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Crime Prevention: The Role and Potential of Schools

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Background

‘...an effective crime prevention strategy lies outside the criminal justice system and in the fields of education and employment, through which fundamental economic, social and political inequalities can be challenged.’
(Muncie 2002, p.158)

This chapter will review the arguments about the role and potential of schools as a site for crime prevention. It will consider the evidence about the scale and nature of problematic (and sometimes criminal) behaviour presented on the school site, by children and others. The chapter concludes with a look at the competing priorities for schools in relation to any crime prevention role.

Preventing crime is generally understood to be a complex process in which the role and potential of a wide range of agencies is now under review (Hughes, McLaughlin and Muncie 2002). It is often maintained that youth is the most criminogenic age. Young people are also the most common victims, particularly males (Muncie 2004). Offending behaviour during adolescence and young adulthood is widespread. Graham and Bowling (1995) found that half of males and a third of females aged 14-25 admitted that they had committed at least one offence at some time, although for the majority this was limited to one or two property offences. Victimization studies show that high proportions of young people are affected: for example a third of a national sample of 12-15 year olds claimed to have been assaulted at least once in a six month period; a fifth had been harassed by people of their own age, the same proportion had been harassed by an adult; a fifth had their property stolen (Muncie, 2004). The Youth Justice Board (YJB) has commissioned an annual survey of secondary school age young people since 1999, through MORI (Market and Opinion Research International). These surveys explore the prevalence of offending amongst young people and compare young people in mainstream education to those attending facilities for pupils excluded from school. The 2004 YJB survey found that 26% of mainstream school pupils had committed a crime in the last year, compared to 60% of excluded pupils; 49% of mainstream pupils had been a victim of any offence compared to 55% of excluded pupils in the same time period (MORI 2004).

The opening quote from Muncie reflects a view that an *effective* crime prevention strategy has to deal with underlying and fundamental issues. Education and its connection to employment opportunities are key in this respect. The links between education and crime can be illustrated in a variety of ways, one of these is low levels of numeracy and literacy, which is striking amongst the prison population: nearly one in two (48%) prisoners has difficulty with reading and two-thirds (65%) have difficulties in working with numbers. Strong associations have been found between poor basic skills and the amount of self-reported contact with the police and offending (Parsons 2002).

The high prevalence of youth offending and victimisation found in different ways in surveys and official statistics suggests the conclusion that primary crime prevention in the form of universal programmes in schools are an obvious component in the overall fight against crime. However, what is of most interest to policy makers are the persistent and prolific offenders (2% of men, 1% of women) who account for about half of all offences committed (East and Campbell 1999). This group may not be containable in mainstream schools. Yet the role and potential of schools in crime prevention should be reviewed with varying levels of need in mind. Schools as universal service providers have the difficult task of ensuring effective targeting of help whilst avoiding the potentially negative impact of what might be seen as labelling. Sutton, Utting and Farrington (2004) conclude that preventative services should be presented and justified in terms of children's existing needs and problems, rather than in relation to any future risk of criminality.

Crime prevention policies and measures may be carried out at the individual, situational or structural level and are carried out by many different agencies. Schools have a role to play on all levels. At the level of the individual, schools can enhance pro-social behaviour, personal achievement, the sense of being part of a wider community, as well as the opportunity to lead a productive and law-abiding life. Schools can promote parental interest and involvement in their child's education and achievement. In other words, schools can help to enhance many of the well-known 'protective factors' against criminal involvement. Furthermore, schools can provide the opportunity for social advancement and as such they are a vehicle for a route out of poverty and lack of opportunity and the temptation to follow a 'criminal career.' On the other hand, schools are also a site where criminal, anti-social and abusive behaviour can occur, both from within and outside the community. Schools thus have to guard against 'outsiders' as well as develop a safe and orderly community within school itself.

Crime, inequality, anti-social behaviour and young people

The association between crime, anti-social behaviour and young people inhabits popular imagination and discourse. One child 'crime waves', 'feral children' and similarly emotive headlines are common in the mass media. Individual cases, such as the killing of Jamie Bulger in 1993 (by two ten-year-old boys truanting from school at the time) have come to signify a more 'generalised crisis in childhood and a breakdown of moral and social order' (Muncie 2004, 5). This is not a new debate, the behaviour of young people has caused concern for some adults for as long as we have documented the issue. Jones (2001, 45) cites a 6,000 year old inscription of an Egyptian priest proclaiming: 'our earth is degenerate – children no longer obey their parents'.

