School Security
NEU guidance for members, reps and local officers

This briefing looks at security of school premises, in particular at security arrangements and means of dealing with intruders.

Security of school premises
Incidents such as the 2014 murder of teacher Anne Maguire, while rare, highlight the importance of ensuring appropriate security arrangements in schools.
Over the years, the Government has published a number of very useful documents on the subject of school security, but unfortunately these are no longer available. The Department for Education (DfE) has more recently published [Advice on School Security: access to and barring of individuals from, school premises](#).

The need to review security arrangements
Schools face a dilemma in their security arrangements. On the one hand, they wish to be open and welcoming places for parents, pupils and the local community. On the other hand, staff and pupils must be able to work in and learn in a safe and secure environment.

The legal obligations owed to staff and pupils are clear. Every employer is required by law to assess the risks to the health and safety of employees and others, and to take steps to eliminate or reduce those risks. This applies just as much to risks arising out of poor security arrangements, such as dangers from intruders, as to risks from unsafe premises or equipment.

This means that school employers are legally bound to examine their security arrangements, take the steps needed to improve security, and keep their arrangements under review. All reviews of school security arrangements should be firmly based upon the principles of risk assessment. Employers are legally required to consult their employees and their elected representatives about health and safety arrangements, including their security provisions.

Guidance on improving security arrangements
As part of their legal responsibility to ensure the safety of their staff at work, employers must carry out a risk assessment of the school site in order to establish where risks to security exist, and how these should be managed, including when the building is closed. Security arrangements should be reviewed regularly, and at least annually. Many schools have independent, isolated or temporary buildings, multiple entrances, poor fencing and public access out of hours. Therefore, the closing-down procedure is a vital part of the security arrangements of each school and college. Schools must also consider staff members engaged in lone working in their security arrangements, whether on or off the school site.

Employer monitoring of school security
In their annual reports to parents, governing bodies must report on measures taken to review and improve school security. Schools should therefore review their security

arrangements at least annually. It is advisable that a specific review be carried out against the checklist recommended by the DfE in order to increase the likelihood of the school securing entitlement to funding for additional security measures.

School employers should be pressed to provide governors and school managers with proper guidance, support and training on the subject and operate a monitoring system on school security issues. Many local authorities have drawn up comprehensive initiatives on the issue of school security and all employers should be keeping their own approaches under review in the light of developing best practice elsewhere. It is important that schools outside of local authority control, such as those in academy chains and individual academies, ensure that policies and procedures are in place for maintaining security in their schools.

NEU health and safety representatives should ensure that issues of school security are examined and kept under review within their school.

Dealing with intruders
In 1997, the DfE issued comprehensive guidance entitled School Security: Dealing with Trouble Makers on dealing with incidents in schools. This guidance sets out the relevant legal background, covering civil and criminal offences, and pays particular attention to offences involving weapons or violence. It considers, and advises upon, the issue of co-operation between the police and schools in dealing with incidents and in monitoring school security matters on a routine basis. The document is no longer available on the DfE website but can be found on the DfE's archived site (see further guidance below).

Who is a trespasser?
Schools are not public places to which anyone can have access. People entering without permission are trespassers and a variety of approaches is available to dealing with trespassers under the law. The first thing a school should do is to make clear exactly who has authority to be on the premises.

Some people, in particular staff, pupils and parents, will have 'implied' authority to be present if they would normally be allowed access to the premises. There can be limits to their implied authority to be present. For example, there may be limits on the times and places when their presence is authorised. Parents might expect to be allowed on site only at the beginning or end of the day, or when otherwise invited.
Other people, including visitors, need specific authority to be present if they are not to be regarded as possible trespassers.

A school policy clearly communicated to pupils and parents can help in ensuring everyone knows who has authority to be present in schools, as can a noticeboard directing all visitors to present themselves at a specified reception point. Anyone can have their authority to be present withdrawn by letting them know by letter. Any implied authority of individuals to be present does not extend to circumstances when they are causing a disturbance.

