

Importance of strengthening security measures in educational establishments

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Insight from Peter Jackson, managing director, [Jacksons Fencing](#)

The UK's future hinges significantly on the quality of its education system, where young minds are nurtured and developed within the safe confines of schools. These institutions require robust security infrastructure to ensure student wellbeing and prevent unauthorised access.

Key considerations in school construction or renovation include the design of fences, gates, and access control. A school's perimeter should provide a balance between blending with its environment and offering robust protection against potential threats.

Recent statistics from the [Youth Endowment Fund\[1\]](#) highlight an alarming issue: in 2022, 14% of students missed school due to perceived safety concerns, underscoring the critical need for secure educational environments.

A comprehensive study, '[Protecting the Future](#),'[2] conducted by Jacksons Fencing, brought to light growing security concerns within the education sector. The report reveals that 30% of teachers believe existing security measures on school grounds to be inadequate, pointing to potential risks that could jeopardise child safety. Furthermore, 28% of schools reported issues with criminal damage, including vandalism, burglary, arson, and anti-social behaviour.

Based on these insights, we identified five key factors that need to be considered when assessing the security requirements of educational sites:

Entrance points

Efficient access control is vital. Our study indicated that 56% of teachers reported multiple entrances in their schools. It's advisable to have a central entry point, visible from the school's main office, supplemented by a pedestrian gate near car entry points. Additional gates should be limited to peak usage times, with clear signage and operating hours displayed.

Local environment considerations

Assessing the surrounding landscape is essential to identify potential security risks. This includes evaluating the support structures for fences and gates and ensuring there are no aids for climbing, like overhanging branches, parked vehicles, or storage containers. Consider how security measures can influence neighbourhood residents if your school is situated in a residential area. Acoustic barriers can provide security and seclusion in addition to reducing noise entering and leaving the school grounds.

Aesthetics versus security

Balancing a welcoming appearance with security can be challenging. Utilising colours can enhance the aesthetic appeal of perimeters. While metal railings might suit some institutions, timber fencing can offer a softer look – especially for nurseries and primary schools – without compromising on security.

Designated pathways and timings

Managing the flow of pedestrian and vehicular traffic, particularly during peak times, is crucial. Schools should consider separate pathways for vehicles and pedestrians and have a well-thought-out security plan for off-peak hours in order to maintain safety on site.

Diverse security options

Schools should choose appropriate fencing and gates based on their level of risk. Options are available in both wood and steel, with slatted designs that discourage climbing if placed vertically. Resistance against climbing is increased by welded mesh designs with smaller gaps between the horizontal and vertical wires. For high-risk areas, installing LPS 1175-certified fencing of at least 1.8 metres in height is recommended.

Acoustic solutions

Apart from physical security, noise pollution also significantly impacts learning environments. Surprisingly, only 30% of specifiers consider acoustic solutions in school designs. The WHO advocates for classroom noise levels below 35 dB for optimal learning, yet many in Europe are exposed to levels above 55 dB. Solutions like earth bunds, steel, aluminium, and timber acoustic barriers can significantly improve learning conditions.

Collaborative effort in school security

Tackling school security presents a complex challenge that necessitates the collaboration of architects, security experts, and school administrators. For example, the effectiveness of a high-quality fence may be undermined by an adjacent climbable object. Therefore, it is crucial to adopt a multidisciplinary approach, involving security experts, architects, and contractors, to create customised solutions that cater to the unique needs of each school.

The call to action is clear: there is an urgent need to address security gaps in schools to safeguard

children. Enhancing communication and pooling expertise among designers, security professionals, and educators can significantly improve the safety standards of educational institutions.

The importance of secure, well-planned, and thoughtfully designed educational establishments cannot be overstated. They are pivotal to the safety and development of our children. With the insights and recommendations from experts, schools can take proactive steps to ensure their environments are not only conducive to learning but also offer the security and safety necessary for students to thrive.

[1] <https://youthendowmentfund.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/YEF-Children-violence-and-vulnerability-2022.pdf>

[2] <https://www.jacksons-security.co.uk/education-report-download>