

Children's Safety At School

What is the issue?

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- Recently there were two incidents of attack on children inside their school premises in Delhi.
- This has drawn attention to the safety of children at schools.

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What are the drawbacks in schools in this regard?

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- The perception of education and the hierarchy of “educational needs” places 'safety' well below many other **priorities**.
- Unlike hard core physical infrastructure the safety measures are largely ignored.
- Audits and regular **inspections** of safety and security measures at schools by experienced security professionals are lacking in the country.
- Also, the present **norms** by the school boards are **poorly implemented** by the school managements.
- The school managements or the directorates of education **lack the requisite training** for handling the safety related issues.
- The responsibility is thus handed over to **private security agencies** who are under-paid and untrained, and thus **inefficient**.
- Above all, the recovery of the capital invested is getting to be the prime driving force well above the motive of imparting secure education.

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What are the recent CBSE guidelines in this regard?

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- Following the recent incident, CBSE has issued guidelines to all its affiliated schools failing to follow which would amount to losing their affiliation.

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- The guidelines include -

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1. Conducting **safety/security audits** of school premises and employees from the respective local police station within the next two months.
2. Installing **CCTV cameras** at all vulnerable points in the school premises and ensuring it is functional at all times.
3. Conducting **psychometric evaluation** of all staff employees including the non-teaching staff like bus conductors, drivers, peon, and other support staffs.
4. Ensuring support personnel are employed by authorised agencies and proper records are maintained of them as well.
5. Providing **training** and development to staff to protect children from any form of abuse.
6. Constituting **parent-teacher-students committee** to address security and safety needs of students and taking regular feedback from parents as well.
7. Monitoring access to school buildings by outsiders and visitors.
8. Besides, schools shall constitute a separate **committee for redressal** of public, staff, students, and parents grievances.
9. An **internal complaint committee** on sexual harassment and a committee under Protection of Children from Sexual Offence (POCSO) Act should also be constituted.

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- In all, CBSE has said that responsibility for the safety of children in schools

‘shall solely lie’ with the school authorities.

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What is the way forward?

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- Schools are expected to be “pro-active” in this area rather than “reactive” and take measures on the directions issued.

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- As CBSE has emphasised safety and security at schools is a fundamental right of the child, it should be given due importance.

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- This will ensure that a child engage and study in an environment where he/she feels safe and is free from any form of physical or emotional abuse or harassment.

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Source: Indian Express, Firstpost

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