

Oifig Chosc Coireachta/Chaidrimh
Phobail,
An Garda Síochána,
Caislean a Bhárraigh,
Contae Mhaigh eo.



Crime Prevention/Community
Relations Office,
An Garda Síochána
Castlebar,
Co. Mayo

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Please quote the following ref. Number:

5th June 2010

Dear Principal,

Re: Primary & Post Primary School Security.

With reference to above a considerable number of schools have been broken into over the past few weeks in the Mayo Garda Division. The fact that cash and portable I.T. equipment is readily available in some schools is of great concern to An Garda Síochána. There is no doubt that this is the reason that burglaries at schools are continuing to happen.

I have in my role as Crime Prevention Officer visited a good number of schools over the past few years. I have also visited a number of schools recently, and offered security advice to those particular schools. As there are approximately 180 primary schools and over 30 secondary schools, it would be impossible to visit all in the short term.

The following recommendations and advice will help to improve the overall security of your school and reduce the opportunities for crime. It is understood that some of the recommendations may not apply to your school, for example you may already have an intruder alarm, and CCTV fitted.

- A monitored intruder alarm system should be installed which complies with Irish Standard EN 50131. A monitored alarm system is linked to a monitoring station 24 hours a day. In the event of alarm activation the key holder and the Gardai are informed immediately. The presence of a good quality alarm system is a major deterrent against would-be criminals, reducing the risk of attack on the building and also giving early warning in the event of a breach of physical security.
- Fit shock sensors to vulnerable windows including the office and computer room. A break-in is detected as soon as the intruder attempts to force, smash, drill, or even saw the protected window which means that the alarm is activated while the intruder is still outside.

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- Closed Circuit Television, (CCTV) is a good deterrent used in conjunction with other security features. A good quality digital system should be installed with at least 30 days storage of recorded material. Infra-red cameras should be used for good night time footage. Get three quotations and a demonstration from the installer. Only use reputable installers who are listed in the golden pages.
- Fit 5 lever security mortise locks to all doors. (Not on emergency exit doors)
- An inventory should be created for all valuable equipment including laptops, desktops, printers, digital cameras, televisions, stereos, etc, record make, model, serial number, colour, etc The most valuable items should be photographed.
- Property mark all school equipment especially laptops and portable electronic equipment. A mark such as 'Castlebar N.S.' should be engraved or etched so that it is highly visible, which would make disposal more difficult in the event of the item being stolen.
- A secure room within the school should be designated as a 'strong room', preferably without windows and with a good quality solid wooden door, fitted with two 5 lever mortise locks. This room should also be alarmed. All valuable portable equipment mentioned above should be stored in this room when not in use, and especially over long holiday periods. The recorder for the CCTV system should also be stored in the strong room.
- Some schools have a portable trolley of laptops, some containing 16 or more laptops; this should be stored in the strong room every night.
- Laptops which are connected to equipment such as printers and white boards should be firmly secured using a laptop security cable, to a hook rawl bolted to a concrete wall or floor.
- When it's not possible to put equipment in the strong room overnight ensure window blinds are closed to prevent equipment being seen.
- Yearly schemes, lesson plans and valuable information should be backed-up on a regular basis in case the computer is stolen.
- Fit good quality close shackle padlock to boiler house.
- Fit good quality close shackle padlock to tool shed/lawnmower shed.
- Property marks all tools and lawnmower: record make, model, serial number, colour of lawnmower and it should be photographed.
- Buy heating oil in small quantities where possible and ensure tank has a small amount of oil over long holiday periods.

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- Fit lock on cap of oil tank.
- Fit palisade security fence around oil tank with a good quality close shackle padlock on the gate.



Palisade fence



Close shackle pad-lock

- Cash should not to be kept in the school overnight. If cash for tours, grants, etc has to be kept in the school then a good quality safe should be purchased. It should be rawl bolted to a concrete wall or floor in a concealed place. (Remember the first place a burglar looks is the locked filing cabinet in the Principal's office)
- Lighting is a good deterrent around schools as it allows natural surveillance from nearby houses (where applicable) and passing motorists and pedestrians. High pressure sodium or metal halide is the best options as they give off a white or blue light. A lot of schools have deep recesses in the shell of the building and these are popular haunts for teenage drinking parties etc.
- All windows in the school, especially small ones should be closed at the end of the school day.

If you need any specific crime prevention advice you may contact me Castlebar Garda station on 094 9038200 are on mobile 086 -8282264. Please leave a message if the line is busy.

This report and recommendations should be read in conjunction with the Fire Officer's and Health and Safety Officer's reports.

Yours sincerely,

Tony Cosgrove Sergeant.
(Tony Cosgrove.)
Crime Prevention Officer.