What powers exist to deal with trespassers?
Special legal provisions govern steps to be taken against trespassers in schools. Section 547 of the 1996 Education Act provides that trespassers who are making a nuisance or disturbance and refusing to leave school premises are committing a criminal offence. 'Nuisance or disturbance' has a wide interpretation and includes, for example, riding motorbikes or exercising animals in such a way as to disturb the normal running of the school. Such trespassers cannot be arrested but they can be removed by a police officer or anyone authorised by the 'appropriate authority' – this is the local authority (LA) for maintained schools, the governing body or LA if authorised by the governing body for VA or foundation schools, and the proprietor for academies and independent schools. They can also be prosecuted and fined up to £500 or, if under 16, their parents can be bound over.

The NEU strongly advises that school staff should not themselves take on responsibility for removing intruders. The recommended course of action is:
- to advise trespassers that they are on the premises without authority and ask them to leave
- if they ignore the warning, to advise them that the police will be called
- to call the police and arrange for a police officer to come and remove them from the premises (serious incidents should, of course, be reported to the police at once).

The general criminal law applies where other criminal offences are being committed. Anyone committing a criminal offence, such as threatening behaviour, causing a breach of the peace, assault or committing criminal damage, can be arrested and prosecuted.

Finally, the school may take action under civil law. Injunctions can be sought against persistent trespassers and these can, for example, prohibit named individuals from coming on to school grounds or within a certain distance of the school. Anyone causing loss or damage can be sued by the school. Police and local authorities have used Criminal Behaviour Orders to exclude particular people from a school or schools where their behaviour is identified as likely to cause harassment, alarm or distress, which are a criminal offence if breached.

Rights of way through school grounds
Certain schools have rights of way through their grounds. The law provides that rights of way may, in certain circumstances, be closed or diverted.

A school's security risk assessment may identify a security risk posed by the existence of a right of way, particularly if there have been previous incidents. The school's governing body may therefore determine that it believes that the right of way should be closed or diverted. In practice, courts prefer applications for closure or diversion to be made by the owner of the land; this may be the local authority, the academy trust, the diocese for voluntary aided schools or the foundation for foundation schools. The governing body should therefore seek the support and assistance of the appropriate body in making any such application.

Lock down procedures

Schools should establish lock down procedures, should an incident such as an attack or intruder threaten the safety of the school. When reviewing their security arrangements, employers should consider what measures will be required to lock down the school site. These will largely depend on the individual circumstances of the school, including the location and size of the site, and the age and needs of the pupils. Factors to consider include:

- how to alert staff and pupils of the lock down incident (to avoid confusion, this should not be the fire alarm)
- how to secure doors and windows
- how to bring staff and pupils into the site from outside
- where staff and pupils should be located during a lock down
- how to communicate throughout the school and to parents, emergency services etc during the lock down.

Consideration should also be given to communicating a lock down situation to members of the school community who are away from the school site, for instance, on a school trip. It is likely that they should be advised not to return to the school while the situation continues.

As with other security arrangements, employers are required to consult with employees and their elected trade union representatives on these matters. Schools should ensure staff (especially those with specific responsibilities during a lock down) and pupils are provided with comprehensive training on the procedures. If employers, such as local authorities, have guidance for schools on lock down procedures, this should be used to inform the process. The National Counter Terrorism Security Office has produced guidance on developing lockdown procedures.

Action points for safety reps

Check that:

1. your school has a copy of the DfE school security guidance
2. your school has examined its security arrangements and behaviour policies in line with these guidance documents and keeps matters under review
3. where appropriate, risk assessments have been carried out in respect of pupils whose behaviour has included, or is likely to include, violence or the threat of violence as defined by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE).

Further guidance on school security
NEU – available on the union website at: neu.org.uk
Violence in Schools
Fire Safety
Risk Assessments
Lone Working

DfE

[School Security: Dealing with Troublemakers](#)

[Safe School: a legal toolkit for schools](#)

[Abusive Behaviour on School Premises](#)

[Archived FAQs on school security](#)

HSE
[Preventing Workplace Harassment and Violence](#)

[Suzy Lamplugh Trust](#)
Helpline: 0808 802 0300

[Arson Prevention Forum](#)

Appendix 1
School security checklist

Source: DfE guidance document: Improving Security in Schools

Assess your school's level of security risks by allocating scores in each of the boxes below according to the criteria specified and totalling the score.

