



Department  
for Education

# **School security guidance**

**Government consultation response**

**November 2019**

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## Introduction

On 26 November 2018, the Department for Education published a consultation on proposed new *School security guidance* for educational establishments in England. This provided an opportunity for schools and other stakeholders to comment on the proposed guidance in order to assess its potential effectiveness. The consultation was directed to:

- headteachers, teachers, other school staff and governing boards in maintained schools and academies, including pupil referral units;
- proprietors of independent and non-maintained schools; and
- local authorities.

The consultation was published on 26 November 2018 and closed on 18 February 2019.

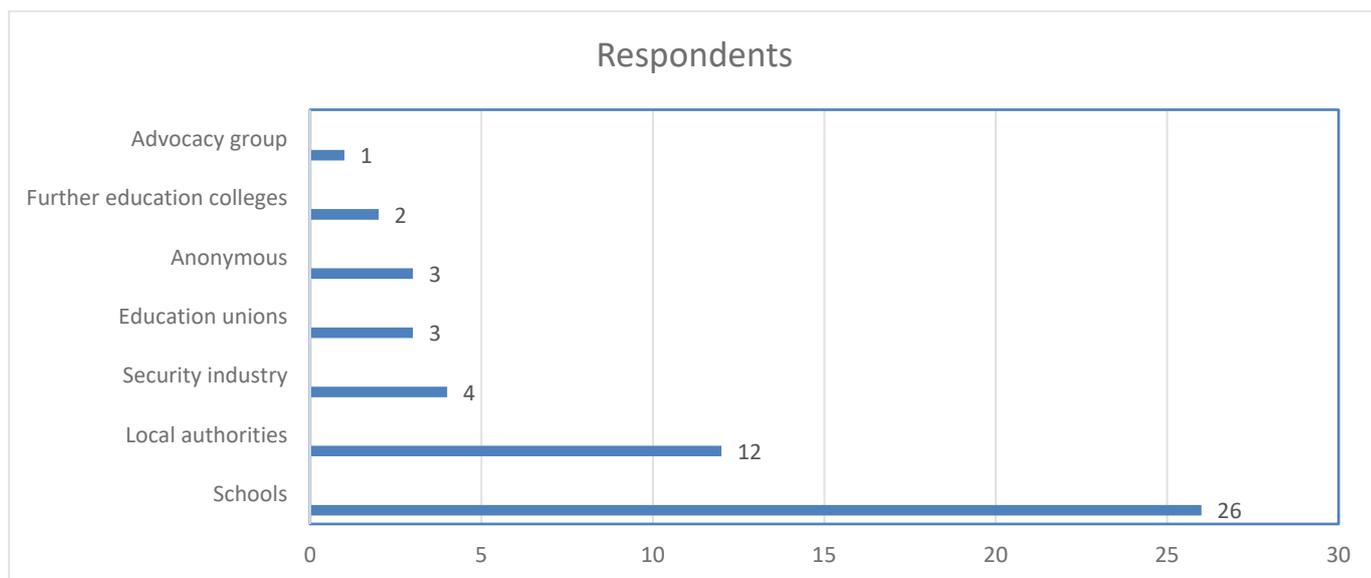
The consultation pointed out that schools continue to be amongst the safest places to be. However, no school can afford to ignore the risk and impact of having to deal with a range of security related incidents. The aim of the guidance, therefore, is to provide schools with access to a range of information sources and tools that will help them to develop sensible and proportionate policies and plans to meet their security needs.

We are publishing, alongside this response, new *Security guidance for schools and colleges*, which takes into account the consultation findings.

## Summary of responses received and the government's response

The responses have been important in shaping and strengthening the guidance and we are grateful to respondents for sharing their views. We have reflected carefully on the responses and in some cases made changes to the guidance as a result.

A total of 51 responses were received. The table below summarises these and a list of organisations that responded can be found at Annex A.



The 26 school responses, comprised:

- 16 primary schools (defined as teaching up to the age of 11) including one school which responded twice;
- seven secondary schools (defined as teaching from 11);
- one community special school (age range 3 – 19);
- one pupil referral unit (age range 11 – 16); and
- one academy/federation trust (defined as a multi academy trust consisting of more than one school).

