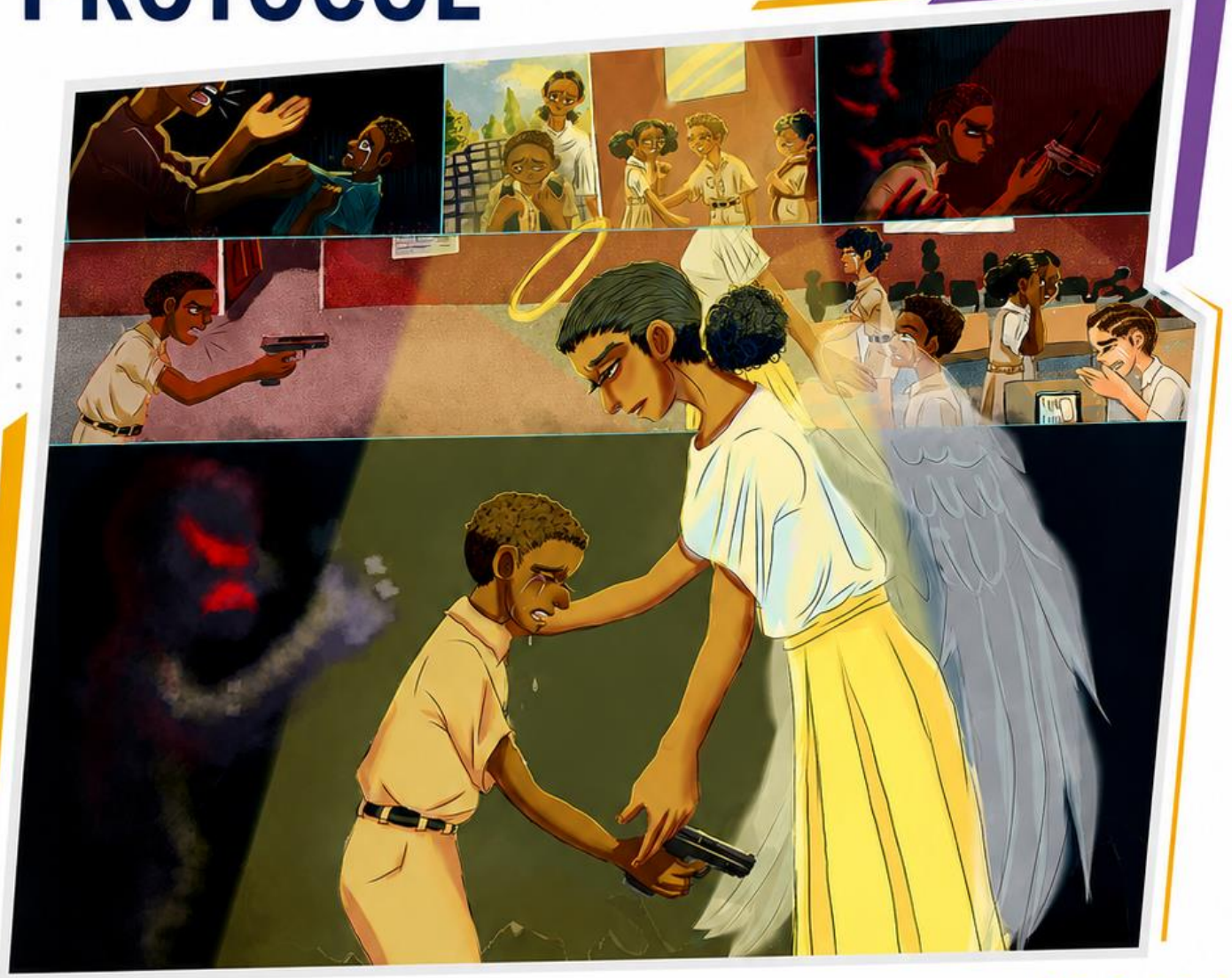
SALIENT PROJECT – PHASE 2

NATIONAL SCHOOLS FIREARMS MANAGEMENT AND RESPONSE PROTOCOL



MINISTRY OF EDUCATION,
SKILLS, YOUTH AND INFORMATION

JAMAICA, WEST INDIES

SALIENT PROJECT – PHASE 2

NATIONAL SCHOOLS FIREARMS MANAGEMENT AND RESPONSE PROTOCOL

A Comprehensive Guide to Preventing, Managing, and Responding to Firearm-Related Incidents in Schools

Ensuring Safe Learning Environments Through Proactive Firearms Management and Response

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, SKILLS, YOUTH AND INFORMATION

JAMAICA, WEST INDIES

Developed by the Schools' Safety & Security Branch

2026

NATIONAL SCHOOLS FIREARMS MANAGEMENT AND RESPONSE PROTOCOL

NATIONAL SCHOOLS FIREARMS MANAGEMENT AND RESPONSE PROTOCOL

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MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, SKILLS, YOUTH AND INFORMATION

2 National Heroes Circle

Kingston 4

Jamaica, West Indies.

