



School security guidance consultation

Response of the Association of School and College Leaders

1. The Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL) represents nearly 19,000 education system leaders, heads, principals, deputies, vice-principals, assistant heads, business managers and other senior staff of state-funded and independent schools and colleges throughout the UK. ASCL members are responsible for the education of more than four million young people in more than 90 per cent of the secondary and tertiary phases, and in an increasing proportion of the primary phase. This places the association in a strong position to consider this issue from the viewpoint of the leaders of schools and colleges of all types.
2. ASCL welcomes the opportunity to contribute to this consultation. We are responding to the consultation as a whole, rather than to individual questions, as many of the questions assume the respondent is from a specific school or college. We hope that our responses provide a helpful overview of the practices and needs we observe in schools and colleges around the country.
3. We welcome the proposal to provide new guidance for schools on security-related incidents and potential threats. We completely agree that all school staff and pupils **must** be able to work in a safe and secure environment.
4. We agree that school policies and plan should be proportionate, measured and reflect the local and national security issues and threats.
5. We ask that this guidance should be regularly reviewed, as new issues and threats are identified.
6. We agree that staff and, to some extent, pupils should take personal responsibility for their own security and that of those that they work and learn alongside, whilst also recognising there are barriers that need to be considered and circumstances where alternative and other measures may be required. These include staff with physical disabilities, pupils with SEND needs, or children with English as second language who may not recognise language prompts.
7. We agree that safety should be everyone's responsibility, and that it is useful to have a named person or position that takes a lead on these matters and has been able to access relevant (and affordable) training.
8. Although this guidance is being produced for schools, it is important to recognise that it is equally as important to nurseries, further education providers and sixth form colleges, and that steps are taken to ensure all settings are made aware of the guidance.
9. The level of awareness of security issues in schools and colleges must be age appropriate. Whilst pupils need to be aware of the potential threats to safety, clearly there needs to be differentiation about whether it is appropriate for nursery and primary age pupils to know about the potential threat of serious crimes involving terrorism and violence. It is more important that pupils can recognise, follow and action the school's processes and procedures, especially when they feel unsafe or threatened.

10. We are aware of schools which have added to their preventative measures by testing technological solutions that raise awareness to staff of a potential threat. Some settings are using a system similar to those used in doctors' surgeries, whereby a member of staff can send a message that appears on all network devices. We are also aware of schools that have worked with their local authority emergency planning teams to plan and lead an appropriate staged event, in order to test processes and procedures in place.
11. We believe that the majority of, if not all, schools will already undertake regular evacuation and shut down processes that ensure staff and children are able to mobilise and reach a safe location in a reasonable about of time.
12. There are examples of some local authorities providing thorough emergency plan templates and supporting documents, which schools can use to bring together essential information for local emergency and support services. Whilst designing a school plan with robust processes and procedures, consideration must be given to other statutory requirements, such as GDPR and the storing of, for example, staff personal data.
13. The guidance goes some way to providing schools with sufficient information to be able to develop a security policy and plan. The guidance is provided at a fairly high summary level. Providing an example emergency plan document may support schools by giving them an example of good practice as a comparison or starting point.
14. The list of examples of potential security threats is a useful starting point for schools to use to as a checklist to see whether their current policies and procedures cover the areas mentioned.
15. Whilst we agree that stakeholders (e.g. emergency services and local authorities) working together with schools and sharing information is good practice, the strain on finances and resources in all of these areas is likely to compromise what could be an effective way of preventing, reducing and building greater awareness in the community of risks and deploying early intervention.
16. Finally, school safety dovetails with other areas of risk management in schools, such as financial risk management and the prevalence of the attempts of cyber fraud, along with safeguarding and general health and safety. As part of evaluating the effectiveness of the processes and procedures in this guidance, consideration could be made to how schools should be reporting to their governing board, and whether in academies this is covered by the audit committee or equivalent.

Hayley Dunn
Business Leadership Specialist
Association of School and College Leaders

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