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.
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- 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**.
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- Unlike hard core physical infrastructure the safety measures are largely ignored.
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- Audits and regular **inspections** of safety and security measures at schools by experienced security professionals are lacking in the country.
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- Also, the present **norms** by the school boards are **poorly implemented** by the school managements.
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- The school managements or the directorates of education **lack the requisite training** for handling the safety related issues.
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- The responsibility is thus handed over to **private security agencies** who are under-paid and untrained, and thus **inefficient**.
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- 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.
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2. Installing **CCTV cameras** at all vulnerable points in the school premises and ensuring it is functional at all times.
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3. Conducting **psychometric evaluation** of all staff employees including the non-teaching staff like bus conductors, drivers, peon, and other support staffs.
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4. Ensuring support personnel are employed by authorised agencies and proper records are maintained of them as well.
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5. Providing **training** and development to staff to protect children from any form of abuse.
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6. Constituting **parent-teacher-students committee** to address security and safety needs of students and taking regular feedback from parents as well.
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7. Monitoring access to school buildings by outsiders and visitors.
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8. Besides, schools shall constitute a separate **committee for redressal** of public, staff, students, and parents grievances.
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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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