The inter-connection between social and economic inequalities (now more commonly located within the debates about social exclusion and neighbourhood renewal) and concerns about disorder and social control are well documented (Social Exclusion Unit 2001a, 2001b). The specific links between disorder, crime and general neighbourhood decline were highlighted in New Labour thinking whilst still in opposition (Straw and Michael 1996). Thus what was once the domain of social welfare has become redefined in terms of the potential contribution to crime control (Hughes et al 2002). Schools as a place in which the vast majority of young people spend their teenage years become an obvious site for development in this context.

Much of the behaviour of young people that especially troubles adults is referred to as 'anti-social'. However, there are different interpretations of this term. Rutter, Giller and Hagell (1998) use the term 'anti-social behaviour' in a very specific way, to cover behaviour that is a criminal offence, whether or not the behaviour results in detection or conviction. Their use of the term in relation to criminal behaviour is chosen in order to make the distinction between this behaviour and the various diagnostic categories used by clinicians when referring to behaviour considered to be outside the norm (such as conduct or oppositional disorders). Rutter *et al* remind us that the various clinical disorders are *not* synonymous with criminal behaviour, neither is criminal behaviour synonymous with social or psychological dysfunction. In contrast the Home Office (2003:5) definition and use of the term is wider: 'it is behaviour which causes or is likely to cause harassment, alarm or distress to one or more people who are not in the same household as the perpetrator.' Examples of anti-social behaviour include: graffiti, abusive and intimidating language, excessive noise, dropping litter, drunken behaviour in the street, dealing drugs. Such behaviour is explicitly blamed for holding back the regeneration of the most disadvantaged areas and creating an environment conducive to crime.

The Home Office definition of 'anti-social behaviour' can be seen as a response to a more generalised concern about social disorder and the specific perception of connection to young people in public places. For example, the British Crime Survey, BCS found that 22% of respondents perceived a high level of disorder in their neighbourhood, with a third (33%) citing teenagers 'hanging around' the streets as a big problem (Home Office 2004). The Home Office definition of anti-social behaviour is important. Some of the behaviour viewed as 'anti-social' according to the Home Office and viewed as problematic by respondents to the BCS is not criminal, yet Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs) can be served on children committing 'nuisance' activities from the age of ten. Breach of an ASBO is a criminal offence (see also McKenzie this volume). These orders have been available since April 1999 and are used for adults as well as young people. The most common types of behaviour for which ASBOs have been served are 'general loutish and unruly conduct such as verbal abuse, harassment, assault, graffiti and excessive noise' (Home Office 2003, 11).

Acceptable Behaviour Contracts (ABC) are more recent; they constitute 'a written agreement between a person who has been involved in anti-social behaviour and one or more agencies whose role it is to prevent such behaviour' (Home Office 2003, 52). ABCs are designed for young people (10-18 years), they can be effected more quickly than ASBOs and at lower cost (Stephen and Squires 2003). It is advocated that the ABC should be well publicised amongst young people, in particular within schools. Information from the education service about truancy and school exclusion is explicitly cited as a potential evidence source when identifying individuals for ABCs. Stephen and Squires (2003, 11) note that '...not only can almost any behaviour potentially be regarded as 'anti-social' but there is a much lower standard of 'proof.' A situation that can be viewed as 'criminalisation by stealth.'" (op cit). As some of the behaviour which is the focus of ASBOs and ABCs is not criminal, the process could thus be argued to be having a 'net-widening' effect of bringing into the orbit of the criminal justice system young people who would not previously be in this situation.

Research evidence on persistence and desistance of anti-social behaviour (as defined by Rutter *et al*, 1998) would indicate that the more serious and persistent forms can be detected as early as age three, in the form of oppositional and

hyperactive behaviour. The distinction is made between ‘adolescent-limited’ and ‘life course persistent’ anti-social behaviour. Although it is emphasised that ‘nothing is cast in stone’ and a range of life events and other opportunities and circumstances can play a part in helping anti-social behaviour to continue or cease (Rutter et al 1998, 307). Schools could be said to occupy this difficult terrain – they can help to ameliorate and reduce behaviour problems or in the worst circumstances they may emphasise and entrench their significance. The explicit involvement of schools in crime prevention programmes might be seen as further evidence of the ‘net-widening’ already referred to, or alternatively evidence of attempts at ‘nipping problems in the bud’. There is clearly the potential for schools to occupy both positions simultaneously.

