summer."

Aaronson said lead blood levels are more readily detected during summer months because lead has a tendency to be dormant until activated by Vitamin D from the sun.

Ninety-five students at the Read School, 78th and Bust Ave., were tested after a group of parents touring the facility collected paint chips and sent them to a chemical laboratory for testing.

The results showed the paint contained dangerously high levels of lead.

City tests got similar results. "NONE of the children actually showed traces of lead paint poisoning," said Aaronson. "The two will be watched, but they have suffered no damage to health."

Aaronson pointed out that anybody who walks and breathes air will show low lead levels in his blood.

The city is completing tests on the school.

Aaronson said when they are finished, the city will issue an order to strip and repaint all rooms found to contain high lead levels.

Pupils Periled by Lead in Wall Paint

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