

Security in the Independent Education Sector



A White Paper from:

Paul Oughton

Security Consultant

Advent IM Ltd

Foreword



This paper is aimed largely at Independent Schools as they are more likely to have a greater say on how money is spent on school improvements than State Schools; furthermore, income generation and reputation are likely to factor more highly for an independent school. However, the threats and risks discussed within this paper are just as relevant to all educational establishments, and the solutions discussed later on can and should be applied to all organisations who are responsible for the education or care of children.

Paul Oughton – Advent IM Ltd

"For security to be effective, schools' security needs to be assessed and monitored regularly."

Department for Education Report

Introduction

There are around 2,500 independent schools in the UK which educate around 600,000 children; this equates to around 7 per cent of all British children and 18 per cent of pupils over the age of 16. Private education is an expanding sector; as a result of the economic upturn and with pressure on the State Education system from growing class sizes and dwindling budgets, more and more parents who want the best for their children are now looking at Private Education. Similarly, the UK's reputation and high standards in education have attracted many overseas students to attend independent schools in the UK.

This has become a competitive market with many schools seeking new ways to exploit unique selling points and attract their share of the students. Many schools have similar lessons, similar classrooms and similar facilities, so what is it that will sell one independent school over another to a prospective parent?

To quote former Prime-Minister Tony Blair, the top priority was, is and always will be education, education, education. The all-important league tables will always be a major determining factor in the selection of any school, independent or otherwise. Equally, reputation or a previous family connection will likely have an impact on a parent's ultimate decision about how and where to educate their children in order to give them the very best start in life. So, having said that, I think it's clear that parents care a lot about their children's future... but they also care about their present; their safety, happiness and wellbeing here and now.

While academics may extol the virtues and benefits of top-quality teaching, well-equipped classrooms and world-class sporting facilities, students and their parents may be looking at other important features such as the atmosphere, the 'user experience' and the confidence and assurance that both parents and students have in the establishment with regards to safeguarding and other aspects of pastoral care. This includes the level of security that is provided to children whilst at school; the physical protection afforded, the measures that are put in place to ensure that teachers and staff are adequately cleared and qualified to work in a school environment, and increasingly that personal information relating to students and their families is sufficiently protected. There is growing evidence of both students and parents taking a greater interest in security and the risks posed while at school; this paper seeks to identify some of those threats and to explore solutions and measures that may be considered to mitigate those risks, whilst still maintaining an environment that is welcoming and provides a conducive learning environment for our future generations.

The Problem

It is almost 20 years since 16 children and their teacher were shot dead by Thomas Hamilton in the gym at Dunblane Primary School in 1996. Similarly, the attack on St Luke's Church of England Infant School in Wolverhampton happened the same year; where Horrett Irving Campbell, leapt over a fence and began attacking children and adults with a machete, resulting in the serious injury of three children and four adults. Whilst much time has passed since then, the repercussions of these fateful days remain today with concerns still being raised over the relative lack of adequate safeguards being in place to ensure UK schools are secure, and a growing voice amongst lobbyists still seeking to address this issue.

A Home Office report produced 10 years after these events highlighted the fact that many schools remain unsafe and at risk from intruders. The report, carried out by the University of Leicester, said schools had inadequate procedures for controlling or restricting access to the school site or for reporting violent incidents and did not see safety as important because, unlike school meals, security did not have its own league table.



The report, as well as independent evidence gathered by myself on behalf of Advent IM, highlighted a general lack of awareness of security risks both by Government regulatory bodies and by independent and state schools alike. As security isn't an issue that schools are measured on in terms of league tables, so it isn't at the top of their agenda. Equally, it has been noted that where schools have spent money on security measures, they are often not aligned with the specific threats and risks that the school and its students are actually facing. Instances have been observed where significant sums of money have been spent on technical security measures such as access control systems, CCTV cameras or through the implementation of robust security processes; however, in many cases this expenditure has achieved little to enhance the security of the school site due to the lack of an appropriate security culture; this has often meant that security doors are left 'propped open', CCTV systems are not monitored and security processes are simply ignored as a result of ignorance or apathy.