Risk and protective factors – the role of schools

The role and potential of schools in relation to crime prevention is a relatively neglected area in UK criminology, although school related issues are often cited as part of the well known list of ‘risk’ and ‘protective’ factors for future criminality (Farrington, 1996). According to Farrington, risks specifically relating to schooling include: low intelligence and school failure; hyperactivity/impulsivity/attention deficit. More broadly Farrington notes that the prevalence of offending by pupils varies greatly between schools, although the mechanisms at work alongside the social mix of pupils attending schools are not sufficiently understood. Outside the school, other risk factors relate to poor socio-economic circumstances and community influences; poor parenting and family conflict; low levels of parental supervision, as well as individual temperament. Many of these factors have in turn been found to be associated specifically with truancy and school exclusion (Graham and Bowling, 1995; Hayden, 2001). Protective factors identified by Farrington (1996) include: resilient temperament; warm affectionate relationship with at least one parent; parents who provide effective supervision; pro-social beliefs; consistent discipline and parents who maintain a strong interest in their child’s education. McCarthy *et al* (2004:ix-x) caution against a simplistic interpretation of the concept of risk, noting that risks are ‘context-dependent and vary over time and with different circumstances’. In particular, children vary in their resilience to difficult circumstances. Children with a stronger sense of attachment to other people, with a more positive outlook on life, more plans for the future and more control over their lives are more likely to demonstrate resilience.

The broader role of school in enhancing protective factors against adverse social circumstances and outcomes is well appreciated and more widely researched in American studies. American research has singled out the concept of ‘school connectedness’ as the single most important school-related variable that is protective for adverse outcomes, such as substance use, violence and early sexual activity (Resnick, Bearman and Blum 1997). For example, one study of over 83,000 pupils found that four attributes explained a large part of between school variance in school-connectedness (McNeely, Nonnemaker and Blum 2002). These attributes included: classroom management climate; school size; severity of discipline policies and rates of participation in after school activities. School connectedness was found to be lower in schools with difficult classroom management climates and where temporary exclusion was used for minor issues. Zero Tolerance policies (often using harsh punishments like exclusion from school) were associated with reports of pupils

feeling less safe, than schools with more moderate policies. Pupils in smaller schools felt more 'connected' or attached to their schools than those in larger schools. Not surprisingly students who participate in extracurricular activities report feeling more connected to school; they also achieved higher grades (McNeely et al, 2002).

In Britain, a study by Rutter

Rutter, Maughan, Mortimore and Ouston (1979) is often cited as the landmark study that showed that schools could 'make a difference', rather than simply reproduce existing social inequalities and divisions. Of specific interest here is the finding that school organization and ethos have an impact on rates of delinquency. The implications of studies like this have not been lost on New Labour. The priorities for the 1997 administration have been often quoted as 'education, education, education,' with 'social inclusion' as a consistent broader policy objective seen throughout the public sector. In relation to schools this has included targets to reduce school exclusion (now abandoned) as well increase attendance (still in operation) and a plethora of initiatives aimed at promoting social inclusion through education. A number of initiatives typify the uneasy tension between welfare and justice in New Labour's reforms however; such as the increasingly hard line taken with parents whose children do not attend school regularly (first parent imprisoned in 2002) and proposals in relation to the drug testing of school children.

A wider role for schools?

It was clear from the start that New Labour saw a wider role for schools than what might be termed academic achievement and the acquisition of the credentials ultimately needed for employment. New Labour came into office at a time when there was widespread concern about exclusion from school and truancy and the growing evidence about their associations with criminal involvement. Indeed, the first report from the Social Exclusion Unit (SEU) focussed on truancy and school exclusion (SEU 1998). Targets were set for a one-third reduction in school exclusion and truancy in a five year period. 'Social Inclusion: Pupil Support' (DfEE 1999) was the guidance launched to replace the Tory guidance on 'Pupils with Problems' (DfEE 1994), refocusing the debate away from the individual and towards broader social objectives. This attempt to refocus the role of schools however, came after a long period in which academic achievement, league tables and competition between schools had been engineered as a way of driving up academic standards in schools. Schools had been given a very clear message on how they would be valued, both by the school inspection system (Ofsted) and by the way parents interpreted league tables and consequently exercised their 'choice' of school. New Labour sought to maintain what it saw as the advantages of this system, overlain with the broader mission of social inclusion. Pointing to the obvious tensions between the social inclusion and standards agendas, Loxley and Thomas (2000, 299) comment that: '..an ungenerous observer might suggest that the government is trying to have its cake and eat it'.