Of these, 19 schools can be classified as urban and seven as rural.

## Summary of main findings

The key messages from the consultation responses were:

1. The majority of respondents were in favour of the department providing guidance. Most were supportive of the draft guidance, whilst stressing the importance of the content being proportionate to the risks it was seeking to address. A small number of respondents were unclear what “new risk” necessitated the production of guidance and questioned why it was necessary.
2. A minority of responses focused on ‘national’ security issues, while others saw threats that were distinctly local. This suggests that the guidance should be designed to allow for a balanced approach, to provide schools and colleges with a broad range of advice and information that they can apply to their particular circumstances.
3. Responses were divided about how prescriptive the guidance should be. It was clear that locality and experience are important factors in determining an individual school or college’s risk assessment. Whilst some with recognised risks would like advice on how to counter these, others are happier with guidance which seeks to provide flexibility and links to sources of advice, some of which may not be relevant to all schools and colleges.
4. A common theme within the responses was the importance of partnership working despite the fact that a significant minority of respondents said they did not have established local partnerships. Several good practice school/college - police partnerships were identified, but in some areas these were said not to exist.
5. The costs associated with both building and maintaining partnerships and keeping up to date comprehensive policies were highlighted in a minority of responses. In some cases, this view appeared to be driven by the misconception that good security required significant expenditure and the use of technology. The counter argument to this, which has been presented to us, is that good security is often based firmly on common sense and just one or two simple additions to a school or college’s security measures can make a very significant difference to student and staff safety.
6. We are grateful to those respondents who suggested additions to the guidance, which in many cases we have accommodated in the published version. Here we have retained the principle that the guidance should be a source document to enable school and college leaders to make informed decisions about their security. That said, there was a strong argument within the responses for the guidance to include at least a sample of templates and checklists, a set of which we have provided in the published guidance.
7. There were relatively few responses from the further education sector, including sixth form colleges. We acknowledge that not specifically including these

establishments in the consultation audience was a shortcoming. Subsequently we have undertaken targeted stakeholder engagement with this sector. This included discussions with policy officials at both the Association of Colleges (AoC) and the Sixth Form College Association (SFCA), a round table event with college principals and senior leaders hosted by the AoC and our participation at two workshops at the SFCA's summer conference in June 2019, all of which informed the final guidance.

8. In addition to this engagement, both organisations helpfully undertook consultation with their respective memberships on our behalf. The SFCA used its committees to sense check the guidance and AoC undertook a survey of its members. Feedback from the sector was in the main supportive of the guidance and its approach, and we are most appreciative of the involvement of both AoC and SFCA, and for the help both provided at short notice.

# Individual question analysis<sup>1</sup>

## Question 1

**Does the guidance provide schools with sufficient information to be able to develop a security policy and plan to reflect its own characteristics and local priorities?**

	Total	Percent
Yes	20	39%
No	20	39%
Partially	6	12%
Not answered	5	10%

## Consultation findings

Respondents were evenly split about whether the guidance provided schools with sufficient information to be able to develop such a security policy and plan.

The negative and positive responses were split broadly consistently across each category of respondent.

## Government response

Our assessment is that school and college leaders are best placed to make decisions about the content of local security policies. The focus of the guidance therefore remains to provide them with information sources that best enable them to fulfil that role.

We recognise that there are areas where additional material will help schools and colleges, and we have sourced and added this information in areas such as the curriculum (paragraphs 55 and 56 of the guidance), cyber security (paragraph 28) and partnership working (paragraphs 24 to 29). We have also addressed the request from many respondents to provide a set of templates and checklists (Annex A) to help with risk assessments and evaluations. These are included in our published guidance.

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<sup>1</sup> Where respondents commented on more than one aspect of the guidance all comments have been summarised in the Consultation Findings section.

## Question 2

Is there anything missing from the guidance that would help a school to develop its policy?

	Total	Percent
Yes	39	76%
No	9	18%
Not answered	3	6%

### Consultation findings

A number of “gaps” in the guidance were identified. Amongst schools (nine responses) and local authorities (two responses) the most common request was for more practical materials, particularly model checklists and templates.