During a security review of an independent city based school that I recently conducted, not only was I able to gain access to the school site without any need to identify myself, I was also able to wander the site with complete impunity for over 30mins. During the course of this time, I had unrestricted access to all parts of the school; at no point was my presence questioned or challenged in any way. Upon request, I was even given directions to various parts of the site and was provided with the code to one of the access-controlled doors by one of the students; everyone was extremely friendly and helpful, but in doing so they created a major vulnerability that an intruder or someone with malicious intent could easily have exploited.

Sometimes, it is not only the threat from outside that schools need to be concerned about; teachers say violence among pupils is also rising. A recent Mori poll indicated 29% of school children across all areas of the educational sector admitted to having carried a knife or other such weapon. What measures do schools have in place to manage this issue?

Literally thousands of violent attacks take place in schools in the United States on an almost weekly basis; these attacks involve all manner of weapons, including firearms. Shootings such as the one in Columbine High School in Colorado, where students Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold murdered a total of 12 of their fellow students and one teacher. They injured 21 additional people, with three others being injured while attempting to escape the school. The pair then committed suicide; the attack is regarded by many as the deadliest high school shooting in US history. The attack prompted not only a review of US gun control laws, but also of school security, resulting in the installation of numerous measures that included individual student ID cards, see-through back-packs and security scanners / metal detectors at the entrances to school buildings.



Paul and Jayne Walmsley, whose son Luke was murdered by a fellow pupil at Birkbeck School in Lincolnshire in 2004, think there should be CCTV cameras in every UK school. Paul Walmsley said: "To protect our children there should be higher levels of security in schools. We would like to see security scanners in schools to prevent weapons from getting near children".

Personally, I hardly think a US, or Heathrow Airport-style approach of installing metal detectors and 'frisking' students as they enter the premises is not in any way appropriate or proportional to the problem at hand; but are schools giving consideration to the fact that a violent attack could take place on school premises, and that this attack could be perpetrated by the students who are afforded legitimate access to the site? Many new teachers say they have little or no training in how to defuse violent situations and with limited means of identifying potential violence either before or during an attack, what assurance do parents and students have with regards to this kind of threat?

Within the competitive market that is the independent education sector, much is dependent upon a school's reputation. A security incident of any kind may have a significant and highly detrimental impact upon parent confidence, future student enrolments and ultimately upon revenue generation. A security incident may constitute any of the points made above; an intruder, an incident occurring on site or the loss or theft of personal or sensitive information. Equally, schools must also consider the potential reputational and financial damage that may occur through the failure to comply with legislative or regulatory requirements and the subsequent investigation and financial penalty that may be enforced by the appropriate governing body or regulator. One particular area of concern is the handling and processing of

personal information under the Data Protection Act (1998); under the provisions of the legislation, this information must be protected and only used for the purpose it was intended. As information becomes a more valuable commodity, to be sold and traded by cold-calling companies and the like, so too does the threat increase to organisations like schools, who hold large amounts of personal sensitive information on students and their families.

Equally, security systems that are installed within schools, such as CCTV cameras, are subject to many legal and regulatory restrictions that must be considered; an independent school that I provided security advice for recently had CCTV cameras that could be positioned to capture images of neighbouring residential areas. This was largely due to the fact that little consideration had been given to some of the regulations that apply to such systems in respect to the impact on personal privacy, nor had consideration been given to the operational requirement of the system, that was to provide a higher level of assurance for the safeguarding of students and staff at the school. The current system was in no way compliant with the current legislation and could potentially have caused embarrassment and financial repercussions to the school in question.



Disturbingly, cases have been seen both in the UK and US of systems that have been implemented to enhance the security of students, being used for the exact opposite. One such example is the use of CCTV systems within schools that are used to monitor students and provide a greater level of security, confidence and assurance for all involved; some such systems have provided

parents with the ability to log-in to the CCTV feed and watch their children at school. Unfortunately, in a number of extreme and isolated cases, these systems have been infiltrated by hackers and the images and footage distributed to known paedophilic groups.

At the extreme end of the spectrum, are our schools at risk from the most dangerous manifestations of threats: terrorism, extremist violence, kidnapping? With a greater number of foreign students attending UK independent schools, many of whom come from countries with significant levels of organised crime or who have political or religious beliefs and ideologies that are not always aligned with our own, does their presence present an increased level of risk to schools and students alike?

