

## 2 Personal safety

The main threats to personal safety within the school environment include the following:

- physical assault
- verbal abuse
- racial abuse
- bullying
- threats and intimidation
- self-harm
- substance abuse

Maintaining effective defences against intruders will reduce the risks of physical assault and intimidation. However, most incidents that threaten the personal safety of students and staff will be perpetrated by other members of the school and occasionally by parents. Failure to ensure the personal safety of students and staff have serious negative consequences, both for the victims and for the school.

Negative consequences for victims include:

- Physical injury/death
- Self-harm
- Psychological problems, eg low self-esteem
- Revenge attacks by the victim and/or his/her friends

Negative consequences for the school include:

- Damage to reputation
- Declining student numbers
- Litigation
- Problems escalate, demanding an increasing amount of staff time to deal with them
- High staff turnover
- Low student/staff morale

Securing the building envelope is the obvious first step in deterring intruders. A perimeter fence or hedge would define the school boundaries. Security fencing enclosing buildings, though, would be a more effective barrier to entry. Restricting the number of entrance points to the school to the bare minimum is important. There should also be an access control system for visitors.

## Checklist of safety measures: Personal safety

- |    |   | ✓ or X                   |
|----|---|--------------------------|
| 1  | Is there an access control system for all visitors?   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2  | Can all access doors be made secure?  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3  | Can all windows be locked?  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4  | Is there adequate external lighting?  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5  | Are security guards on site during school hours?  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6  | Are grounds and buildings kept under surveillance by CCTV?  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7  | Is there a secure perimeter fence protecting the buildings?   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 8  | Is there a fully operational panic alarm system installed throughout the school?  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 9  | Are staff issued with personal attack alarms?   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 10 | Are intruders denied cover in:  |                          |
|    | a bushes and undergrowth?   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|    | b doorways and recesses?  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 11 | Do the police have entry access to the school buildings and grounds at all times?                                       | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 12 | Is there good liaison on personal safety matters between the school and the police?                                     | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 13 | Is there adequate personal safety training for all staff?   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 14 | Does the school have a personal safety awareness education programme?   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 15 | Does the school have a policy for dealing with bullying?  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 16 | Are bullies and their victims offered counselling and support?  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 17 | Is there adequate playground supervision before school and during breaks?   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 18 | Are all staff aware of recommended procedures for preventing/handling fights between students?                          | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 19 | Are measures taken to deter/prevent students from bringing potentially dangerous items (weapons) into the school?       | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 20 | Are there effective arrangements for encouraging members of the school to report incidents of physical or verbal abuse? | <input type="checkbox"/> |

## 5 Theft and burglary

Theft and burglary are common experiences for most schools today. Both school property and the personal possessions that students and staff take on site are at risk. What is stolen and how frequently the incidents occur, however, will vary depending on the type of school and where it is located. The presence of just a few criminals in the local community who determinedly target the school can significantly increase the scale of losses and make a heightened level of response essential. Theft from within (ie by students and staff on the site) may also prove an intolerable strain, disrupting the normal working of the school and being a burden on the budget.

Features which may increase the risk of theft and burglary include the following:

- A site which has many buildings that are made from non-traditional materials, eg prefabricated temporary accommodation, wooden huts, etc.
- Schools with a large, spread out ground floor area, especially if this is combined with a lot of entrances and low-level windows.
- Open sites with long perimeters and poor fencing.
- Schools with many independent buildings spread out across a large site.
- Easy access to roofs and insecure roof lights.
- A high level of crime in the local community.
- A school ethos which fails to encourage students to respect the property of others, together with a lack of emphasis on informing people about the costs to the school of losing valuable property.
- Schools which are sheltered from public roads and neighbours.
- Schools with inadequate arrangements for lockers and other means of enabling students and staff to protect their personal possessions.

