

UPDATE ON THE SAFE SCHOOLS PROGRAMME & UNIFORMED GROUPS**INTRODUCTION**

Members are being asked to note that the Ministry of Education, Youth & Information, MoE, Y& I, is reaping success with the implementation of the Safe Schools Programme and the introduction of uniformed groups in schools.

BACKGROUND

The Safe School Policy (SSP) has its genesis in the recommendations of the Revised Report of the Task Force on Educational Reform in Jamaica (2004). It is intended to curb anti-social and violent behaviours in schools, as well as improve the capacity and state of the physical plant. The concept of “school safety” was expanded beyond physical safety and security to encompass a state of well-being for those who study, work and visit our Nation’s schools.

One of the Ministry’s prime objectives is to implement the necessary measures to transform schools and their immediate surroundings into safe zones through a multi-layered, multi-sectorial approach, utilizing both public and private partnerships, supported by legislation, where necessary.

THE SCHOOL SECURITY AND SAFETY POLICY GUIDELINES

The Ministry has also developed The School Security and Safety Policy Guidelines - a collection of standards and guidelines introduced to the public school system in the 2008/2009 Academic Year, with the stated objective of developing and engendering “*a culture of security and safety in the leadership and general population of all schools*”. These standards were revised in September 2015 and the following may be found on the Ministry’s website - moey.gov.jm:

1. Safety and Security Policy Guidelines;
2. Safety and Security for Contact Sports;
3. Policy dealing with the Management of Hazardous Materials, Equipment and the Disposal of Hazardous Waste;
4. Critical Incident Management Plan;
5. Policy on Field Trip; and
6. Policy on Substance Abuse.

The SSP is consistent with the Government’s obligations and the protection afforded to fundamental rights and freedoms under international and domestic laws.

The standards are formulated to address specific facets of a school's security and safety plan and deal with:

- Creating a security and safety network;
- Controlling possession of weapons and other contraband in schools; and
- Controlling gangs, associations and anti-social cliques in schools.

In addition, the Ministry has provided new metal detectors for schools and now has in stock to facilitate easy replacement as needed. Extensive training has taken place over the last six years to ensure that key persons such as Deans of Discipline are equipped with the knowledge and skills to support schools. The JCF continues to support our schools through their School Resource Officers.

UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

For the upcoming school year the Ministry will be identifying and training security representatives for each school and will also develop a Security Liaison Corp of young people who will be trained in Security Operations while providing support to schools. The security audits and monitoring of the work of the security committees will also continue.

UNIFORMED GROUPS

The Ministry continues to promote uniformed groups as one of the means to address behavioural problems in schools. There are over 600 uniformed groups in schools, with 106 new groups established in the past two years. The presence of these groups is significant in promoting positive values and attitudes of our students.

The Ministry of Education, Youth and Information has cemented a special partnership with the Caribbean Maritime Institute (CMI) and 5 schools have already introduced a cadet programme as at September 2015. The further expansion of this programme will be introduced in 10 additional schools in September 2016.

The CMI will also set up a cadet unit in the Career Advancement Programme (CAP) in St James, Clarendon, St Catherine and Kingston.

The Safety and Security Unit has partnered with the Jamaica Constabulary Force's Community Safety and Security Branch to establish Police Youth Clubs in 50 high schools in September 2016.

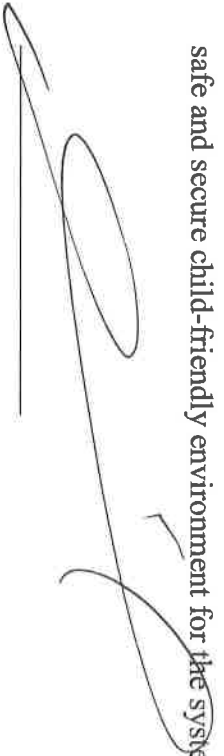
Discussions have already taken place with members of the Jamaica Combined Cadet Force for the expansion of its programme in high schools starting this September, 2016.

Other uniformed groups have also been approached in this regard based on the strategic priority of the Ministry. The Ministry has allocated ten million dollars to support these groups.

Whilst there is a thrust to expand uniformed groups in school, the Ministry has developed strict guidelines for all external groups that wish to operate schools. The operators of these groups

must meet fit and proper criteria and submit an application to the Permanent Secretary. These guidelines are included in the revised Safety and Security Policy.

The Ministry will continue to focus and provide support in this area to ensure the provision of a safe and secure child-friendly environment for the system.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'R. Reid', written over a horizontal line.

Senator the Hon. Ruel Reid, CD, JP
Minister

June 6, 2016

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