Yet schools in Britain have long been acknowledged to have a wider remit than simply the transmission of specific forms of knowledge, not least the more explicit social control functions of promoting a certain kind of conformity and obedience to authority, as well as keeping children and young people 'off the streets' and occupied (Carlen, Gleeson and Wardhaugh 1992). Beyond these key roles are others that broadly come under the heading of individual well-being and the opportunity to socialise with one's peers. These objectives are summarised in

Bloom's taxonomy (in Fitz-Gibbon 2000, 7) which characterises schools as having three broad goals: cognitive, affective and behavioural. *Cognitive* goals are to do with academic learning. *Affective* goals relate to happiness, aspirations and satisfaction with school. *Behavioural* goals include regular attendance, paying attention in class and pro-social behaviour. Fitz-Gibbon (2000) notes how parents are often reported to be equally interested in affective and behavioural goals, as well as cognitive attainment. The ideal school would maximise opportunities for these goals, recognising that one affects another. Further, all of these goals inter-relate with well-known protective factors against criminal involvement. Pupils who are happy and 'connected' to school are more likely to behave in 'acceptable' ways, attend, achieve and in turn have aspirations for a law-abiding future. It could be argued that the behavioural goals are fundamental to all of this, not least because in order to benefit from school in cognitive and affective terms, you have to attend school regularly in the first place!

School attendance: associations with criminal and anti-social behaviour

We have already noted that school-related issues are part of the range of risk and protective factors that surround children and young people. The inter-connection between school attendance, achievement and specifically school exclusion is now a well-rehearsed part of the debate about social exclusion and inclusion. Those who do not attend school regularly or full-time are known to come disproportionately from the more vulnerable groups in society and as we have already noted they are also known to be more likely to be involved in offending behaviour. A number of key studies have found strong evidence of the association between school exclusion and offending (*see* Graham 1988, Graham and Bowling 1995). Graham and Bowling (1995, 42) conclude that exclusion 'is both a cause and a consequence of crime'. Other well-known reports in this field suggest that if children were in school they would not be committing crime (Audit Commission 1996). A Social Exclusion Unit report goes as far as seeing children not attending school as a 'significant cause' of crime (SEU 1998, 1). Studies (YJB 2002, 54) have shown that pupils playing truant are more than twice as likely to offend, compared with those who have not played truant (65% and 30% respectively). However, the YJB study also notes that pupils do not necessarily offend whilst playing truant: half said they never offended whilst playing truant (48%), and only one in ten (10%) said they often did so. Excluded pupils were similarly more than twice as likely to report offending, compared with non excluded pupils (64% and 26% respectively). Nevertheless, Berridge, Brodie, Pitts, Porteous and Tarling (2001) conclude in their study that the relationship between school exclusion and offending is complex, making absolute statements difficult.

Behaviour in schools

As we noted earlier a key goal for schools has always been about socialising children and young people into pro-social patterns of behaviour and getting children to attend school regularly in the first place. There are other forms of problematic and aggressive behaviour in schools, such as bullying, that may also overlap with the issues explaining some truancy and exclusion. Early aggressive behaviour is strongly associated with later anti-social and criminal behaviour, schools could be seen as well placed to detect such behaviour and help in its amelioration. Some forms of school

based behaviour involving the harassment of minority groups and bullying in schools is now viewed as a form of ‘hate crime’ by a number of police forces in the UK in their work with schools. It is already established that perpetrators of hate crimes in the community are most likely to be teenage boys, with relatively low levels of school achievement (Gadd, 2004, see also Hall in this volume).

There are various ways in which we might try to estimate how big an issue problematic and aggressive behaviour is in schools, some of this behaviour could be viewed as criminal, some could be seen as anti-social whilst other behaviour may be simply part of the growing up process and ‘testing the boundaries’ with adults. It should also be emphasised that some of the behaviour that is viewed as problematic in a school (such as ‘disruptive’ behaviour) may not be viewed in quite the same way in other settings. Differences in opinion are evident between parents and teachers about the extent to which a particular behaviour constitutes a problem severe enough to warrant school exclusion (Hayden and Dunne 2001). All the ways of estimating the scale of problem behaviour in schools are open to some criticism. It is also worth remembering that for many pupils, school is a place that is safer than home or the community. However, putting aside these concerns for a moment and taking note of some of the evidence available, it is difficult to escape the conclusion that schools are frequently the site for behaviour that is at the least anti-social and sometimes criminal, although not necessarily seen as such. The language within the education service when talking about very difficult pupil behaviour tends to be ‘disruptive’ or ‘disaffected’. Although low-level disruption to lessons and harassment of teachers are a feature of surveys focussing on pupil behaviour (DES/WO 1989, Neill 2000, NAS/UWT 2003) it is evident that pupils are reported to be the most frequent victims of the more severe events - physical violence, bullying and harassment in schools, as Table 1 illustrates.