Developed by the Schools' Safety & Security Branch

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TABLE OF CONTENT

	Page
MESSAGES	vi
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	xii
ACRONYMS	xiii
GLOSSARY	xv
BACKGROUND AND JUSTIFICATION	1
Project Framework: The SALIENT Initiative	2
INTRODUCTION	3
OBJECTIVES OF THE PROTOCOL	5
Establishing Clear and Effective Response Mechanisms	5
Strengthening Preventative and Risk Reduction Measures	5
Enhancing Coordination Among Key Stakeholders	5
Addressing the Psychological and Social Impact of Firearm Incidents	6
Promoting a Culture of Non-Violence and Conflict Resolution	6
ALIGNMENT WITH INTERNATIONAL INSTRUMENTS, PUBLIC POLICY, AND INTERNATIONAL BEST PRACTICES	7
International Instruments	7
National Legislation and Policies	9
SCOPE OF THE FIREARMS PROTOCOL IN SCHOOLS	17
The Firearms Management and Response Protocol	17
General	17
THEME 1: PREVENTION	19
Firearm Prevention Strategies in Schools	19

TABLE OF CONTENT

	Page
THEME 2: MANAGEMENT	**27**
Prohibition of Firearms on School Premises	**27**
Emergency Services	**30**
Emergency Codes	**32**
Role and Responsibilities of First Responders	**32**
Internal and External Communications Protocols	**39**
Performance Monitoring, Incident Reporting and Evaluation	**40**
RESPONSE: IMMEDIATE ACTIONS AND EMERGENCY PROCEDURES	**42**
Four-Tiered System	**43**
RECOVERY	**66**
Trauma Support & Counselling	**66**
Incident Debriefing & Lessons Learned	**70**
Appendix 1: School Evacuation Plan Form	**72**
Appendix 2: Emergency Contact List Template	**73**
Appendix 3: Stakeholder Consultations	**76**
Appendix 4: Technical Working Group Members	**80**
Appendix 5: Four-Tiered Firearm Threat Response Protocol – Quick Reference Guide	**82**
Appendix 6: Bibliography	**84**

MESSAGE

The safety and well-being of our children, teachers, and school communities remain among the Government's highest priorities. Incidents in which disputes have spilled over into our educational institutions are deeply concerning and completely unacceptable. Schools must be continue to be sanctuaries of learning, and not become spaces of fear.

Available data do not suggest that Jamaica has had many serious incidents of firearms being brought directly on to school campuses, yet we must be proactive to keep the risk of potential escalation of conflicts low through a multi-pronged approach. We cannot be complacent given the threats posed by the use and presence of illegal weapons in the wider society.

Information from the Jamaica Constabulary Force and the Ministry of National Security and Peace indicates that during the period 2019-2024, there was approximately 247 minors who came in conflict with the law for firearm related offences. The annual totals show fluctuations over the period of observation. After recording 46 cases in 2019, the total declined to 40 in 2020, then increased to a peak of 51 in 2021. Thereafter, the totals showed a downward trend, falling to 42 in 2022 and reaching a low of 31 in 2023. A closer review of the data revealed that at least 90% of the minors who came in conflict with the law for firearm related offences were males.

To address the challenges posed by these incidents, the Ministry of Education, Skills, Youth and Information, in collaboration with our partners across Government, has strengthened the Protocol to Prevent, Manage and Respond to Firearm Incidents in Schools. This *National Schools Firearms Management and Response Protocol* therefore serves as a comprehensive framework to guide educational institutions across Jamaica on steps to prevent, manage, and respond to firearm-related incidents in the event that they may occur. It provides clear guidelines for school leaders, teachers, and support personnel to act swiftly and decisively when threats involving real or imitation firearms arise.

We are also reinforcing our collaboration with the Ministry of National Security and Peace, the Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Affairs, and other key stakeholders to ensure a coordinated response to violent conflicts affecting our youth. These inter-ministerial efforts include:

- Enhanced school safety monitoring and rapid response mechanisms;
- Expanded psychosocial support and conflict resolution programmes for students;
- Targeted community interventions to disrupt the influence of gangs on our young people and to steer them towards meaningful; and
- Support for families and communities to promote peace and positive engagement.

Additionally, new and tougher legislation is being advanced to impose stronger penalties on those found in possession of a real or imitation firearm. The message is clear: violence and intimidation have no place in our schools or our society.

We are calling on all Jamaicans, parents, community leaders, boards, school administrators, educators, and students, to stand together in defence of our children's right to learn in safety. The Ministry is determined to create secure, nurturing environments where our young people can thrive, develop their skills, build the future Jamaica deserves and achieve their fullest potential.

Together, we can and we will reject violence, protect our schools, and build a culture of peace, discipline, and respect across our nation.

Senator, Dr. the Honourable Dana Morris Dixon

Minister of Education, Skills, Youth and Information

MESSAGE

The Ministry of Education, Skills, Youth and Information is pleased to present the National Schools Firearms Management and Response Protocol, a critical policy instrument aimed at safeguarding Jamaica's school communities and strengthening our national commitment to safe and secure learning environments.

In recent years, both regionally and locally, there has been growing concern about the presence and use of firearms in and around schools. Across Latin America and the Caribbean, media reports and research have documented incidents involving firearms on school premises, intimidation using weapons, and, in the most tragic cases, injuries and loss of life. Jamaica has not been immune to these trends.