Terrorist attacks on schools such as the Beslan Number One School in North Ossetia (an autonomous republic in the North Caucasus region of the Russian Federation) by Chechen separatist group, the Riyadus-Salikhin Battalion on 1 September 2004; this involved the capture and hostage-taking of over 1,100 people, including 777 children, that ended with 385 confirmed dead. More recently, Anders Breivik bombed government buildings in Oslo, Norway, on July 22 2011 and then attacked a Youth Camp on the Norwegian island of Utoye, as a protest against Muslim immigrants; of his 77 victims, 69 of them were teenagers, the youngest being only 14 years old. His

rationale for this attack was that these were predominantly children of leading political figures and key decision makers.

In Columbia, a new industry has emerged in recent years. Known as express kidnappings (*secuestros express*); this practice involves criminal gangs kidnapping children of wealthy families, often from or around their school for no other reason than to claim a hefty ransom. These 'transactions' often take no more than a few days from the child being kidnapped, a ransom being paid and the child released back to their families; there have been instances of some particularly high-profile or wealthy families being targeted several times by different gangs.

Whilst these attacks, and the actions of the night of 14 April 2014, where 276 female students were kidnapped from the Government Secondary School in Nigeria by the Islamic Jihadist and terrorist group, Boko Haram, may seem a world away from the local school in our home town, they do illustrate the extreme lengths to which these groups and individuals are prepared to go in pursuit of their goals.

Are schools, and their students, viewed as an easy target for extremist or terrorist groups and criminal gangs who will employ such abhorrent tactics in order to target Governments, Organisations or simply to extort money from wealthy parents? And is this a modus-operandi that may eventually make its way to the UK?



Some of the scenarios mentioned here may seem somewhat far-fetched; something more likely seen as the plot of a Hollywood movie, rather than something that schools need to be concerned with on a daily basis. Maybe some of what is mentioned here could be regarded as a scare-mongering tactic, designed to make schools think that they need to spend money on expensive

security systems. I am the first to admit that it is unlikely that any of these terrible events will repeat themselves in a UK school, independent or otherwise, in the foreseeable future, though not impossible. However, with the responsibility placed upon them to safeguard the children under their care and with a vested interest in their own financial and reputational wellbeing, schools must consider and be cognisant of the threats and risks highlighted above. Today's hugely diverse threat landscape is a world away from the simpler, more innocent days of yester-year; threats and risks to both people and organisations and the essential services and information that support them have changed considerably and are very real.

One of the greatest threats to good security is the firmly held belief that there is no threat; ignorance, apathy and a lack of understanding are the most significant vulnerabilities to any organisation because they erode the security culture from within and allow an adversary to exploit often simple weaknesses to cause potentially significant and detrimental damage. Basic security measures and the implementation of a good security culture can do a lot to protect a school, its students, its staff, its infrastructure and its reputation.

Even though it was written over 2,500 years ago, Sun Tzu's quote below from his Art of War, thought by many to be the definitive work on military strategy and tactics, is as relevant now as it was when it was first published. It tells us that we must be mindful of the threat, prepare for it and in an appropriate and proportional manner, protect ourselves against it.



“The art of war teaches us to rely not on the likelihood of the enemy’s not coming, but on our own readiness to receive him; not on the chance of his not attacking, but rather on the fact that we have made our position unassailable.”

Sun Tzu (The Art of War)

The Solution

So how should a school react to the enormous variety of security threats that are out there; how best should students be protected, whilst still maintaining an environment and an atmosphere that encourages learning and personal development?

It is vital that any security regime is proportionate and appropriate. Therefore, a risk-based approach to security should be adopted; recognising the threat environment and the assets that must be protected, as well as implementing security measures and processes based on an understanding of both the likelihood or probability of an incident happening alongside the impact on the school and its students if such an incident were to occur.

It goes without saying that in an educational establishment, security should not be the main focus. Security should be ever-present, but not overwhelming or oppressive; it should provide confidence and reassurance as well as deterring a potential attacker. Schools should not be locked down, surrounded with razor-wire fences and with CCTV cameras on every corner; whilst many children may consider them as such, schools should not become, or at least take on the appearance of a prison or a concentration camp, but neither should they allow easy access to an adversary. It is all about striking the right balance between the two opposing considerations of security and the maintenance of a welcoming, friendly atmosphere.