Table 1: Behaviour in schools (as reported by teachers)

Type of behaviour/problem	Frequency & % reporting, BY TEACHER
Possession of offensive weapon (pupil)	3% weekly or monthly ; 9.2% termly; 20.2% annually; 33% ‘ever’
Physical violence – direct threats: pupil to pupil	43.4% weekly ; 19.3% monthly; 83.2% ‘ever’
Physical violence – threats to pupils from third parties (usually parents, less frequently former pupils)	16.1% weekly ; 14.5% monthly; 52.7% ‘ever’
Bullying and harassment – pupil to pupil	32.2% weekly ; 20.4% monthly
Damage to teachers’ property	26.8% weekly ; 19.7% monthly
Physical violence – threats from pupils to teachers	5% weekly ; 5% monthly; 25% termly or annually
Physical violence – threats to teachers from third parties (usually parents, less frequently former pupils)	7.9% termly
Unwanted physical contact – towards teachers (pushing, touching)	8.9% weekly ; 8.9 % monthly; 8.2% termly; 10.9% annually

(Adapted from Neill 2002, 2-4. Based on 13 LEAs, 2,575 responses)

Another survey, conducted by a teaching union and focussing only on abuse against teachers, across 304 schools (primary, secondary and special) in the North West of England, revealed 964 incidents of abuse against teachers in a two-week period in January 2003. About one in eight of these abuses (126 cases) involved what were termed ‘physical assaults’ (NAS/UWT 2003).

Research into personal safety and violence in schools (Gill and Hearnshaw 1997) provides a picture of what a random sample of 3,986 schools experienced in one school year. Selected findings from this research are presented below.

Table 2: Personal Safety and Violence in Schools (at school level)

Type of incident	% SCHOOLS reporting in last school year
Physical violence – pupil to staff	18.7%(member of staff - hit, punched or kicked) 2.9% (member of staff - hit with weapon or other object, stabbed or slashed)
Physical violence – pupil to pupil	50.7% (pupil - hit, punched or kicked) 6.9% (pupil - hit with weapon or other object, stabbed or slashed)
Weapons – carried by pupils, on school site	12.1% of schools
Theft with threats or actual violence	1.9% of schools

(Adapted from Gill and Hearnshaw 1997, 1-2. Based on 9% of schools nationally, 2,303 responses)

Tables 1 and 2 illustrate a worrying picture of the incidence of very problematic and sometimes criminal behaviour in schools. The surveys also highlight the different ways data may be collected (e.g. by individual teacher or by school) thus creating problems of comparability.

Pupil-based surveys come up with equally worrying, though varying, rates of prevalence of different types of bullying behaviour. Again there are problems of definition and comparability across surveys. For example, ‘physical violence, pupil to pupil’ (as referred to in Tables 1 and 2) may be one-off acts of aggression; they may on the other hand be more sustained. According to Smith (2002, 117-18) and based on the pioneering work by Olweus (1993) ‘bullying is a subset of aggressive behaviours, characterised by repetition and power imbalance’. Bullying takes various forms – physical, verbal, social exclusion and indirect forms such as spreading rumours.

Table 3: Bullying surveys

Authors	Area	School type/age	Prevalence
Whitney & Smith (1993)	Sheffield (6,000 pupils)	Primary & Secondary	27% primary and 10% secondary had been bullied; 12% primary and 6% secondary had bullied others
Katz Buchanan & Bream (2001)	UK (7,000 young people)	13-19 years	More than 50% had been bullied: 13% boys; 12% girls were bullied 'severely'

Bullying surveys produce fairly wide ranging estimates depending on the way questions are asked and the timescale involved. Smith and Myron-Wilson (1998, 406) estimate that: 'around 1 in 5 children are involved in bully-victim problems' in the UK, with similar incidences reported in other countries. Furniss (2000) discusses whether some forms of bullying should be considered to be a crime, rather than as a school disciplinary matter. Furniss considers the issue both from the standpoint of existing legal provisions as well as from the point of view of the level of protection afforded to children. She points out that assaults on teachers (though less frequent than pupil to pupil assaults) are often reported to the police; whereas in pupil to pupil cases, parents are expected to make the decision about whether or not to involve the police.

Permanent exclusion from school might be viewed as an indicator of teachers' limits to tolerance in relation to pupil behaviour. A large proportion of the reasons for permanent exclusion involve physically aggressive behaviour from pupils or behaviour that is highly disruptive of the learning of other pupils. When permanent exclusion figures are compared with surveys of teacher experience like the ones noted above, one might be surprised by the relatively small proportion of children who are permanently excluded, according to official statistics.