This Protocol has been developed to provide clear, standardized, and actionable guidance to school administrators, teachers, support staff, and security personnel on how to prevent, manage, and respond to firearm-related incidents. By establishing well-defined procedures, the Protocol seeks to reduce risks, support timely decision- making, and protect the physical, psychological, and emotional well-being of students, educators, and lawful visitors.

The Protocol is the product of extensive collaboration under the SALIENT Initiative, implemented by the United Nations Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean (UNLIREC). Between 2024 and 2025, the Ministry worked closely with UNLIREC and more than one hundred national experts drawn from education, law enforcement, child protection, security, and community-based sectors. This inclusive process ensured that the Protocol is both practical and responsive to Jamaica's unique context, while remaining aligned with international best practices.

Importantly, the Protocol is grounded in Jamaica's existing legal and policy framework, including the Firearms (Prohibition, Restriction, and Regulation) Act (2022), the Child Care

and Protection Act (2004), the Child Diversion Act (2018), the National Safe Schools Policy, and the Critical Incident Management Plan. It emphasizes prevention, early intervention, coordinated emergency response, and post-incident recovery, including trauma-informed counselling and ongoing safety assessments.

The Ministry recognises that schools cannot address firearm-related risks in isolation. Effective implementation of this Protocol depends on strong partnerships among schools, parents, communities, law enforcement, and emergency services. Through shared responsibility, consistent training, and adherence to established procedures, we can foster a culture of non-violence and resilience within our education system.

The National Schools Firearms Management and Response Protocol therefore represents a significant step toward ensuring that every child in Jamaica can learn in an environment that is safe, supportive, and conducive to their full development. The Ministry remains committed to supporting schools in its implementation and to continuously strengthening our collective response to emerging safety challenges.

Dr. Kasan Troupe, Maj. JP Permanent Secretary

Ministry of Education, Skills, Youth and Information

MESSAGE

The safety and well-being of our students, educators, and school communities remain a paramount priority for the Ministry of Education, Skills, Youth and Information. It is therefore with a deep sense of responsibility and urgency that we present the National Schools Firearms Management and Response Protocol, a critical framework designed to guide our education system in preventing, managing, and responding to firearm-related incidents in schools across Jamaica.

In recent years, Jamaica, like many countries in the Latin American and Caribbean region, has experienced an increase in violence affecting young people, including incidents involving firearms in and around school environments. Reports from the Jamaica Constabulary Force and the Ministry's Safety and Security in Schools Unit confirm a troubling rise in violent confrontations, firearm possession, and gang-related activity involving students. These realities demand proactive, coordinated, and structured responses to ensure that our schools remain safe, supportive spaces for learning and development.

This protocol provides clear, standardised guidance for school leaders, teachers, security personnel, and education officers on how to act decisively and lawfully in the event of a firearm-related incident. Developed in alignment with Jamaica's legal framework, including the Firearms (prohibition, Restriction and Regulation) Act 2022, the Child Care and Protection Act, and the Child Diversion Act, as well as existing school safety policies, it strengthens our national capacity to prevent firearm threats, de-escalate crises, and respond effectively when incidents occur.

The protocol is the result of a collaborative and inclusive process undertaken between 2024 and 2025, led by the Ministry in partnership with the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean (UNLIREC). Over 100 national stakeholders contributed their expertise, ensuring that this document reflects international best practices while remaining firmly grounded in the Jamaican context. We are grateful for the

support provided through the SALIENT Initiative, with funding from the United Nations, UNDP, and Global Affairs Canada.

Beyond emergency response, this protocol emphasises prevention, reporting, trauma-informed care, and post-incident recovery. Through strengthened collaboration with law enforcement, emergency responders, parents, and communities, it reinforces our collective responsibility to protect our children and promote a culture of non-violence.

I urge all school administrators and education stakeholders to fully implement this protocol. Together, we can safeguard our schools and reaffirm education as a pathway to peace, resilience, and national development.

Ms Terry-Ann Thomas Gayle

Chief Education Officer (Acting)

Ministry of Education, Skills, Youth and Information

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Ministry of Education, Skills, Youth and Information (MOESYI) gratefully acknowledges the contributions of the Ministry of National Security and Peace, the Jamaica Constabulary Force, emergency response agencies, education stakeholders, international development partners and other public and private sector partners whose expertise, guidance and support informed the development of this Protocol.

Special appreciation is extended to the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean (UNLIREC) for the technical and financial support provided through its SALIENT Project, which facilitated the development of this important national resource. The Ministry also acknowledges Ms. Ruth Lewis, who was engaged by UNLIREC as a consultant and provided valuable technical and consultancy support throughout the development and refinement of the Protocol.

The Ministry recognizes the valuable contributions of principals, teachers, deans of discipline, guidance counsellors, school safety personnel, students and other practitioners, as well as stakeholders who participated in consultations, provided technical input and reviewed the document. Their practical knowledge and experience helped to ensure that the Protocol is responsive to the realities and needs of schools.

The leadership of the Schools' Safety and Security Branch and technical assistance from the Planning and Development Branch is acknowledged for coordinating the development of the Protocol as part of the Ministry's ongoing efforts to strengthen prevention, preparedness, management and response to safety and security threats in schools.

