

CITY OF PEABODY
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
24 Lowell Street
Peabody, Massachusetts 01960
(978) 538-5926
Fax: (978) 560-0984

BOARD OF HEALTH
THOMAS J. DURKIN III, CHAIRPERSON
ANTHONY CARLI
JULIA FLEET, D.O.

SHARON CAMERON
DIRECTOR

March 6, 2025

NOTICE OF INSPECTION

Dr. Joshua Vadala
Superintendent
Peabody Public Schools
27 Lowell St.
Peabody MA 01960

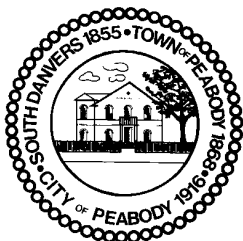
Dear Dr. Vadala:

As follow-up from a request from the City Council, staff of the Peabody Health Department made a site visit to the Center Elementary School at 18 Irving Street on March 4, 2025. Director Sharon Cameron and Inspectors Randy Suckney and Chris Wodarski conducted the site visit and were accompanied by: Captain Chris Dowling, Peabody Fire; Superintendent Josh Vadala and Assistant Superintendent Mark Higgins; Facilities Director Jim Politano and Assistant Facilities Director Robert Harris; and Mayor Edward Bettencourt.

Background: The request for inspection was initiated as a result of water infiltration to classroom and common hallways of the Center School preschool program following a period of approximately 2-3 weeks of roof leaks and ice dams. During that time frame, one staff member reported a respiratory infection to a school custodian and to the school nurse, and a second staff member reported symptoms of nausea to the school nurse a few days later. Neither the school nurse nor the school administration has reported unusual patterns of illness or absenteeism among students in the preschool.

Health Department staff made the following on-site observations on March 4:

Location	Observation	Notes
Main corridor	No active leaks at time of inspection. Photos from week prior to inspection show numerous trash receptacles in place to contain leaks.	
	Water damaged ceiling tiles have been removed. No mold visible above tiles.	Replacement ceiling tiles are on premises. Recommend to keep missing tiles open for a few days to allow for air circulation and drying. Some ceiling tiles are slightly bowed but with no evidence of water damage – recommend to assess integrity of supporting frame.

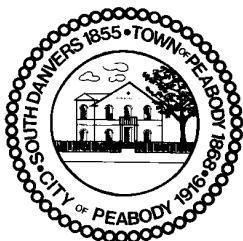


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	Gaps around skylights visible from interior of building, providing route for water infiltration. There are 4 skylights in main corridor.	Roofers are on-site on 3-4-25 reinstalling flashing on skylights and repairing other damaged areas of roof.
	Musty odor in main corridor near classrooms 5 and 6 but no mold visible.	
Classroom 4	No carpet in place. No evidence of water damage to floor tiles. No visible evidence of mold.	
	Water stains at bulletin board adhered to concrete wall.	Recommend to remove bulletin board to assess for mold growth behind. If there is mold growth, clean and kill mold prior to reinstallation of bulletin board. Evidence of mold growth would also indicate need to remove and mitigate all other bulletin boards exposed to leaking water.
	Loose paint on bathroom ceiling.	Recommend to remove loose paint and repaint.
	Delaminating wood on ceiling of closet.	Recommend to assess closet area for water damage and mold growth above panel, and repair/replace water-damaged wood surfaces.
Classroom 8	Teacher states that students in classroom had been getting dripped on. There is still an active leak in the left rear corner of the classroom. Area has been physically isolated with furniture.	Roofers on-site repairing roof.
	Water damaged carpet has been cleaned and water extracted.	
	Teacher expresses concern about possible leak in classroom bathroom but there is no visible evidence.	
	Teacher expresses concern about presence of mold in gym and kitchen.	Facilities Director states mold in kitchen has been remediated.
	Evidence of active water leak in light fixture.	Recommend to assess safety of light fixtures exposed to water and remove water collected in light covers.
Classroom 3	Carpet exposed to water has been cleaned and extracted, but there is still staining on underside of carpet.	Recommend additional treatment of carpet, or replacement.

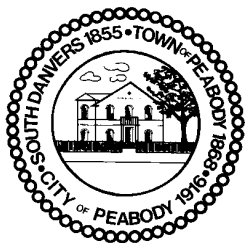


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	Evidence of active water leak in light fixture.	Recommend to assess safety of light fixtures exposed to water and remove water collected in light covers.
	Teacher expresses concerns about odor from trash receptacles.	Ensure trash receptacles are cleaned frequently enough to prevent nuisance conditions such as odors or attraction of pests.
Classroom 7	Teacher expresses concern about water saturation of wood in closet area. She states that the wood released water when she pressed it, and leaked water onto student belongings.	No evidence of water extrusion today, but there was some delaminated wood in the area. Recommend to remove a section of closet to assess potential for mold growth between wood and underlying concrete wall.
	Water-damaged ceiling tiles missing in classroom, with some areas of active leak. No visible evidence of mold.	Recommend to keep missing tiles open for a few days to allow for air circulation and drying.
Classroom 9	One bowed ceiling tile visible but no visible water damage or mold.	Recommend to assess integrity of tile and supporting frame.
Classrooms 1, 2, 10 and health clinic	No visible evidence of water damage or mold.	Staff report no water infiltration in these areas.
Gym	Visible discoloration of several ceiling panels identified, along with peeling paint and damaged substrate.	No water infiltration from this incident reported by staff. This area not slated for renovation but non-intact ceiling panels must be addressed. Any mold on surfaces must be cleaned and treated prior to repainting.
	Efflorescence visible on brick walls.	Recommend to assess whether ongoing moisture problems are affecting stability of brick and underlying structure.
General	Water-damaged ceiling tiles removed throughout classrooms and corridors.	Recommend to allow underlying areas to dry thoroughly before installing new panels.
	Intake vents in classroom closet areas with heavy accumulation of dust.	Recommend regular cleaning of air intakes and exhaust vents. Facilities staff will clean vents over April break.
	Some classroom areas have univents blocked or partially obstructed.	Univent filters are replaced twice per year. Recommend staff notification to remind of the importance of keeping univents unobstructed to facilitate proper air exchange.



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We discussed prevention of future roof leaks due to build up of snow and ice on flat roof surface. Facilities Director stated that as part of this repair, crews will be regrading the roof surface to allow sloping down toward the roof drains. Facilities Department will reinforce existing protocols around clearing areas around roof drains following significant snow/icing conditions, and keeping drains free of debris.

More information about mold remediation in schools can be found in the EPA document “Mold Remediation in Schools and Commercial Buildings” at <https://www.epa.gov/sites/default/files/2014-08/documents/moldremediation.pdf> and on the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH) website at <https://www.mass.gov/mold-moisture-and-mildew>.

Please note that the MDPH “does not test for mold and does not recommend mold testing as part of routine water damage remediation.” Further information about mold testing can be found at <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/guidance-regarding-testing-for-mold-in-water-damaged-public-buildings>. The Peabody Health Department concurs with this guidance, and recommends that the focus be on eliminating sources of water infiltration and repairing/replacing water-damaged materials. To the extent practicable, remediation efforts should be done expeditiously and without students or staff in the building.

Thank you for your attention to these issues. Please contact me at (978) 538-5920 if you have any questions or would like to discuss further.

Sincerely,

Sharon Cameron
Director of Health and Human Services
City of Peabody

cc:
Mayor
City Council
Facilities Department
Fire Department
Building Department
Board of Health