Table 4: Permanent exclusions

Year	All permanent exclusions
1990 – 1991	2,910
1996 – 1997	12,700
1999 – 2000	8,300
2000 – 2001	9,210
2001 - 2002	9,540
2002 - 2003	9,290

(Source of figures: www.dfes.gov.uk)

However, it is important to appreciate that although these official figures for permanent exclusion represent a very small proportion of the school population (the rate of permanent exclusion was 1.3 per 1,000 school population in England or 0.13% in 2002/2003) they are the tip of the iceberg in terms of disaffected and other difficult to manage behaviour in school. Fixed period exclusions (a matter of days usually) are

much more numerous. The first available national data estimates 80,000 fixed period exclusions involving 62,000 individual pupils in the summer term of 2003 school year (DfES 2004). Some pupils had more than one fixed period exclusion in this school term. The most common single reason given for both permanent and fixed period exclusions is ‘persistent disruptive behaviour’ (20% of all exclusions). Physical assault against an adult accounted for 12% of permanent and 5% fixed period exclusions. Physical assault against a pupil accounted for 14% of permanent and 16% of fixed period exclusions (DfES 2004). Work conducted by the author for one urban education authority found records of exclusion for about 2% of the whole school population in a one year period; most of these were fixed period exclusions, for a matter of a day or so (Hayden 2000).

Official records of non-attendance involve a much bigger proportion of the school population. The reasons for non-attendance are varied, but in some cases at least they represent disaffection or disinterest in schooling and in others avoidance of work pressures or bullying. Schools record ‘non-attendance’ which covers authorised absence (for example through sickness) and unauthorised absence (which may include a range of situations including truancy and young carers). ‘Truancy’ suggests an active choice not to go to school and is thus a particular form of absence.

Table 5: Non-attendance

	1995 – 1996	2002 – 2003
<i>% half days missed:</i>		
Authorised	6.9	6.13
Unauthorised	0.7	0.7

(Source of figures: www.dfes.gov.uk)

Other estimates for children not attending school include: 0.5 million school children engaged in illegal work, of whom 100,000 are believed to truant from school daily in order to work (TUC/MORI 2001). The most commonly quoted figure in government announcements is 50,000 school children truanting from school on any school day (DfES 2002). Further, around 100,000 pupils were found to ‘disappear’ from the school roll between years 10 and 11 in a one-year period of monitoring (Ofsted 2003). There are a complex set of circumstances and reasons to explain why children are not in school or not benefiting from school. They all have their behavioural manifestations, although it tends to be the ‘acting out’ child that causes most consternation amongst teachers and parents because such behaviour demands attention.

Schools and their community as a site for crime

Schools are seen as a potential site for crime, as well as the site for crime prevention that has been the focus of much of this chapter. Enhanced security measures are a common feature of the school environment: CCTV; keypad entry systems and main gates locked for substantial periods of the day. Within ‘Safer School Partnerships’ (DfES 2002), police officers are based in schools in areas with a high level of street crime. The police also have a role in the event of parallel criminal proceedings in cases of school exclusion where a serious allegation or event has occurred (DfEE 1999).

The last section looked at behaviour in schools and the various ways the education service and educational research tends to measure the extent of the issue. Criminologists have a slightly different focus and many of the surveys conducted are more explicitly looking at the prevalence of offending behaviour and victimisation of young people of school age. Self-report surveys conducted with school pupils, provide us with a picture of young people's involvement in criminal activity in the community (see for example, Aye Maung 1995, based on BCS data or annual YJB survey, MORI 2004).

However, there is very little research explicitly focussing specifically on criminal acts committed on the school site, presumably because of the extreme sensitivity of such data and the difficulties of gaining access to undertake the research. One self-report study of a sample from 20 state secondary schools (3,103 respondents) in Cardiff found that one in five pupils reported involvement in one of five categories of offence on the school site in a one year period. The proportion of pupils reporting offences were as follows: assault (13.2%); vandalism (6.7%); theft (6.0%); robbery (0.7%); breaking into school (0.7%). Interestingly, this study reports varying levels of impact on offending behaviour in relation to individual and lifestyle factors, with school context exercising a different level of relative protection in relation to these factors (Boxford 2004). This sort of study is important in a number of ways: it illustrates the high level of offending that may be occurring in schools; it adds to the debate about the extent to which schools (in combination with other factors) can address these issues and it reminds us that some of the acts dealt with as a within-school disciplinary issue could be seen as a criminal offence.

Despite enhanced security in schools studies have found high proportions of pupils expressing real fears about being victimised in school: a third of pupils in a study by Noaks and Noaks (2000). Pupils expressed further fears about particular situations like school buses and unsupervised settings. Fears about travel or security in school were sufficient for between 3 and 5% of pupils to miss school in another study (Kingery, Coggleshall and Alford 1998). Whatever the precise focus of these surveys, they all indicate a high prevalence of anti-social and potentially criminal behaviour in the lives of children of school age. This has led Phillips (2003) to comment upon the 'normalization' of aspects of abuse, harassment and violence in young people's lives. In particular, stealing, fighting and general aggression are reported to be common (Howard League 2002).