### Government response

In preparing the final guidance, we have sought to address the range of suggestions put forward in the consultation, although some of the responses did contradict one another. The most significant recurring theme was around templates and checklists, which we have responded to so that schools and colleges have, at Annex A of the guidance, a set of materials they can adapt to their local situations and needs. This is a significant change to the draft which went to consultation and responds to the concerns raised indicating that users would need more targeted advice.

## Question 3

Does the guidance provide a mechanism for all schools to be able to identify the internal and external security risks they may face? If not, please indicate what could be included in the guidance.

	Total	Percent
Yes	29	57%
No	17	33%
Not answered	5	10%

### Consultation findings

Whilst over half of the respondents said the guidance did provide a mechanism for identifying risk, a number of respondents suggested additions. Prominent amongst these

was the suggestion that advice should include consideration of off-site security emergencies and the necessity for robust off-site visit planning systems, including highlighting the DfE's educational visits guidance. The highest number of suggested additions (five respondents) were for model templates, with the value of developing and maintaining effective partnership also a reoccurring theme.

## Government response

The published guidance includes a suite of templates and checklists, and we have expanded the off-site content, in response to these requests. The guidance also emphasises the importance of building relationships locally (paragraphs 24 to 29), to ensure that security policies are supported by local partnership working.

## Question 4

**What do you see as the main security issues facing your school and/or schools in your local area?**

## Consultation findings

Whilst there was a variation in responses from those in urban and rural locations the most common issues identified in the responses were the threat of intruders, and issues associated with serious crime, for example involving drugs and weapons in or around schools or colleges.

## Government response

We have strengthened the guidance's content in relation to the physical security measures schools should consider. We have also directed users to the guidance and support available to help schools in the area of serious violence, including the DfE's *Drugs advice for schools* (at Annex B of the guidance) given serious violence in schools is often influenced by drug related incidents. The published guidance also references the DfE's pre-existing guidance on dealing with intruders; *Controlling access to school premises* (paragraph 35 of the guidance).

## Question 5

**Does the guidance provide sufficient information for schools to put in place measures to manage the risks identified?**

	<b>Total</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Yes	21	41%
No	26	51%
Not answered	4	8%

### Consultation findings

More than half of the respondents disagreed that the guidance provided sufficient information for schools and colleges to put in place measures to manage the risks they have identified. The split was near equal between those who want more precise or prescriptive advice, say about lockdown or other key components of a security policy, and those who consider an approach that provides information but allows the assessment of what needs to be done locally, so that it is proportional and evidence based.

Some respondents commented that the draft guidance was in places repetitive and others felt that it was a little unwieldy. There was nonetheless widespread acknowledgement that the draft guidance included many useful sources of advice.

### Government response

Our assessment is that these responses show that there is no consensus about whether the guidance should be more prescriptive than the consultation draft, or that an enabling document that directs schools and colleges to expert advice is a preferable approach.

We have therefore sought to restructure the guidance significantly to improve its flow, widen the content to include material in those areas that were of most concern to respondents and be more specific in those areas we have been able to be. At the same time, we have retained the principle that the guidance is designed to help schools and colleges put in place policies and procedures they consider best meet their needs.

We believe that this is best done in partnership with local authorities, academy trusts, and others, and that there should be a strong emphasis on building relationships locally to support good policymaking. In support of this DfE is working with a number of stakeholders to consider whether there is further advice we can give to school and college leaders to help them identify materials that will help support best practice in their policies and their delivery.

## Question 6

If not, please indicate what could be included in the guidance.

### Consultation findings and the government's response

The materials and themes suggested in response to this question were voluminous. In analysing the consultation responses, we have given consideration to every suggestion put forward.

As far as is practical we have addressed the suggestions received, including those referred in this report, and we have drawn on the many sound recommendations and examples of good practice provided in preparing our published guidance. The responses suggested that schools and colleges would like significant increases in detail around addressing issues and clearer signposting of measures required. This has been provided by strengthening the guidance in respect of:

- the curriculum (paragraphs 55 and 56 of the guidance);
- police school partnership arrangements (paragraphs 38, 56 and 62);
- the value of developing relationships more widely (paragraphs 24 to 29);
- testing, recovery and business continuity (paragraphs 57, 64 to 66 and 67 to 69 respectively); and
- risk assessments and evaluation templates (Annex A).

