



# Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service

## **Deter unauthorised entry onto your school site**

### **Perimeter Security**

The first line of defence for a school site is the perimeter fencing and gates. Ideally the site will be fully enclosed by robust perimeter fencing of at least 2m in height that will be difficult for intruders to breach or climb over. Gates should be locked out of hours and any potential climbing aids such as structures adjacent to the fences/gates, foliage growing over the fences/gates or trees with overhanging braches adjacent to the fences/gates should be removed or trimmed back to ensure that intruders cannot take advantage of these to climb over the fences/gates.

The perimeter security gates should have anti-lift hinges and avoid any features that assist intruders to climb over them. Many perimeter gates have square openings that provide access to the locking mechanism (e.g. bolt and padlock). If these are present consider fitting angled metal anti-cut plates over the square openings to prevent intruders using them as foothold climbing aids.

There are various types of security fencing available (e.g. palisade, weld mesh, chain link etc.). The local Crime Prevention Officer can provide guidance on which type or combination of types would be the most appropriate for the school. Your local Crime Prevention Officers can either be contacted via the Bedfordshire Police switchboard (01234 841212) or via their team email address as below:

[crimereduction@bedfordshire.pnn.police.uk](mailto:crimereduction@bedfordshire.pnn.police.uk)

### **Pedestrian and vehicle access**

The number of entrances to school sites should be reduced to the minimum practicable and preferably direct vehicles and pedestrians through one main entrance and exit that should ideally be monitored and subject to remote access control during school hours to minimise the opportunities for unauthorised access to the site.

Casual intrusion onto the school site by the general public must be discouraged. In particular any footpaths through the school site should be designed to serve the school. Problems can arise when local residents use such footpaths or other routes across the school grounds as a short cut or identify school grounds as an area to exercise dogs or allow their children to play.

Similarly vehicular access to the school site and to different parts of the school site should be restricted to the minimum possible and only to those areas necessary i.e. parking and service areas. If required physical features to enforce these restrictions such as access control barriers, bollards, double curbs, walls and substantial landscaping can be installed. The local Crime Prevention Officer can provide guidance on which type or combination of types of these physical features would be the most appropriate for the school.

Clear directional signage should be on display for all persons and vehicles entering

and moving around the school site to ensure they use specified routes and only access the areas necessary for their specific purposes. There should be clear directional signage at all access points to the site directing visitors to report to the reception area. There should be a clear sign outside the reception area and all visitors should be required to report to the reception staff, identify themselves and the purpose of their visit, sign in and take receipt of and openly display a visitor's pass whilst on the school site.

Authorised visitors will comply with such signage and direction and this will deter the opportunist intruder as they will feel more vulnerable to being challenged if they were to stray from the specified routes or to be on the school site without a visitor's pass.

Ideally the staff at reception will be protected by a screen and the doors leading into the school from the reception area will be subject to access control to prevent anyone who does get into the reception area from intimidating/assaulting the staff and/or gaining unauthorised access to the rest of the school.

### **Natural surveillance**

If intruders gain access to the school site and approach the school buildings 'natural surveillance' can have a deterrent effect by making them feel vulnerable and exposed to observation, either from neighbouring properties, passing pedestrians and vehicles or from CCTV, any of which could report their presence to the police.

If the school site is visible to neighbouring properties and/or to passing pedestrians their view of the school site, and thus the intruders view of them, should not be blocked by overgrown trees, foliage etc. that will provide cover for intruders. As a general rule all bushes and shrubs should be trimmed back to a maximum height of 1 metre high and all trees should have their lower branches trimmed so that all are at least 2.2 metres above ground level. This will maintain a clear field of view for all areas subject to natural surveillance. All cleared vegetation should be removed from the site as soon as possible, especially in dry conditions as it can soon become easily combustible and provide a ready source of fuel for a fire.

The presence of a site agent living on the school site will have a deterrent effect as the intruders will be wary of being seen or disturbed by the site agent. If the site agent is away during the hours of darkness they could make use of timer switches to activate lights in their house to make it appear that somebody is in and awake, thus giving the intruders the impression that they are at risk of being seen and reported to the police.

The use of security guards to patrol the school site out of hours will have a deterrent effect as the intruders will be wary of being seen or disturbed by the security guards. Appropriate signage should be on display to maximise the deterrent effect.