In a range of ways schools are also a place where adults, parents and former pupils may vent their anger and frustration. There are various ways that we can estimate the scale of this sort of problem. Table 1 includes estimates of 'third party' incursions onto the school site, directed at either pupils or teachers. Sometimes people want to gain access to the schools site for the purpose of vandalism and arson or theft of school property. Further, schools may also act as a site for 'professional perpetrators' to gain access to children (Sullivan and Beech 2002). Sullivan and Beech (2002) quote a BBC survey reported in 2000, that estimated that about 400 teachers in the UK were suspended each year, following allegations of abusing pupils.

The need for better security for schools, as well as screening of school staff, have been highlighted in the public imagination by events such as the Dunblane tragedy in which 16 children and their teacher were killed by an intruder (during the school day); the murder of Head teacher Philip Lawrence at the school gates (at the end of the school day); and, the murder of two primary age school girls in Soham by the school caretaker (in the school summer holidays). Yet these are very different types of event involving attacks on children, teachers and the whole school

community. Research indicates that external threats to security, specifically intrusion to the school premises, are ranked higher as a concern by schools than internal threats from people within the school community (Lloyd and Ching 2003). Security firms now offer such schemes as ‘SchoolWatch’ over the summer holiday period. Such firms tend to focus very much on property and damage from arson, vandalism and graffiti, rather than harm to people (see www.chubb.co.uk). The risk of arson and vandalism is known to be higher in deprived urban areas, than elsewhere. Arson attacks against schools has declined from over 1,100 in 1994 to just under 800 in 2000. However, there has been an increase in the proportion of arson attacks occurring in school time. Around 250 of the 800 arson attacks in 2000 were during the school day when pupils are present (Arson Prevention Bureau 2002).

Table 6: Rates of School-Time Arson Fires: English Metropolitan areas compared with Non-metropolitan areas

	Metropolitan areas	Non-metropolitan areas
Number (rate) of fires per 100,000 pupils	3.3	2.3
Number (rate) of fires per 100 schools	1.2	0.7

(Source of figures: Arson Prevention Bureau 2002)

Schools as a site for crime prevention

As we note earlier, the prevalence of offending is known to vary greatly across schools and it is now well known that schools can make a difference, independently of socio-economic circumstances. Further, schools are an obvious site in which to influence the next generation *en masse*.

Overall schools clearly have wide *potential* for enhancing protective factors against criminal involvement. Schools can help foster pro-social behaviour; provide opportunities for a sense of personal achievement, school ‘connectedness’ and ‘inclusion’ in a community. Schools already provide positive opportunities for the great majority of young people, many of whom have committed a minor criminal offence and some of whom are at risk of more extensive criminal involvement. Schools are encouraged to involve and interest parents and carers in their children’s education (thereby enhancing a protective factor against criminality); in policy terms this is often seen as a self-evidently ‘good thing’. However, in all these areas, Rutter et al (1998, 233) conclude that good quality evidence about both effects and the mechanisms at work is limited.

There are numerous ‘whole school’ and more targeted approaches to managing behaviour in schools in Britain, such as ‘Assertive Discipline’, ‘Circle Time’ and ‘Team-Teach’. In-school units, mentors and Connexions advisors are also common. Further, schools are expected to have policies to deal with bullying, harassment and behaviour management more generally. Restorative Justice approaches are more familiar in criminal justice settings but are also being used in school settings. Most initiatives involve outside facilitators offering restorative conferencing to schools in relation to bullying or where exclusion is being considered. Interest in the potential of restorative practices in schools is said to be growing and more initiatives are starting (Hopkins 2002); this is apparent in some of the ‘Safer School Partnerships’ (discussed below).

Traditionally the role of the police in relation to schools has been as an additional teaching resource; for example, in relation to drugs education, which is well established in schools. Some in-school programmes have been based on quite substantial investment from police authorities, although the impact on pupil attitudes and behaviour is difficult to establish or attribute to the programmes as such (Downey, Keene, and Wincup 2002). Yet police officers have admitted to an ambivalence about their role, as school visits also provide an opportunity for intelligence gathering (Walsh 2004). Current policy takes a more educative stance, developing from the view that drugs education should provide opportunities for pupils to develop their knowledge, skills, attitudes and understanding about drugs, as well as an appreciation of the benefits of a healthy lifestyle and so on. However, at the same time Blair has suggested the possibility of drug testing in schools and indeed sniffer dogs are already used in some schools. Concern has been expressed at this possibility, not least because drugs like Cannabis stay in the system longer than more harmful drugs like Heroin and Ecstasy (Walsh 2004). The American experience of drug testing in schools is not promising, both because of civil liberties challenges, resistance from schools (reportedly 95% of schools do not use the tests) and the lack of evidence of a reduction in drug use where the tests are used (Walsh 2004).