## Question 7

**Does the guidance provide sufficient direction to help schools identify appropriate preventative measures to limit or lessen the chances of an incident occurring?**

	Total	Percent
Yes	22	43%
No	17	33%
Partially	6	12%
Not answered/no comment	6	12%

### Consultation findings

A number of respondents felt that the guidance should direct schools and colleges to the policies and support that is already available locally, which it was suggested will primarily

be provided by the local authority. The costs of schools acting totally independently are likely to be prohibitive, so schools and colleges should maximise the support that is already available and look to develop working relationships where good practice is already in place.

## Government response

We agree with the sentiments expressed in response to this question. Our published guidance encourages schools and colleges to develop partnerships where these exist, and develop relationships generally. Many schools and colleges expressed aspects of their own security policies that are important to them, as well known good practice. These examples are widely reflected in the published guidance.

## Question 8

**What innovative preventative measures has your school used, e.g. anonymous reporting mechanisms? What degree of success have you had in using such innovative measures?**

## Consultation findings

Of the 26 schools that responded 14 did not report any innovative preventive measures. Those that did suggest measures referenced the following areas:

- remodelling/securing entrances to premises;
- installing panic buttons, metal detectors, magnetic locks and other internal physical measures;
- investment and greater involvement of staff in policy development and delivery;
- measures that involve pupils contributing to security, such as checking ID, meeting visitors etc;
- adoption/changes to lockdown procedures;
- partnership working with the local community; and
- online anonymous reporting.

Local authorities reported the use of whistle blowing policies, partnership with police and other organisations and the provision of specialist authority based staff as important preventative measures.

## Government response

We have considered these measures alongside the guidance, which we consider allows for these measures to be adopted within local security policies.

## Question 9

**Please provide examples of how a whole school approach has helped you to deal with identified security risks.**

### Consultation findings

The responses included a wide range of examples, which we have summarised as falling into the following areas.

- all staff involvement in policy development, including with the testing of the school or college arrangements;
- staff involvement/consultation when remodelling premises and installing security measures;
- involvement extended to pupils and in some cases parents; and
- use of staff training to develop and road test policies, critical incident plans etc.

Additionally, specific incidents were reported where a whole school approach had assisted with the effective handling of an incident as follows:

- enforcing lockdown procedure – most often when the threat was from a parent or family member;
- shared plans to manage the arrival and departure of identified high risk individual(s);
- school/college staff personally affected by past local traumatic incidents, so drills and training must be mindful of how the residual effects of incidents impact on personnel;
- use of independent external validation of security issues, including the validation of the school or college's performance when practicing these; and
- collaborative working with Private Finance Initiative providers, including evaluating security measures and ensuring the buildings and grounds are well-maintained, well lighted and secure with appropriate lighting, CCTV cameras and front-of-building security.

### Government response

The responses provided significant evidence that many schools and colleges are involving their staff, pupils and in some cases parents in the development, maintenance and improvement of their security measures. We were particularly heartened by the number of references to policy evaluation and the testing of arrangements. It is important

that policies and procedures are kept under review and periodically tested to ensure they remain fit for purpose. The published guidance has been strengthened in these areas.

## Question 10

**Does the guidance provide sufficient information to enable schools to draw up recovery and evaluation plans? If not, please indicate what should be included?**

	Total	Percent
Yes	21	41%
No	24	47%
Not applicable/no comment	6	12%

## Consultation findings

Responses were split almost evenly in response to this question. Those who felt the guidance had shortcomings in supporting recovery and evaluation plans made some helpful suggested improvements, including:

- that local authorities provide support and materials in this area, and this should be signposted in the guidance;
- the guidance ought to reference the value of educational psychology services and support with managing social media; and
- that it would benefit from the inclusion of model templates, including for emergency planning and business continuity.

## Government response

We have strengthened the published guidance in this area, addressing the key areas identified in the consultation responses. This includes the addition of clearer signposting to areas of help in recovery and evaluation as well as the inclusion of templates covering post incident support and lessons learned (Annex A of the guidance).