### **External lighting and CCTV**

If intruders do gain access to the school site it is likely that the most valuable assets they could damage or destroy by fire will be inside the school buildings. To be effective during the hours of darkness external lighting must protect the vulnerable parts of the school buildings such as doorways (especially recessed doorways) and other access points to the school buildings, including to low flat roofs. The external lighting needs to be planned to ensure that it maximises the deterrent effect without assisting intruders by providing light to work with in areas where they are not subject to any surveillance or shadows to work in that allow them to avoid

surveillance. Circumstances will dictate whether motion operated sensor lights, photo-cell operated lights that come on at dusk and go off at dawn or floodlights will be the most effective solution for any school or part of the school.

Consideration also needs to be given to the safety of any staff that go onto the site in the hours of darkness. If any parts of the school are in darkness the key holder should turn the lights on before checking the interior or exterior of the building to reduce the potential for an ambush or confrontation.

In some cases neighbours may not be supportive of conventional external lighting. If this is the case infra-red lighting with infra-red compatible CCTV cameras may be an option to provide protection to vulnerable areas that cannot be subject to conventional external lighting.

CCTV can provide an effective deterrent effect as well as assisting in the identification of offenders and providing evidence to help secure a prosecution. As mentioned above it is likely that the most valuable assets that intruders could damage or destroy by fire will be inside the school buildings. Ideally the CCTV will be set up to cover the buildings and be concentrated upon vulnerable areas such as doors (especially recessed doorways) and access points, including to low flat roofs. The CCTV should be supported by the external lighting system and the type and quality of both the CCTV and external lighting should be such that images of evidential quality can be gained of intruders as they approach, enter (or attempt to enter) and leave the school buildings during daylight, low light (dawn and dusk) and hours of darkness.

Most CCTV cameras are 'fixed focus' which means that they only provide a clear image at a certain distance. As a subject moves towards their focal point their image will become clearer and as they move away from the focal point their image will become less clear. These cameras need to be deployed in such a way that the focal point is aligned to the vulnerability they are protecting. There are also CCTV cameras available that provide greater flexibility than a fixed focus camera as they have pan, tilt and zoom (PTZ) facilities. Most CCTV cameras can be adapted to be motion activated and as such will only record images during the time that their sensor detects movement in their field of view.

CCTV systems are most effective when they are monitored as the operator will be able to see the intruder in real time and take action to maximise the opportunities for them to be apprehended whilst minimising the opportunities for them to commit offences. There are security companies that can provide a monitoring service out of school hours and can also provide a response themselves or contact the local police to provide a response. If the CCTV images are recorded they can be used to assist in the identification of offenders and providing evidence to help secure a prosecution. If the recordings are to be used for these purposes they need to be of an evidential standard. Even if the recordings are not of an evidential standard they can still be used to identify the areas that have been targeted by intruders and the means they have used to gain or attempt to gain entry to the school buildings. This information can enable the school to take action to make it more difficult for a repeat attack to occur.

Ideally the recordings will be retained for a sufficient period of time to enable them to be reviewed if an incident does occur and for copies to be made to hand over to the police if required. The usual standard is for recordings to be retained for 28 days.

A regular review of the fields of view of the CCTV cameras and external lighting should be carried out to ensure that items such as growing vegetation, tree branches, hedge lines and temporary or permanent structures do not obstruct the camera views or the external lighting and that the external lighting remains effective, especially during winter months.

If CCTV is installed there should be appropriate signage on display to ensure that person on the school site know that they may be subject to CCTV surveillance.

### **School buildings**

In order to prevent intruders gaining access to the school buildings all doors, windows and other potential access points should be locked or otherwise adequately secured out of school hours. The condition of all external doors, windows and skylights, including the frames and locking mechanisms, should be subject to regular review and any deterioration in condition that may allow an intruder to gain access to the school should be addressed promptly.

Any items that could be used as levers to force open doors, windows or skylights to enable intruders to gain access to the school buildings should be kept in a secure storage facility out of school hours to prevent them being used as described above. All external outward opening doors are vulnerable to attack at the hinges and ideally such doors should be fitted with hinge bolts to improve security. Any external wooden doors that are not of solid construction should be reinforced with 3mm thick steel plate to make it more difficult for intruders to break through them.

Ideally all windows should be of modern secure construction with at least two locking points. Old metal framed single glazed units are particularly vulnerable as they can become bent out of shape with use/time to the extent that they cannot be closed properly. Once in such condition these windows can be easily forced open by an intruder and consideration should be given to replacing them with more modern secure units.