Security should be holistic; covering all aspects of the site, staff and students from all manner of threats. Security measures should be integrated and complement one another, physical security measures should work alongside robust security procedures and be further aided by a strong culture of security awareness and a willingness by staff and students to challenge or report a potential breach of security or a security related incident.

Schools should not hide the fact that they have adopted a proactive approach to security, but instead should use it as a selling point to provide confidence and assurance to parents, students and other stakeholders that a safe and secure environment has been created. Parents and students are much more aware of the threats and risks that exist in contemporary society; the media does not shy away from these issues, and the public is highly attuned to the dangers that exist. With this in mind, a school that provides a good level of security and can demonstrate an environment where consideration has been given to likely risks and that measures have been implemented to mitigate these risks in a sensible and proportionate manner, can only be seen as a positive thing.

In harsh economic times there is frequently a temptation to reduce the resources expended on what is often seen as an unwelcome business expense, especially by

organisations that do not see or understand the indirect benefits of what security delivers. Taking the security of students and staff seriously may be seen as a market differentiator, setting one independent school apart from another in a meaningful and affirmative manner. It should also be seen as an essential business enabler, ensuring the effective function of the school and enabling it to achieve its business aims and strategic objectives; security should be embedded into the very core of the organisation and be embraced by all, rather than be regarded as a simple bolt-on or a sticking plaster that stands alone and is designed to deal with security incidents in isolation. Unfortunately, there are many independent schools that do not view security in this way; but those that do embrace its processes and its obvious benefits, may find that they survive in this competitive market more strongly than a similar one that does not.

Security is an important process that must be acknowledged by all and continuously 'steered' in order to provide and receive the best results. There are security responsibilities that fall on senior management, including the Board of Governors, the Headmaster / Headmistress or department heads; but responsibility for security rests with all persons who work, live or study within a school community and cannot simply be left as a matter for the school security team, if the school is fortunate to have one, or the Police. Schools should develop their own security culture in line with their core values and mission. The development of a Security Strategy or Policy is the first step to establishing that culture, but this will need buy-in from all. This is especially so for the senior management team. It is their responsibility to ensure that all members of the academic team, as well as the administrative support staff and students understand that everyone has a role to play and that security is a corporate responsibility held by every individual.



The current cost of sending a child to an independent school means that students and parents are eager to ensure that they will get a good return on their investment, leading to an expectation that their chosen school will provide all of the services they require, if not demand, including effective security as a given. This paper has considered the myriad of threats and risks

that exist and that have directly targeted schools and their students both in the UK and abroad in recent years. Each school will, and should, approach security in a different manner; their circumstances will always be different with diverse threats and vulnerabilities, urban or rural locations and the nature of the student population all influencing the security risks that are present. Some schools will need a security solution that is more robust with physical barriers and detection and monitoring systems in place; others will rely on procedures, processes and the establishment of a security culture. Schools should do whatever is most appropriate to mitigate the threats and risks that have been identified, whilst ensuring that whatever security approach is adopted, that it is aligned with the school's values and beliefs and its education, strategic or corporate objectives.

A safe and secure environment supports all aspects of school life, providing a safe place to learn, deterring potential threats and reassuring students and parents that their financial investment is sound. Finally, parents will feel that the trust that they placed in the school they have chosen for the protection of their child is well founded.

If nothing else, it is hoped that this paper may provoke schools and parents alike to consider the threats and risks that may be present and that may affect schools and their students. Parents should challenge the educational system to ensure that the most appropriate levels of safeguarding are applied and to seek answers to the questions that they have in respect to the security and protection of their children. Schools on the other hand should reflect upon their own approaches to security; ask themselves the 'What if...' questions and begin to formulate a proportional response. Schools should consider their own security culture; how effective is it, and how aware are staff and students of the threats and risks both internal and external and their responsibilities in managing or mitigating these risks?

As we have established, ignorance and apathy are often some of the most significant factors in allowing a security incident to occur. Schools need to understand the threat and the associated risks affecting them; in doing so, they will take a positive step towards building a secure environment where students can flourish and develop and where parents can be safe in the knowledge that their children are well looked after. Doing nothing, simply isn't good enough.



Security in the Independent Education Sector



www.advent-im.co.uk

0121 559 6699

0207 100 1124

@Advent_IM