## Question 11

**Drawing on your experience over the last 24 months, how/did you evaluate the effectiveness of your recovery plans and how did your plans change as a consequence?**

## Consultation findings

The responses ranged from making simple changes, such as the number of rings on a bell to indicate the type of incident, to an incident stimulating full scenario testing of a school's policies and its evaluation procedures.

Other consultation responses included the following, which may helpfully inform school and college policies:

- monthly/regular audit of safeguarding measures with input from governors and trustees and external peer reviews;
- an annual review of policy, but with periodic small test scenarios to review specific elements of policy/procedures on a shorter timescale. More widely, the importance of scenario testing, evaluation and dissemination of reform to procedures, including using staff training, was identified as good practice;
- routine evaluation after a serious incident (e.g. a stabbing near school), which informed changes to procedures across multi-sites;
- multiple minor incidents involving parents encouraged a review of security at the front of the school, which resulted in changes in how non-staff adults are managed in the main reception area. These procedures have subsequently been adopted into the critical incident section of the school's recovery plans;
- where policies have been refined and adjusted as a consequence of an incident, schools and colleges need to make sure changes are then shared with staff;
- where a college undertakes overseas visits it reviewed its procedures and communication, using terrorist incidents in Europe to test the effectiveness of its own procedures; and
- a school reported how an incident involving an armed intruder on an adjacent school's site resulted in joint evaluation of both schools' security plans and that consequential infrastructure improvements were made.

## Government response

Clearly many schools and colleges are taking a dynamic approach to reviewing and evaluating their policies and procedures in the light of real events. In our published guidance, we make clear the importance of both testing procedures and keeping them under review (paragraphs 57 and 67, and in the materials provided at Annex A). We want to avoid the scenario where untested policies are found to have significant shortcomings or fail only at the time they are needed.

## Question 12

**Does the guidance help schools to educate and raise awareness with staff and pupils about the consequences of carrying weapons?**

	Total	Percent
Yes	24	47%
No	11	22%
Not answered	16	32%

### Consultation findings

Responses to the consultation provided examples of how awareness about the dangers and consequences of carrying weapons was raised through a combination of approaches. These included assemblies, PSHE lessons and guest speakers.

### Government response

Whilst some responses alluded to the excellent partnership working that is taking place with the police and third sector, it is clear that awareness of the support that can be obtained, and the contribution this can make, is not universal. As we make clear in our response to Question 5, we are working with stakeholders to identify the good practice materials that are available, and we will ensure these are brought to the attention of schools and colleges.

## Question 13

**Can you provide examples of how your school currently deters and restricts the risk of weapons being brought into school?**

### Consultation findings

The consultation responses identified a range of measures schools and colleges rely on to deter weapons from being brought onto their premises. Examples included:

- zero tolerance approach – made clear to students, with some schools and colleges adopting random bag checks or ad-hoc use of metal detectors, whilst others require pupils to hand in possessions;
- clear behaviour policies, which make clear the expectations around knives, weapons and drugs;

- the use of awareness assemblies, knife crime workshops, school police team liaison and guest speakers. A number of responses identified the importance of multi-agency working to address the causes of knife crime, including the value brought by safer schools police officers and other partnership working;
- the use of enhanced security, such as cameras and fencing, supported by meetings with parents and pupils from primary school onwards. A number of responses highlighted the importance of involving parents; and
- some respondents advocated close working with students, so staff develop an in depth knowledge of young people, which enables an appropriate response to those at risk from knife crime and to the drivers that lie behind students carrying a knife.

## Government response

Whilst it is clear that many schools and colleges have in place a range of measures to prevent knives being brought onto their premises, we know that others have focussed on exploring with students why they consider it necessary to carry weapons. Having a dialogue with those students identified as being at risk will help inform school and college policies. Our published guidance provides a variety of advice sources (Annex B) which can help schools and colleges develop policies and strategies to help with serious violent crime, including that involving knives.

## Question 14

**Please give examples that provide an illustration of close partnership working with the police and local security networks and explain why they are effective?**

### Consultation findings

Five local authorities and 18 schools responded. Whilst few schools and colleges had a dedicated police officer, the responses clearly demonstrated that, where partnerships exist with the police, relationships are valued.