This could also be an opportunity to improve the energy efficiency of the buildings as the single glazed metal framed units are poor at retaining heat, especially once the frames become buckled.

Ideally all rooms with external doors and windows should be fitted with substantial blinds that are closed out of school hours to prevent intruders seeing if there are any valuable items inside. If this is not possible then all rooms with external doors and windows that contain valuable items (such as laptops, tablets etc.) should be fitted with substantial blinds that are closed out of school hours to prevent intruders seeing if there are any valuable items inside. The risk in only fitting substantial blinds to certain rooms is that intruders may target those rooms on the grounds that they suspect that the blinds are hiding items of value from them.

### **Roofs**

It is often the case that intruders will climb onto low flat roofs in order to seek a way into the school buildings via skylights or doors/windows that are not external to the building. In addition to items that can be moved around the site there are certain fixtures and fittings that intruders can use as climbing aids to gain access to low flat roofs. Examples include hanging basket brackets mounted on walls below low flat roofs, low walls and fences adjacent to parts of the school buildings with low flat roofs, storage sheds and other 'temporary' structures adjacent to parts of the school buildings with low flat roofs, water butts under drainpipes adjacent to parts of the school buildings with low flat roofs, handrails leading into doors providing access to

parts of the school buildings with low flat roofs, trees growing adjacent to parts of the school buildings with low flat roofs etc.

Consideration should be given to removing the climbing aids wherever possible. If this is not possible then consideration should be given to putting something on top of the climbing aid or along the edge of the low flat roof that would deter intruders. There are a variety of devices and methods available such as anti-climb paint, static spikes, rotary spikes etc. The local Crime Prevention Officer can provide guidance on which devices or methods will be most effective for the particular circumstances at the school or part of the school. Please ensure that you speak to your local Crime Prevention Officer before fitting any anti-climbing measures that may cause harm such as spikes, barbed or razor wire etc. Additional advice from the relevant Local Authority Risk Management Team should be sought regarding this point in order to comply with relevant Health and Safety legislation.

The presence of metal circular profile drainpipes, especially in areas where there are low flat roofs, make those areas particularly vulnerable to intruders who want to get onto the roof areas. The fitting of 'L' angled metal plates or wooden boxing or cladding on the upper sections of drain pipes in such areas will prevent them being used as climbing aids. This may not always be practical due to the layout of some of the drainpipes and in such cases the use of anti-climbing paint would be an effective alternative deterrent.

Once onto roof areas intruders often use skylights as a means of gaining access to the school buildings. Ideally the skylights will be secured by an adequate locking mechanism and/or covered by a secure metal grill to prevent intruders using them as a point of entry into the school buildings.

### **Intruder detection**

Ideally the school buildings will have comprehensive mains powered intruder detector cover that will be linked to an alert system in the form of a monitoring service as this will ensure that the key holder(s), security patrols and/or the police get prompt notification of an intrusion in the school buildings out of hours.

If the intruder detectors cannot be linked to a monitoring service then they should be linked to an external audible warning system that can be heard by neighbours. This is not the ideal as our experience is that neighbours do not always respond promptly to the sound of an external audible warning system. The resultant increases the likelihood of the intruders being given sufficient time to cause damage, to find and remove items of value and make good their escape.

If the school buildings are not comprehensively covered by automatic intruder detectors that are linked to an alert system it is likely that any intrusion into the school buildings out of hours will remain undetected until the school is next in use, by which time the intruders will have caused all the damage and/or removed all the items of value that they came for.

Ideally all rooms with external doors, windows or other points of access and all corridors will have intruder detectors (e.g. motion sensors or contacts). This should include rooms with external doors and windows in enclosed courtyards if intruders could get into such courtyards via flat roofs.

It is important to regularly review the intruder detectors to ensure they are in good working order and that the field of view of any motion sensors are not obstructed by

boxes, books etc. that have been piled up on cupboards or bookcases underneath the motion sensors.

### **External lettings**

Lettings to external groups out of school hours must be controlled to ensure that the security of the school is not compromised. Ideally access will be restricted to just the areas the group need with all other areas being secured and alarmed. Ideally a school representative should remain on site and ensure that the buildings and external gates are secured and the intruder alarm systems set once the external group have finished.