This Protocol reflects a shared commitment to protecting students, staff and the wider school community. Its effectiveness will depend on continued cooperation, consistent implementation and the collective responsibility of all stakeholders to promote safe, secure and enabling learning environments.

The Ministry expresses sincere appreciation to all who contributed to this important national initiative.

ACRONYMS

CBO	Community-Based Organization
CCPA	Child Care and Protection Act
CCTV	Closed Circuit Television
CDP	Child Diversion Programme
CICT	Critical Incident Management Team
CIMP	Critical Incident Management Plan
CPFSA	Child Protection and Family Services Agency
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CWD	Children with Disabilities
FBO	Faith Based Organisations
FLA	Firearms Licensing Authority
GOJ	Government of Jamaica
JCF	Jamaica Constabulary Force
JDF	Jamaica Defence Force
JFB	Jamaica Fire Brigade
JP	Justice of the Peace
MLSS	Ministry of Labour and Social Security

MNS	Ministry of National Security
MOESYI	Ministry of Education, Skills, Youth and Information
MOHW	Ministry of Health and Wellness
MOJ&CA	Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Affairs
MOU	Memoranda of Understanding
NSSP	National Safe Schools Policy
OCA	Office of the Children's Advocate
RJ	Restorative Justice
SALIENT	Saving Lives Entity
SWPBIS	School Wide Positive Behaviour Intervention Support
UNCRC	United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNLIREC	United Nations Regional Office for Peace, Disarmament, and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean

GLOSSARY

Active Shooter is an individual who is engaged in killing, or attempting to kill, people in a confined and populated area.

Ammunition means any article consisting of a complete cartridge or round, or any component of a cartridge or round, and includes any—

a. cartridge case;
b. primer;
c. propellant; or
d. bullet or projectile, that can be used in a firearm; ammunition for any firearm and includes restricted ammunition.[1]

Authorized Teacher a person registered under section 36 of the Education Act and employed as a teacher in a public educational institution.[2]

Automatic Firearm means any firearm designed or adapted so that if pressure is applied to the trigger, projectiles continue to be discharged until pressure is removed from the trigger or the magazine containing the projectiles is empty.[3]

A child is a person under the age of eighteen years.

Firearm means any i) barrelled weapon which discharges or is designed to discharge any shot, bullet or other projectile; or; ii) prohibited weapon, unless the context otherwise requires, and includes any such weapons created as 3D printed weapons or otherwise created through the use of electronic software; (b) includes any parts and components of any weapon referred to in paragraph (a); and (c) does

[1] The Firearms (Prohibitions, Restrictions, and Regulation) Act, 2022.
[2] The Education Act.
[3] The Firearms (Prohibitions, Restrictions, and Regulation) Act, 2022.

not include an air rifle, air gun, or air pistol, of a type or calibre prescribed by the Minister.[4]

Firearm User's Licence means a licence authorizing the holder thereof, subject to Section 22 of the Firearms Act and to the terms and conditions specified in the licence, to be in possession of the firearm or ammunition so specified.

Prohibited Firearm refers to any artillery; any automatic firearm; any rifle of a prescribed calibre; any light machine gun or heavy machine gun; any sub-machine gun; any firearm in respect of which no firearm authorisation is granted under Part V; any other type of firearm prescribed by the Minister; or any parts and components of any item referred to in any of paragraphs (a) to (g).[5]

Prohibited Weapon means a) any prohibited firearm; b) any grenade, bomb or other like missile; c) any missile or missile launcher; d) any projectile or rocket manufactured to be discharged from any item referred to in any of paragraphs (b) to (c); e) any imitation of any weapon or device referred to in any of paragraphs (a) to (d); (f) any ammunition stockpiled in the quantity referred to in section 6(2)(b) or in a person's possession in the quantity referred to in section 10(2)(b)(ii); (g) such other weapons or devices as may be prescribed by the Minister; or (h) any parts and components of an item referred to in any of paragraphs (b) to (g), "and for the purposes of this

[4] Ibid
[5] Ibid

	definition "missile" means a weapon capable of self-propelled flight, that is designed to deliver an explosive payload;".[6]
Protocol	could be understood as a set of steps, procedures or guidelines applicable to any situation, or as a response to a given event.[7]
Restricted weapon	refers to any weapon of whatever description or design which is adapted for the discharge of any noxious liquid, gas or other thing.[8]
High School	means any secondary school classified by the Minister of Education as a high school
Imitation Firearm	means anything which has the appearance of being a firearm within the meaning of this section whether it is capable of discharging any shot, bullet or missile or not.[9]

[6] The Firearms (Prohibitions, Restrictions, and Regulation) Act, 2022.

[7] Guidelines For the Development of Protocols to Tackle The Presence And Use Of Firearms In Schools, United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean (UNLIREC), SALIENT 2023.

[8] Ibid

[9] Firearms Licensing Authority s 25.

BACKGROUND AND JUSTIFICATION

In recent years, the presence and use of firearms in school environments have become an increasingly pressing concern in Latin America and the Caribbean. [10] Media reports have documented a range of alarming incidents, including firearms being discovered on school premises, students carrying weapons among their belongings, and armed students using firearms to intimidate classmates and teachers. In the most severe cases, both accidental and intentional shootings have resulted in injuries and fatalities.