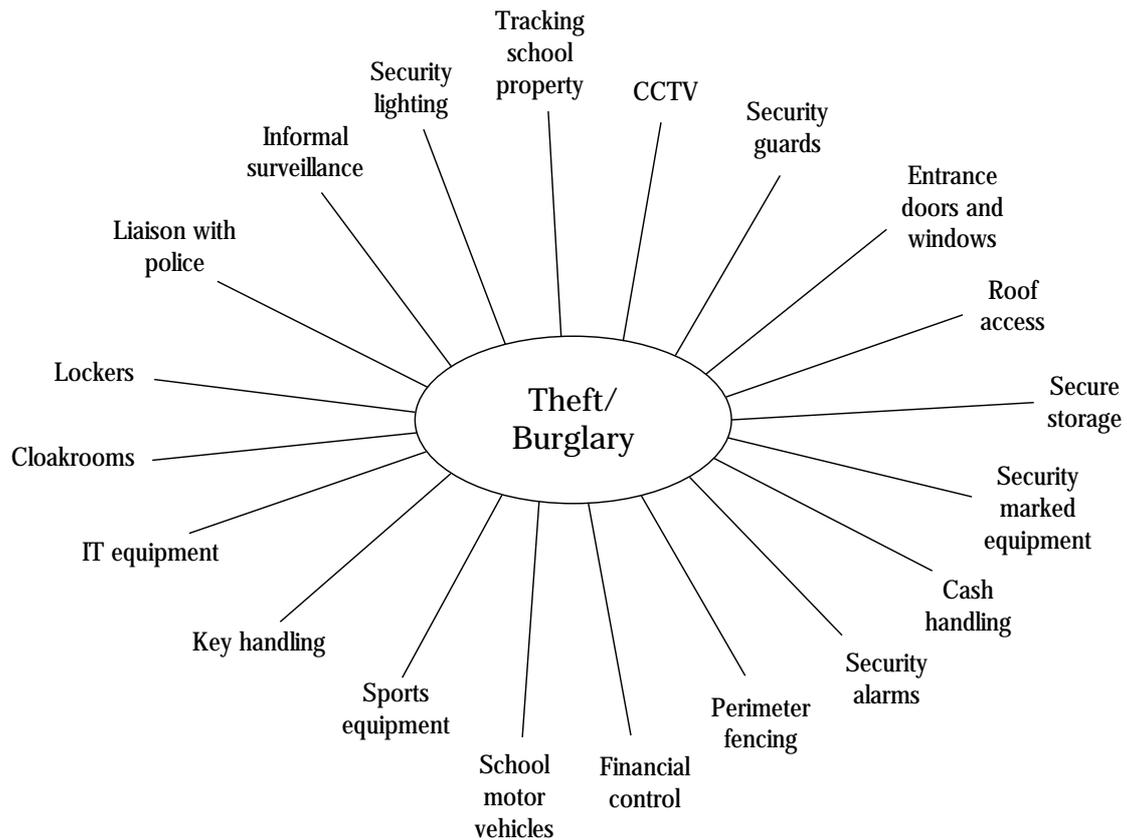
Security measures to prevent theft can be electronic, physical or human. Electronic measures such as intruder alarms, CCTV and access control systems are generally expensive to buy and install. Staff training, systems management and regular maintenance are essential to make the most of the equipment.

Physical measures are generally used to make target areas harder to access, relying on strength of materials and form of construction. They include window shutters and grilles, security fencing, heavy duty doors and locks, strong rooms and safes, and steel lockers. Such measures are simple to operate, have low maintenance requirements and a long working life.

Human measures depend on the commitment and skills of staff and other willing participants such as students, parents and neighbours. They involve: guarding and security patrols, informal surveillance, checks on the whereabouts of valuable property, education

programmes, and various management functions and initiatives. A key aim in utilising human resources should be to encourage positive attitudes to crime prevention. Dedicated and enthusiastic staff are essential for the long term success of a security plan.

The diagram below summarises the main areas of concern relating to theft and burglary.



*Theft and burglary*

The following forms can be used to consider theft and burglary issues:

- Form 11 (page 42) can be used for risk assessment.
- Form 12 (pages 43 and 44) offers a checklist of theft and burglary issues.
- Form 13 (pages 45 to 47) can be used to carry out a staff survey.