The responses showed that most schools and colleges networked with local authorities and MATs, rather than participating with, or in, other security networks, or with local resilience forums. There were examples given of relationships with NaCTSO, including accessing its training, and a range of other local projects and programmes involved with crime prevention, community policing and safeguarding.

The picture was different between urban and rural schools. Those in urban settings generally had closer links with the police, local authorities and other sources of support. Colleges tended to have received more police input into counter terrorism concerns.

Responses identified partnership working with the following:

- LA Education Safeguarding teams;
- Home Office trained PREVENT trainers;
- school and college Designated Safeguarding Leads taking a central role in sharing advice from security partners;
- Local Safeguarding Boards;
- local authorities, police and fire services;
- Safer Schools Officers, including operating as part of a wider Youth Safety Task Forces; and
- LA Safer Neighbourhood teams.

## **Government response**

Responses to this question showed that there are wide range of partnerships in place, and that these are both valued and useful. Our published guidance makes clear the value of partnership working and the responses to the consultation illustrate both the opportunity and benefits this can provide.

## **Question 15**

**How could this partnership working be built on or improved?**

### **Consultation findings**

An industry comment was that, “more work needs to be done (by everyone) to link schools more effectively into their local security networks. This requires greater collaboration between schools, police, councils and credible private security providers”.

Local authority responses suggested that universities and colleges, independent schools and specialist establishments work almost entirely in isolation.

At individual school and college level, there were suggestions that regular meetings between senior education leaders in LAs and MATs, headteachers, college principals and senior police officers would support a more coherent approach to local security issues.

## **Government response**

Whilst quality partnership working is widespread, it is clear the respondents believe that more can be done. We acknowledge that DfE can play a role in this. The advice we have included in our published guidance will help promote partnership working, as will the work

we have signalled we are undertaking elsewhere in this response, to bring together resources, information and good practice materials, and ensure that these are disseminated. Where this involves, or can be seen to support partnership working, we will ensure that these links are made.

## **Next steps**

This report is being published to coincide with the publication of the department's new *Security guidance for schools and colleges*. The further work we are doing to identify best practice resource is ongoing, and we expect this work to conclude in 2020.

## Annex A: List of organisations that responded to the consultation<sup>2</sup>

- Pensby High School
- Simonside Primary School
- Herefordshire Council
- Ingham Primary School
- Devon County Council
- Pupil Referral Unit
- Ironstone Academy Trust
- Altrincham College
- All Saints' CE Primary School
- Bishop Vesey's Grammar School
- Coombe Road Primary School
- Rubicon Resilience
- Norfolk County Council
- Jacobstow Primary School
- BRE
- Haberdashers' Aske's Federation Trust
- Anonymous
- the village school and NEU
- Norfolk County Council
- Norfolk County Council (Outdoor Learning)
- Throckley Primary School

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<sup>2</sup> We had further responses from organisations but if the respondent had not indicated that he/she was responding on behalf of the organisation or included the name/address of the organisation, we have excluded them from this list. Likewise, we have not listed the names of private individuals who replied or of those who requested their responses were kept confidential. However, these views were included in the analysis. We also had some respondents who did not answer the specific questions in the consultation or responded after the consultation closed. Although these responses were not included in the formal consultation analysis, they were read and the views therein taken into account when shaping the revised guidance.

- West Lakes Academy
- Abbott's Hall Primary School
- Greswold Primary School
- Engie
- Winslow Church of England School
- Outdoor Education Advisers Panel
- Lancaster & Morecambe College
- Abingdon and Witney College
- Ilford County High
- St Peter's C of E Primary School
- Platt Bridge Community School
- Greasley Beauvale Primary School
- Gotham Primary School
- Plymouth City Council
- Gotham Primary School
- Anonymous
- Nottinghamshire County Council
- Gate Safe
- St Michael's Church of England Primary School
- Sherborne School for Girls
- West Yorkshire Safer Schools Forum and Wakefield Council
- NEU Health and Safety Adviser
- Voice the Union
- Liverpool City Council
- Dorset County Council
- Acland Burghley School
- The Torah Education Committee
- Anonymous
- BlackBerry
- ASCL



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for Education

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Reference: DfE-00232-2019



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