According to the Jamaica Constabulary Force (JCF), since the resumption of in-person schooling following the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been a noticeable increase in violent incidents among students, including gang-related conflicts occurring within school compounds [11]. These trends underscore the urgent need for comprehensive measures to prevent firearms from entering school spaces and to protect students, teachers, staff and lawful visitors from the risks associated with gun-related violence. Addressing this issue through proactive policy interventions and structured response mechanisms is essential to maintaining a safe and conducive learning environment.

Several countries across Latin America have developed protocols and guidelines to respond to the presence and use of firearms in schools. The Caribbean has not commenced the drafting of such guidelines or protocols, however there is a recognition that the potential prevalence while rare at this time is likely to increase as crime surges in some Caribbean countries.

The primary objective of this protocol is to provide school communities with clear, standardized guidance on how to act and respond in the event of a firearm-related incident. Implementing similar measures in Jamaica is critical to ensuring a structured, effective, and legally sound response framework for school authorities.

[10] UNLIREC, 2019, Firearms in Latin American and Caribbean Schools: Approaches, Challenges, and Responses, p. 33

[11] The Jamaica Constabulary Force, 2022, The Commissioner´s Report. January 2021-April 2022, p. 16.

1.1 Project Framework: The SALIENT Initiative

This protocol was developed as part of a project implemented by the United Nations Centre for Peace, Disarmament, and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean (UNLIREC) aimed at supporting the Government of Jamaica in creating safer learning environments by preventing and reducing the presence of firearms in schools.

Between 2024 and 2025, UNLIREC and Jamaica's Ministry of Education, Skills, Youth and Information (MOESYI) worked closely together to engage over one hundred national experts from a broad range of stakeholders in the development of this protocol. The result is a practical tool that provides school authorities with clear guidance on how to effectively respond to firearm-related incidents within educational institutions. Its primary objective is to establish clear and actionable procedures to safeguard students, educators, and school staff from firearm-related threats.

This initiative was carried out in Jamaica with funding from the *Saving Lives Entity (SALIENT) fund,* a joint initiative of the Office for Disarmament Affairs and UNDP. The SALIENT Jamaica initiative supported the Government of Jamaica in tackling illicit firearms trafficking through legal, policy, and technical assistance, as well as capacity building efforts. The final round of consultations and drafting was funded by Global Affairs Canada. This project aims to promote a more inclusive and results-oriented implementation of disarmament and arms control commitments in Latin America and the Caribbean.

INTRODUCTION

The National Schools Firearms Management and Response Protocol serves as a comprehensive framework for preventing, managing, and responding to firearm-related incidents within educational institutions across Jamaica. Developed in alignment with international best practices, national legislation, and established school safety policies, this protocol provides clear, standardized procedures to ensure the safety and security of students, staff, and school communities. Given the rising prevalence of firearm-related incidents in Jamaica and the broader Caribbean region, this protocol aims to equip school administrators, teachers, and security personnel with structured intervention strategies to prevent firearm threats, de-escalate crises, and support post-incident recovery efforts.

Firearm-related incidents in schools pose significant risks to the physical, psychological, and emotional well-being of students and staff. Recent critical incident reports submitted to the Safety and Security in Schools Unit underscore the urgency of this issue. Between September 2022 and June 2023, a total of 68 critical incident reports were recorded, including physical altercations, fatal stabbings, firearm possession, and violent off-campus confrontations, with two students sustaining injuries by a firearm, both on and off campus. More recently, September to November 2024 saw an increase in firearm-related incidents, including one confirmed case of firearm possession on a school compound, and fatal shootings near school premises. These reports highlight a troubling pattern of violence affecting school environments and emphasize the need for proactive firearm prevention, intervention, and reporting mechanisms.

This protocol is designed to strengthen school safety measures through enhanced collaboration between the Ministry of Education, law enforcement agencies, emergency responders, and community stakeholders. It incorporates best practices from the Critical Incident Management Plan (CIMP), the National Safe Schools Policy (NSSP), and Jamaica's legal framework, including the Firearms (Prohibition, Restriction, and Regulation) Act (2022), the Child Care and Protection Act (2004) and the Child Diversion Act (2018).

Schools are required to adhere to standardized emergency response procedures, conduct regular safety drills, and maintain strict firearm prevention strategies to mitigate risks and promote a culture of non-violence.

This protocol serves not only as a preventative and emergency response tool but also as a guide for post-incident recovery.

Schools must prioritize trauma-informed debriefing, student counselling, and ongoing security assessments and audits to ensure that firearm incidents do not create lasting disruptions to the learning environment.

Through multi-agency coordination, strategic prevention, and rapid response, the National Schools Firearms Management and Response Protocol is a critical step toward fostering safer educational spaces across Jamaica.

