



HEALTHY SCHOOLS NETWORK, INC.

Tips for School Visits & Tours

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School building environments can affect all occupants, and that can mean affecting children's health, attendance, and even test scores. Parents and community members are not often inside schools or given facility tours, but if you are walking your child to school, or attending an open house, teacher conference, or parent association meeting, use the opportunity to assess the building's relative health. Think about what laws or policies or best practices are being followed.

TIP 1: The most observant parents can be those who have successfully “asthma-proofed” their homes. Invite them to join you.

TIP 2: Entry ways. Stop dirt at the door.



Keep outside walks swept clean.

Use “walk-off mats” at all major entries; these are typically 3+ strides long, removable and easily cleaned. They trap dirt, mud, slush, and debris.

TIP 3: Make the cleaning job easier.



Custodial closets should be located near messes and classrooms; this closet has a “dilution station” for using third-party certified green, concentrated cleaning products.

Closets are kept locked, but you can ask a custodian/official to open it.

Neat, well organized closets will have clean mops, brooms, and equipment.

Look for a *third-party certification seal* on general all-purpose cleaning products in use (Green Seal of Eco Logo).



This is not a good example of a custodial closet. It would be hard to work and sort out cleaning materials in this space. Help your custodians get better working conditions so cleaning the school every day is easier.

TIP 4: Make sure the cleaning and maintenance jobs are do-able by school staff



This school entry has a soaring atrium and a Koi Pond water feature.

How is the extra moisture in the air coming from the water feature being reduced to avoid molds growing indoors? Who cleans the pond?

These windows are 35-40 feet above floor level. Who cleans the windows and with what kind of equipment?

Tip 5: Is your school encouraging pests or molds?



Cracks and holes in foundations and exterior walls will permit pest entry.

Nontoxic pest control practices include keeping plantings away from foundation so pests have no place to nest or hide near the building

Water stains on exterior walls and under windows and eaves indicate water and dampness problems that lead to mold growth inside.

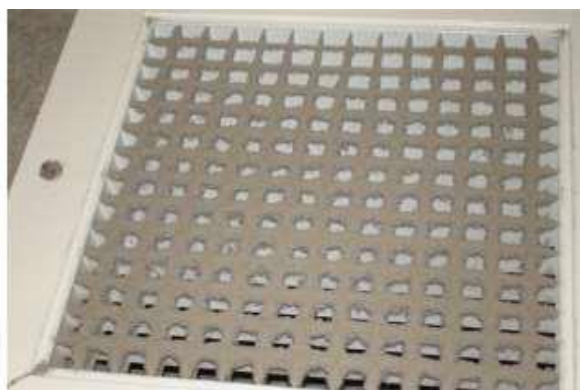
TIP 6: Clean air.

Outside, look to see where the fresh air comes into the building.

Inside, look for clean and clear ventilating grilles, in the walls or ceiling. Typically warm, used air exits at the top and cooler, cleaner air enters at floor or window levels

Smell the air inside. The smell of clean is no odor. No dusty, musty, or damp and dank odors. No chemical odors such as fragrances, disinfectants, bleach, ammonia; no room fresheners or deodorizers to cover up problems. Everyone has problems, but they can't be solved if they are covered up.

Ask the teacher if s/he can open windows or control the room temperature or air supply. Listen, or ask: is the ventilation system noisy?



TIP 7: Chemical management:

Chemical storage areas are kept locked for good reason, but you can ask a teacher, custodian, or official to open the doors.

The picture to the left below is an example of dangerous outdated and mislabeled chemicals that should not be inside any school.

The picture to the right is an example of what proper chemical storage should look like.



TIP 8: Water and moisture controls, inside and out

A clean, dry school will not have any odor. Moldy damp buildings smell dank or earthy.

In humid climates and or in the summer, schools should run AC/ventilation systems to reduce moisture levels indoors and prevent mold growth.



TIP 9: Classroom clutter.

A cluttered classroom is distracting to children.

A cluttered classroom is also impossible to clean, makes it hard to see water damage or pest problems, and pests, and makes it hard to spot water damage leading to mold growth.

Offer to help clean up and clean out. A simple donation of clear plastic bins for student projects will help eliminate “dust catchers” but keep projects in sight.



For more information or to submit your own photos and comments, email Healthy Schools Network at info@healthyschools.org