Low risk	0	1	2	3	4	5	High risk

Part 1: Incidence of crime in the last 12 months

| 1. Trespass

No cases of trespassers in school grounds							Trespassers commonly present in school grounds
2. Vandalism

No cases of vandalism reported | | | | | | | Frequently and costly vandalism of school building |
| 3. Theft/burglary

No cases of theft or burglary reported | | | | | | | Frequent theft or burglary |
| 4. Fire

No arson attacks in the locality | | | | | | | Schools in locality have suffered arson attacks |
| 5. Safety – attacks on staff and pupils

No attacks or threats reported | | | | | | | Attacks inside school or in vicinity of school |
| 6. Drug/solvent abuse

No problems reported | | | | | | | School/locality problem with drugs/solvent abuse |

Part 2: Environment and building

1. Incidence of crime in surrounding areas Locality has a low crime rate	☐☐☐☐☐	Locality has high crime rate as reported to police
2. School overlooked from roads and/or housing Grounds clearly visible to the public	☐☐☐☐☐	Unobserved grounds
3. Boundaries, fences and gates Boundaries well defined	☐☐☐☐☐	No fences/gates preventing unauthorised access to grounds
4. Clearly defined entrances Clear entrances with signs directing visitors	☐☐☐☐☐	No clear entrances, or multiple entrances
5. Well organised reception area and visitors' control Pass system in operation with badges issued to visitors	☐☐☐☐☐	No system of recording visitors
6. Car parking Car parks well lit and overlooked	☐☐☐☐☐	No safe place to park, car parks unlit and not overlooked, or surrounded by trees
7. Conditions and appearance of buildings Buildings well kept and in good repair with no graffiti and not vandalised	☐☐☐☐☐	Buildings badly kept and in state of disrepair, graffiti covered and vandalised

8. Detached/temporary buildings No buildings detached from school building						Many detached buildings, inc. temporary huts
9.Recesses and internal courtyards No places for intruders to hide and break in unobserved						Numerous places for intruders to hide and break in unobserved
10. Secure exit doors Doors secure against all but most determined intruders						Fire exit doors easily forced, inadequate locks
11. Secure window and rooflights Windows and rooflights protected against burglars						Windows and rooflights provide easy access
12. Valuable equipment that is easily stolen and disposed of Few computers, TVs and electrical devices						Many computers, TVs and electrical devices
13. Fire precautions Buildings have adequate fire compartmentation, fire/smoke barriers and fire doors						Over-large fire compartments and lack of fire/smoke barriers and fire doors
14. Community ethos and support for school Strong community and parent support benefits security, eg active PTA						Insignificant parent or community involvement or negative attitudes

15. Out of hours use of school facilities No reported problems and/or security benefit from out-of-hours use							Many security problems due to out-of-hours use, eg bars, social clubs

Part 3: Security measures

1. School out-of-hours Efficient system of reporting suspicious incidents, eg paging via satellite link							No scheme in operation
2. Pupil involvement Successful youth action group or school council							No pupil involvement in security
3. Waste bins Waste and recycling bins locked up every night							Unlocked mobile bins left around school
4. Security lighting Lighting of all entrances, footpaths and building facades							No lighting
5. Surveillance Efficient surveillance, eg CCTV covering perimeter or security patrols							No system
6. Intruder alarms System using passive infra-red detectors in all ground floor covered and vandalism vulnerable rooms							No system

7. Fire detection and sprinkler systems Automatic system linked to brigade								No automatic detection
8. Property marking All valuable property marked and kept secured locally								No markings on property
9. Cash handling procedures Secure methods in operation								Procedures lacking

Security risk assessment score summary:

Part 1 – Crime		0-30 points

Part 2 – Environment and buildings		0-75 points

Part 3 – Security measures		0-45 points

Total		0-150 points