OBJECTIVES OF THE PROTOCOL

3.1 Establishing Clear and Effective Response Mechanisms

The Protocol aims to provide structured, standardized procedures to manage firearm-related incidents in schools effectively. Given the varying nature of these incidents, including the discovery of firearms, student possession, threats involving weapons, and active shooter situations, it is essential that schools have well-defined prevention, intervention, and post-incident management strategies. This protocol outlines step-by-step response measures and ensures that school administrators, teachers, and security personnel can decisively minimize risks while protecting students and staff.[12]

3.2 Strengthening Preventative and Risk Reduction Measures

This protocol's key objective is to prevent the presence and misuse of firearms in schools through early detection mechanisms and enhanced security protocols. Many firearm-related incidents stem from external threats, gang-related conflicts, personal disputes, or students carrying weapons for self-defence.[13] To address these risks, this protocol integrates preventative strategies such as routine security screenings, school-based firearm awareness programs, and behavioural monitoring systems. These measures help identify warning signs early and implement proactive interventions, reducing the likelihood of violent encounters.

3.3 Enhancing Coordination Among Key Stakeholders

Ensuring a coordinated, multi-agency response is essential for effectively addressing school firearm-related incidents. This protocol establishes clear roles and communication protocols between schools, law enforcement agencies, child protection services, and medical and mental health professionals.[14] The protocol enhances incident management efficiency and effectiveness by implementing structured reporting mechanisms, crisis communication strategies, and collaborative partnerships. Regular joint training exercises between school officials and

[12]Guidelines for the Development of Firearms Protocols in Schools, UNLIREC
[13] Firearms in Latin American and Caribbean Schools: Approaches, Challenges, and Responses, UNLIREC.
[14]Guidelines for the Development of Firearms Protocols in Schools, UNLIREC.

emergency responders will strengthen preparedness and response capabilities in handling firearm-related threats.

3.4 Addressing the Psychological and Social Impact of Firearm Incidents

Beyond the immediate risks of physical harm, firearm-related incidents can have long-lasting psychological and emotional consequences for students, teachers, and parents.[15] Exposure to gun violence—whether through direct threats, armed confrontations, or witnessing firearm-related altercations—can lead to fear, trauma, absenteeism, and reduced academic performance. This protocol prioritises post-incident recovery strategies, including access to counselling, trauma-informed care training for teachers, peer support initiatives, and reintegration programmes for affected students. Addressing these psychosocial effects are critical to restoring a sense of safety and normalcy within schools.

3.5 Promoting a Culture of Non-Violence and Conflict Resolution

Beyond immediate response and prevention, this protocol seeks to foster a culture of peace, non-violence, and responsible conflict resolution within school communities. Schools play a crucial role in shaping students' attitudes toward violence and firearms, making it essential to incorporate conflict resolution training, peer mediation programmes, and mentorship initiatives into their safety frameworks.[16] Encouraging open communication, building trust between students and school authorities, and promoting positive behavioural interventions will reduce the normalisation of violence and improve overall school safety.

[15] Firearms in Latin American and Caribbean Schools: Approaches, Challenges, and Responses, UNLIREC.
[16] Guidelines for the Development of Firearms Protocols in Schools, UNLIREC

ALIGNMENT WITH INTERNATIONAL INSTRUMENTS, PUBLIC POLICY, AND INTERNATIONAL BEST PRACTICES

4.1 International Instruments

4.1.1 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

The International Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 20 November 1989 and ratified by Jamaica on 14 May 1991. It provides a framework of principles that recognises the child's status as a human being with rights, and calls upon every State that ratifies the Convention to respect and ensure the rights outlined in the Convention to each child within its jurisdiction "without discrimination of any kind irrespective of status, activities, expressed opinions, or beliefs of the child's parents, legal guardians or family members."[17] The Convention outlines how these rights should be secured (Article 4). It details the rights in defined categories: Family Environment and Alternative Care, Basic Health and Welfare, Education, Leisure and Cultural Activities, and Special Protection Measures. It also identifies groups of children who may need special protection (Articles 37, 39, and 40).

The Convention provides a legal framework for ensuring that children are safeguarded from violence, exploitation, and harm while also guaranteeing their right to education, security, and active participation in society. It recognises children as independent rights holders and outlines the responsibilities of governments to implement policies and institutional measures that uphold these rights.

Among the core principles of the UNCRC is the obligation to ensure that the best interests of the child are a primary consideration in all policies and actions affecting them. This principle is particularly relevant in the context of school safety and firearms management, where the presence of weapons poses a direct threat to children's security, mental well-being, and right to education. The UNCRC also upholds the right of every child to learn in a safe and protective environment, free from fear, intimidation, and physical harm. This includes ensuring that schools implement

[17] Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 2

preventative measures, security policies, and structured intervention strategies to prevent firearms from entering educational spaces and to respond effectively when incidents occur. Additionally, the UNCRC emphasises the right of children to protection from all forms of violence, including exposure to firearms. Firearm-related incidents in schools not only threaten children's immediate safety but also have long-term psychological effects, potentially leading to trauma, decreased academic performance, and increased absenteeism.