In recent years the role of police in relation to schools has become more operational as in 'truancy sweeps', where police officers work with the educational welfare service to get children back into school. Police also take an operational approach in 'Safer Schools Partnerships', a joint initiative between the Department for Education and Skills (DfES), the Youth Justice Board (YJB) and Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO). Safer Schools Partnerships are part of a number of measures that link behaviour in and around schools to an explicit crime prevention programme. Partnerships are located in areas with high levels of street crime, or crime 'hotspots.' In these partnerships a dedicated full-time police officer is based in a secondary school and the feeder primary schools. Key objectives of this role include the prevention and reduction of crime, anti-social behaviour and related incidents around the school; tackling bullying and violence experienced by staff and students; truancy and exclusion; damage to the school buildings and drug related incidents (DfES 2002).

Good quality evidence about the effectiveness of school-based programmes is generally lacking in the UK. Much of the available evidence is from the United States. For example, a recent meta-analysis of 165 studies of school-based prevention activities analysed the evidence available about the impact of activities ranging from individual counselling or behaviour modification programmes through efforts to change the way schools are managed. The analysis shows that school-based practices appear to be effective in relation to certain behaviours: reducing drug and alcohol use, school drop out and attendance problems. In common with findings from prisons research, cognitive behavioural programmes were found to be consistently positive in effect. Non-cognitive behavioural counselling, social work and other therapeutic interventions showed consistently negative effects (Wilson, Gottfredson and Najaka 2001). It is interesting in this context to note what children say. A Howard League (2002) consultation with 1,100 children reported three key issues they identified to help prevent crime: activities and safe places to 'hang out'; police to stop viewing all young people as trouble and treat them with more respect; more initiatives (such as counselling and information on reducing crime) in schools and other places where children are more generally found.

Schools in and of the community, or schools as a fortress against the community?

Schools are one of our most expensive community resources and a major agent of socialisation alongside the family. However, schools have an uneasy task if they make their crime prevention role explicit. Their potential in this respect is at once self-evident but also open to contention, misinterpretation and even potential misuse. Whilst some aspects of crime prevention (such as CCTV) and security measures may seem necessary against intruders, vandals and arsonists, they might also be open to other uses. Equally the role of police in schools may be open to role conflict and move into crime detection, rather than prevention. ‘Schools in and of the community’ is a concept that requires some careful thought. The evidence of widening social division in schooling in Britain is clear (Hayden 2000). Many would argue that the system of league tables and competition has played an important part in bringing this about. This tends to mean that ‘sink’ schools are apparent in most cities; their catchment areas usually coinciding with the poorest most ‘socially excluded’ areas of the city. It is a challenge in such circumstances to be a school ‘in and of the community’, rather than act as a fortress against the negative influences in the community. For schools to be a community resource they have to be open and available to the community in a way that does not conflict with the needs of the current cohort of children and young people getting their chance to do well at school. If schools are open to a community they may also be more open to the risks in that community.

In terms of their role and potential in crime prevention, schools have to balance a number of competing priorities.

Table 7: Competing priorities for schools

The majority: no or minor criminal Involvement	↔	The minority: persistent and prolific offenders (especially for re-integration programmes)
Victims	↔	Perpetrators
Academic achievement	↔	Social inclusion
The current cohort of children and young people	↔	The needs of parents and the wider community
Schools as welcoming and open places	↔	Risk reduction
Schools as a fortress against the community	↔	Schools in and of the community

None of the competing priorities shown in Table 7 are necessarily mutually exclusive but they are nevertheless priorities about which it is difficult to arrive at a consensus. For schools in general (rather than only schools in the most deprived areas) to achieve a better balance in relation to these priorities we would need a fundamental rethink

about the funding, staffing and evaluation of schools. The role and potential of schools in relation to crime prevention is a relatively easy case to make. The bigger questions remain: such as, to what extent do we as a society want to see *schools in general* prioritising a crime prevention role; or whether this role should only be prioritised in 'crime hotspots' for schools in challenging circumstances. Also there is a need for a more realistic look at educational provision for young offenders of school age, both inside the secure estate and once they leave. In relation to the latter group we need to consider urgently, whether reintegration to mainstream school provision is realistic and fair to all concerned.

Conclusion

Schools are clearly both potential sites for crime as well as crime prevention. They are generally protected and protective environments, compared with life in many communities. Children and young people spend a great deal of time in school and schools are a crucial agent of socialisation, as well as one of the main community organisations to which most people have a connection at some point in their lives. The potential of schools to foster pro-social behaviour and attitudes, as well as enhance protective factors against criminal involvement, is well appreciated. The key issue for policy and practice is how to fully realise this potential.

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