

# Health and safety risks of school facilities exposed

Nearly half of the teachers who responded to a survey on the quality of the school estate believe the building in which they work poses a health and safety hazard.

A total of 2178 teachers from a range of schools across the UK participated in the survey, commissioned by ITV's Daybreak and the *Times Educational Supplement* (TES).

One in four teachers conceded that they would not send their children to the school in which they work because of the state of the facilities. Just over half of teachers who responded thought their lessons were made harder by inadequate facilities, with one in five teachers going as far as to say their classrooms were unfit to work in.

A quarter of teachers said their school had

been denied funds for building and renovation work, and, of these, a fifth claimed their school had been turned down more than three times. Most teachers (86 per cent) agreed that better facilities would have a positive impact on pupils' teaching experience and their behaviour.

Gerard Kelly, editor of the *Times Educational Supplement*, described the findings of the survey as "telling". He added: "The quality of school buildings is very important to teaching, and it is apparent that there is a need for investment. While one has to accept that we live in straitened times, it is clear that finding cash to refurbish our crumbling schools should be a matter of urgency."

However, a spokesperson for the Department for Education said the survey questionnaire was biased and failed to give an accurate representation of the state of the UK's schools.

Added the spokesperson: "We have replaced previous schemes, which didn't help the schools in the greatest need, and launched the Priority Schools Building Programme to target the worst school buildings first.

"We have also spent £5.5 billion on maintenance of school buildings; by 2015, we will have spent over £17 billion on school building projects and creating new school places to ensure schools meet the needs of their children and teachers."