



A guide to School Watch

Contents

What is School Watch?	2
Routes.....	2
Hot Spot Areas.....	2
Roles	3
School Watch coordinator.....	3
Police	3
Travel Ambassadors	3
Parents.....	3
Staying safe.....	4
Steps to establish School Watch	5
Coordinating School Watch.....	5
Key Times.....	5
Researching Routes and Hot Spots	5
Providing a high visibility presence	5
Police Safer Transport Team (STT)	6
Promoting School Watch.....	6
Further considerations	6



What is School Watch?

School Watch is intended to mobilise the school community to promote safety and reassurance for young people, providing a high visibility presence at key times during the school year.

School Watch is not a policing tool to fight crime. However, the initiative is particularly important in areas when Safer School officers are diverted away from the area and aims to focus community resources to:

- Improve **feelings of safety** in areas where young people are travelling home from school, and
- **Prevent** ASB and crime in those areas.



Schools are an integral and important part of the community, providing the single most sustained and positive impact on young people. They will form the heart of School Watch with the support of the Metropolitan Police.

It is recognised that School Watch requirements will differ depending on the location of the school and local transport hubs used by students. Therefore, each School Watch scheme is **bespoke** and can include several elements dependant on need.

This is a new concept in Policing whereby the school community is an integral part of its own problem solving process.

Routes

Routes to and from transport hubs are identified through:

- surveys/speaking to young people, school staff, parents and local community, and
- local knowledge/research completed by the Safer Schools Officer.

Consideration should be given to areas where students feel least safe and mapped with the inclusion of CCTV and bus routes.

The school coordinates a visible presence along these routes and all students are then encouraged to travel along these Routes.

Hot Spot Areas

Specific areas where young people converge. This can be a place where there is one main transport hub or another area where students converge.



Roles

School Watch coordinator

A member of school staff takes on the responsibility for ensuring School Watch is implemented and runs at key times relevant to the school throughout the year.

Police

Safer Schools Officers provide the link between schools and other police units. They will share important information (in accordance with the Data Sharing Agreement) with the school where safety and/or safeguarding concerns are apparent.

They will also mobilise police support when needed (Neighbourhood officers, Safer Transport Teams, gangs unit, etc.).

Travel Ambassadors

Travel Ambassadors can be 6th form students who offer an additional visible presence along a route from school. Their role is to support younger students by being a visible presence to improve feelings of safety.

Their assistance can be used to evidence community support in addition to volunteering time for Duke of Edinburgh (DofE) awards or towards a CV.

They can also be utilised to assist Police and key school staff in delivering and promoting School Watch.

Parents

Where applicable, parents can get involved to provide an additional presence in helping to keep young people safe.



Staying safe

A by-product of the visible presence maybe a reduction in anti-social behaviour and crime. However, while the community roles within School Watch are designed to encourage improved behaviour and feelings of safety, it is recognised there may be times when an incident of anti-social behaviour or a crime may still occur.

It is the responsibility of the school to carry out a risk assessment/benefit analysis and ensure all those involved are made aware of the contents.

If an incident happens:

- **Do not** put yourself in harm's way
- **Do not** get drawn in to confrontational situations
- If there is a **Safer Schools Officer** near bring an incident to their attention
- If an emergency, contact the emergency services on **999**

Good practice is to:

- Engage with students
- Speak to other community members in the area
- If someone appears to be acting suspiciously, talk to them and tell them about the School Watch initiative
- If you have further concerns, speak to a police officer. Call 101 or 999 in an emergency.
- Alternatively, contact CrimeStoppers on 0800 555 111, it's 100% anonymous, Always.



Steps to establish School Watch

Coordinating School Watch

The Safer Schools Officer will provide an explanatory letter and guidance inviting the school to coordinate the initiative. A member of school staff will become the School Watch Coordinator and ensure everyone involved knows that they should be doing.

Key Times

The initiative is bespoke to individual school needs. Any high visibility presence should be evidence based and intelligence-led. However, research shows that robberies, thefts and serious youth violence involving young people peaks on weekdays during the period immediately after the school day (1500-1700).

Therefore, the key periods throughout the year are:

- Between 1500-1700 after school,
- At the end of terms when there is a higher chance of anti-social behaviour, and
- The peak months are September, November, January, March, May, and June.

Researching Routes and Hot Spots

Depending on the geography of the school, there may be specific locations that students use (parks, alleyways, transport hubs, etc.) that present areas of risk and a decrease in feelings of safety. The **School Watch safety questionnaire** may be completed by school staff and students to identify those areas.

There may also be areas of concern where crime and anti-social behaviour is highest. These areas can be identified by the Safer Schools Officer and shared with the school.

Once the key areas are identified, new routes can be mapped using analysis of the **School Watch safety questionnaire** and information provided by the Safer Schools Officer. New routes must:

- Be well lit – preferably main roads covered by CCTV and include access to and from Transport Hubs.
- Include the school exit and entry points.

More than one route is advised where applicable. Map examples are included in the School Watch Toolkit.

Providing a high visibility presence

Where new routes are not practical, a small team can be assembled. The team can consist of several school staff members, travel ambassadors and parents. The School Watch



coordinator ensures that everyone involved understands their role and are briefed thoroughly before going out.

Those involved should walk the routes and be a visible presence to provide reassurance. Anecdotal evidence suggests this is more effective for young people in terms of crime prevention and feelings of safety than visible policing.

We advise:

- everyone involved goes out in pairs,
- they wear a high visibility jacket so they can be clearly seen by everyone in the area

Routes and areas should be reviewed regularly.

[Police Safer Transport Team \(STT\)](#)

The STT will be able to provide support and local knowledge of bus timetables, routes, volume of traffic and crime statistics. They can also assist with cycle marking schemes and will often assist with after school patrols at key times throughout the year.

[Promoting School Watch](#)

It is important to make the whole school community aware. Leaflets have been designed for lead professionals and collaborative partners with A5 sized simplified versions for Students, Parents and Carers.

A School Watch PowerPoint has been created and can be shown during Assemblies, parent's events or via lesson input.

[Further considerations](#)

In addition, consider investing in body worn video for those staff members that patrol. The use of body worn video can:

- Provide a visible deterrent of crime and anti-social behaviour
- Capture evidence of a crime and/or anti-social behaviour
- There is an incident log template to use to record anything that might happen. This includes,
 - Information that can be shared with the Safer Schools Officer and followed up later
 - Incidents of Anti-social behaviour
 - Incidents of crime
 - Any incident where it is deemed the visible presence prevented something from happening, ie. a school fight or bullying

This log can be used to show that the School Watch scheme is an effective tool and making a difference.

