

## Candid Camera

*CCTV in education is about more than protecting school and pupil property...*

*The reduction or elimination of theft and vandalism, whether caused by outsiders or pupils, are the primary reasons that schools turn to CCTV. In some schools, toilets, IT rooms, canteens, and playground facilities are all targets. There is also the threat of graffiti at any place around the school. Well-sited cameras, together with notices that surveillance is in operation both serve as a deterrent and become invaluable should there be an incident. The same applies to those schools with drug dealing problems on campus.*

Additionally, behavioural issues can be addressed. This may be general rowdy behaviour, bullying, or even issues related to parent/teacher relations. With CCTV, such situations can be spotted and nipped in the bud before they become serious. Speakers on cameras are particularly effective in such scenarios.



If an incident does happen, then the evidential benefit of

high quality videotape or digital video recording comes into its own. As an extreme example, in one school recently the videotape was the main plank of the police evidence in court after a particularly serious incident. Without the tape, the prosecution case would have collapsed.

Cameras are also effective in dealing with truancy. Security Management Plus, a company that specialises in installing security cameras in schools, supplied a large system to Whalley Range School in Manchester when it was identified as having one of the highest rates of truancy in the country. With the cameras forming an important part of an anti-truancy programme, the new Head Teacher was highly successful in reducing the problem.

Finally, cameras address positive as well as negative issues. Some schools reinforce and reward the good behaviour they see on camera, such as picking up litter. One school also uses the cameras for interview practice, replaying the videotape to the "interviewee" as a training aid. Not a justification for buying cameras, but a very useful spin-off.

A Voluntary Aided Maintained Grammar School founded in 1615, **Wilson's School** in Wallington, Surrey, with over 850 boys aged 11-18, recently installed a new system that has resulted in zero break-ins since. The system consists of 10 cameras, 8 of which are Vista NCL735CK  $\frac{1}{3}$  inch high resolution colour cameras, and 2 Vista VPM8120  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch high resolution monochrome cameras. Covering key locations inside and outside the school, the system includes a Vista VLM16CD split screen control display in the Premises Manager's office and video tape recording on all cameras. The installation has turned the school into enthusiastic



advocates of modern CCTV security, identifying a number of benefits in addition to the original key purpose. These include improved security during lettings and a reduction in financial loss through avoidance of damage to locker areas and vending machines.

Premises Manager Bill Bailey explains:

"School lockers always suffer damage, and I used to budget about £2000 per year for locker door replacements. The new cameras have stopped this. With vending machines, there is a trick of tipping or kicking the machine that then spills out free cans. That doesn't happen now, and the machines have gone from loss to profit. These are the tangible benefits, but there are also gains from less litter, less boisterousness, and on the few occasions where there is a disciplinary problem, the video tapes help sort it out."



Bill finds system operation very simple – videotapes are cycled round routinely in a five-minute daily exercise, and control of the screen and cameras is simple. Using hardware supplied by Norbain, service has been excellent, with same-day service from their installer, Security Services of London, in the event of problems.

**Broadwater Down Primary School** in Kent is equally enthusiastic for its new system comprising 5 Vista VPC9420 ½ inch Colour Cameras and 1 Ultrak KD6SW4P1 External Colour WeatherDome camera feeding into a Vista GCD Generation 3 Colour Multiplexer and a VCR. It has, says Head Teacher Jane Florey “empowered the staff” and transformed the security of the entire school.

“For the benefit of the children, we can now monitor everyone who comes into the school grounds and premises, and we have a VCR record of them. Using cameras for security also has the benefit of avoiding the ‘Colditz’ effect of other measures.”

The school reports that staff feel they have far better back-up and support now. It’s easier for them to see what is going on, monitor any of the minor accidents and mishaps that are inevitable with little children, to see on tape replay exactly what happened and whether an incident can be prevented in future. The cameras can also show that staff were acting correctly and that supervision was adequate at any given time.



Steve Clews of Security Management Plus, concludes:

“Without doubt a CCTV system can provide a very cost-effective contribution to security and behaviour improvements in schools. However, schools need guidance in buying and using systems. Go to an installer experienced in the use of cameras in schools, and be guided by them. They will spec a system of high enough quality; it’s no good having a picture that simply shows the culprit was wearing a school blazer and white shirt – all pupils do. The picture must be good enough for positive identification. And finally, take references about the service record of the supplier – service is vital in security applications, because a good well maintained system will have a positive impact on the school in many ways for many years to come.”