

**“STAYING SAFE”**

**A Conceptual Framework for School Safety**

**John Twigg**

**Senior Research Associate**

## **1. Purpose of the framework**

This conceptual framework is intended to help school governors and managers, and those who work with them on risk, safety and emergency management, to promote school safety more effectively.

It can be used to assess a school’s strengths and weaknesses in risk and emergency management, identify gaps and opportunities for improvement, and – importantly – make connections between different areas of school activity so that they reinforce each other better.

The thinking behind the framework is based on the following ideas and experiences:

- (a) From the perspective of disaster management:
  - The modern ‘disaster risk management’ approach. This is more broad-based than conventional emergency planning. It integrates a range of structural, non-structural, short- and long-term measures to reduce risks and prevent and mitigate crises.
  - Vulnerability and capacity analysis, which considers the spectrum of physical, socio-cultural, organisational and institutional factors that affect particular groups’ ability to withstand shocks and stresses.
  
- (b) From the perspective of school management:
  - The UK Government’s ‘Every Child Matters’ agenda, which now guides the work of schools. This is a holistic view of children’s development which has children’s health and safety among its key outcomes.
  - The challenge for school leaders in keeping the ‘big picture’ in view and adopting a coherent approach to risk and emergency management when faced with a multiplicity of individual regulations and guidelines.

## **2. Components of the framework**

Figure 1 shows the components of the framework. These are explained below.

**Figure 1: the conceptual framework for school safety**

**A. R**

## **2. Management**

All aspects of school governance should be considered within this component, beginning with overall arrangements and responsibilities for decision-making, management and implementation of emergency and risk management measures. This includes the work and duties of school governing bodies.

Other areas to consider are school policies for health & safety and emergencies, operating procedures (e.g. risk assessments, fire drills) and systems for monitoring and evaluating progress.

## **3. Resources**

School resources can be broken down into four main areas:

- 1) Human resources: staff knowledge of risks and how to manage them, staff training (e.g. in evacuation procedures and first aid), and creation of a ‘culture of safety’ among staff and pupils.
- 2) Material resources: equipment and materials (e.g. fire extinguishers, first aid kits).
- 3) Information resources: possession of relevant technical, procedural and other information, and ease of access to it.
- 4) Financial resources: budgeting for the above.

## **4. Location and structures**

This component considers the physical aspects of the school and its immediate environment. This includes site security (e.g. against break-ins), the resilience of buildings and their contents to hazards, evacuation routes and access to the school by emergency services.

Physical hazards arising from the state of the school buildings and the materials used in them should also be taken into account; this extends to the rest of the school site and facilities.

## **5. Families and inclusion**

Schools need to work closely with families to enable children to achieve

## **6. Events and activities**

This area of the ‘school environment’ component is different in character from the other five but is presented here as a distinct area because the issues it addresses are important ones that may otherwise be lost from sight.

It includes out-of-school trips, and major and out-of-hours events on site. Both are normally addressed by standard health and safety procedures and they are sometimes considered as specific categories of risk in their own right.

Also included under this heading are events away from the school which might have an impact on it: for example a major emergency in the locality requiring the use of the school as a first aid station, or an influenza epidemic preventing a significant proportion of staff and pupils from attending school. There is a potential overlap here with the external factors in the framework that are discussed below. Again, what matters is that the issue is kept in sight; the precise category under which it is considered is less important.

## **C. External environment (the outer circle)**

### **3. Institutions**

This includes both government and non-governmental organisations. The institutions and procedures of central and local government are the principal sources of material, financial and technical support for