Another key principle of the UNCRC is children's right to express their views and be heard in matters affecting their lives. The active participation of students in school safety initiatives, awareness programmes, and peer-led mediation efforts is critical in fostering a culture of non-violence and community responsibility. Creating confidential reporting mechanisms and encouraging student involvement in firearm prevention strategies ensures that young people are protected and empowered to contribute to their safety. These principles form the foundation for the National Schools Firearms Management and Response Protocol. The protocol aligns with the UNCRC's legal and ethical obligations by ensuring that firearm-related incidents are managed to prioritise child protection, preserve students' right to education, and integrate structured recovery mechanisms for affected individuals. By embedding the UNCRC's standards into Jamaica's national school safety framework, the protocol upholds the country's commitment to creating and maintaining a secure, supportive, and rights-based learning environment for all students.

4.1.2 The Beijing Rules

The United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Administration of Juvenile Justice (the Beijing Rules) were adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on the 29th of November 1985. The two working documents, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Beijing Rules, reflect the same thinking. Where the Convention outlines principles and concepts, the Beijing Rules speak to the implementation of those principles: they provide guidance for the fair and humane treatment of children; the use of relevant community-based diversion mechanisms; institutionalisation as a last recourse and, when necessary, using rights-based standards; and the role of research, planning, and evaluations. The Rules give details of the procedures used during every stage of a child's contact with the legal system: Investigation and Prosecution, Adjudication and Disposal, and Institutional and Non-Institutional Treatment.

Additionally, the Beijing Rules underscore the importance of proper coordination between education systems and law enforcement in establishing clear roles and responsibilities in handling cases involving children. The protocol ensures that school authorities, law enforcement officers, and relevant agencies collaborate to provide a consistent and structured approach to managing firearm-related incidents. This approach reinforces the Ministry of Education's role in establishing school safety measures while ensuring that legal responses remain measured and in line with international best practices.

By integrating the principles of the Beijing Rules into the National Schools Firearms Management and Response Protocol, the framework ensures that students involved in firearm-related incidents are treated in accordance with international legal standards. It focuses on clear procedures, structured decision-making, and proportional interventions. This approach reinforces Jamaica's commitment to international justice standards, ensuring that schools and law enforcement operate within a well- defined legal and policy framework to manage firearm-related threats effectively.

4.2 National Legislation and Policies

4.2.1 Education Act 1980

The Education Act of Jamaica, enacted in 1965 and revised in 1980, establishes the legal framework governing the nation's education system. Its primary objective is to provide a coordinated structure for public education, encompassing the registration and inspection of independent schools and the certification and regulation of teachers. The Act delineates the roles and responsibilities of educational authorities, institutions, and stakeholders to ensure the delivery of quality education across Jamaica. One of the Act's objectives is to maintain the integrity of the education system by outlining the legal responsibilities of educational institutions, school authorities, and parents in providing a safe and conducive learning environment for students. The Act grants the Minister of Education broad authority to establish policies promoting school safety, discipline, and student welfare. It further defines the structure of the education sector, including establishing government-funded and independent schools, compulsory education requirements, school governance procedures, and disciplinary frameworks.

A key provision of the Act is Section 3, which gives the Minister of Education the power to oversee school safety measures. This provision is particularly relevant to the National Schools Firearms

Management and Response Protocol, as it provides the legal authority for the MOEYSI to establish firearm-related prevention and response procedures in schools. Additionally, Section 20, which mandates compulsory education, underscores the need to ensure that school environments remain safe for students to attend without fear of gun-related violence.

The Act also contains provisions that address student discipline and behavioural expectations. Section 29 grants schools the authority to enforce rules regarding student conduct, including prohibiting firearms on school premises and taking appropriate action against students found possessing weapons. The firearms protocol aligns with this by providing clear, standardised procedures for how schools should respond to firearm-related incidents, ensuring that disciplinary actions are handled consistently and in accordance with national policies. Similarly, Section 31, which allows for the inspection of educational institutions, supports the inclusion of firearm prevention measures in school safety assessments, ensuring that schools comply with security policies designed to prevent firearm-related incidents.

In addition to the Education Act, the Education Regulations of 1980 provide further legal support for firearm prevention and response measures in schools. Regulation 13 requires that school boards implement safety precautions to protect students and staff, reinforcing the need for established firearm prevention strategies and emergency response mechanisms. Additionally, Regulation 17, which mandates the documentation of student behaviour and disciplinary actions, aligns with the firearms protocol's focus on tracking firearm-related incidents and ensuring accountability in incident management.

Integrating these provisions of the Education Act and Education Regulations 1980, the Protocol ensures that schools have a legally grounded approach to preventing and responding to firearm-related incidents.

4.2.2 Child Care and Protection Act (CCPA) 2004

The CCPA came into force on March 25, 2004. It enshrined the cardinal principle that **the best interests of a child are of paramount consideration in administering the laws relating to children.** The objects of the Act are:

a. to promote the best interests, safety and well-being of children;
b. to recognise that –
    i. While parents often need help in caring for children, help should give support to the autonomy and integrity of the family unit and, wherever possible, be provided on the basis of mutual consent;
    ii. the least restrictive or disruptive course of action that is available and appropriate in a particular case to help a child should be followed;
c. to recognise that child services should be provided in a manner that –
    i. respects the child's need for continuity of care and stable family relationship; and
d. takes into account physical and mental differences among children in their development; to recognise the unique needs of children in conflict with the law. Insofar as the treatment of children who find themselves in conflict with the law is concerned, the following principles are to guide functionaries in the justice system.

a. The Child Justice System is intended to:
    i. Prevent crime by focusing on and dealing with the circumstances surrounding a child's misconduct.
    ii. Rehabilitate children who commit offences and have been subject to punitive/correctional orders and reintegrate them into society.
    iii. Provide timely intervention that reinforces the link between offending behaviour and its consequences.
    iv. Promote long-term protection and public safety.

The CCPA is highly relevant, as it provides the legal framework for handling children who come into contact with firearms in school settings, whether as victims, witnesses, or offenders. The Act mandates that anyone aware of a child in danger has a duty to report it to the relevant authorities, reinforcing the importance of confidential reporting mechanisms and early intervention strategies.

By aligning with the CCPA, the Firearms Protocol ensures that school responses to firearm-related incidents are child-sensitive, legally compliant, and upholds the fundamental rights of students while maintaining school safety and security.

4.2.3 The Offences Against the Persons Act (OAPA) 1864

The OAPA of Jamaica establishes criminal liabilities and penalties for acts of violence, including those involving firearms. This legislation is essential to maintaining law and order and ensuring that individuals who engage in violent offences, including firearm possession and use, face appropriate legal consequences. The Act imposes severe penalties for individuals found with firearms unlawfully, ensuring that students, staff, or external threats bringing firearms onto school grounds face legal repercussions. The law stipulates that anyone found illegally possessing a firearm or using a firearm to commit an offence may face life imprisonment, fines, or other legal sanctions as determined by the courts.[18] Additionally, the Act criminalises the use of firearms to inflict bodily harm, reinforcing the necessity of swift and coordinated responses by school authorities and law enforcement when such threats arise. This ensures that schools take immediate action in collaboration with law enforcement agencies to handle firearm-related incidents appropriately.

4.2.4 The Firearms (Prohibition, Restriction, and Regulation) Act 2022

The Firearms (Prohibition, Restriction and Regulation) Act 2022 serves as Jamaica's primary legislation for controlling, regulating, and restricting firearms and ammunition. The Act aims to eliminate the illegal possession, trafficking, and use of prohibited weapons while simultaneously establishing a regulatory framework for the lawful acquisition and use of firearms. Section 20 established Jamaica's Firearm Licensing Authority (FLA). The Authority streamlines and standardises the granting, renewal, and revocation of firearm licences and all the attendant processes. The legislation aligns with international best practices and seeks to strengthen Jamaica's national security and public safety by deterring gun-related crimes through stringent penalties. It

[18] The Offences Against the Person, Section 14,16, 20,21,29.

also empowers law enforcement agencies with the tools to combat firearm offences and imposes strict regulations on firearm ownership, licensing, and use.

The Act has severe penalties for illegal firearm possession. Section 5(2) states that a person found possessing a prohibited weapon commits a felony and, upon conviction in a Circuit Court, faces a minimum sentence of 15 years and a maximum of 25 years in prison.

Additionally, Section 6 addresses stockpiling of firearms, where individuals found in possession of three or more prohibited weapons or fifty rounds of ammunition are subject to life imprisonment, with a minimum of 20 years before parole eligibility. The Act also criminalises the trafficking and manufacturing of illegal firearms, with life imprisonment penalties, ensuring that individuals attempting to distribute or create illegal firearms face severe legal consequences.

For licensed firearm holders, the Act outlines strict conditions for the use and possession of firearms. Section 74 imposes a duty on firearm holders to store their firearms and ammunition safely, and failure to comply can result in the revocation of licenses and legal penalties. Additionally, Section 78 makes it a criminal offence for firearm holders to contravene the conditions of their license.

More significantly, licensed firearm holders who improperly discharge or misuse their firearm in public spaces can be charged under Section 51, which prohibits the unauthorised discharge of firearms and imposes significant legal repercussions. **The Act provides the legal basis for responding to firearm possession within schools, including the immediate involvement of law enforcement and the appropriate legal actions against offenders.** Additionally, provisions related to unauthorised possession and use of imitation firearms under Section 14 are critical to ensuring consistent responses to threats in school settings.

4.2.5 Child Diversion Act 2018

The drafting of a Child Diversion Policy in 2014 resulted in the development of legislation which treats with children in conflict with the law. Consequently, by way of Decision No. 2/18 dated January 12, 2018, the Cabinet approved the tabling of a Bill for Child Diversion in Parliament, which was enacted as the Child Diversion Act, 2018. The Appointed Date Notice of December 31,

2019, was published in the Jamaica Gazette, bringing the Child Diversion (CD) Act into effect and enforceable as of that date. Child Diversion is the process of implementing measures for dealing with children who are alleged, or recognised as having infringed the penal law, without resorting to formal judicial proceedings.[19] It is considered in the interest of individuals and to further the public interest to use alternative measures to deal with these categories of offenders. In most cases, diversion of children provides greater benefits to the offender, victim and society than the formal criminal justice process would. The approaches to be utilised in Child Diversion will build on mediation and restorative justice practices, which extend beyond the retributive justice approach to crime as currently applied under the justice system. This Act seeks to formalise and expand diversion in Jamaica to halt the criminal path of child offenders while safeguarding society. The CD Act focuses on four tiers:

i. Pre-Charge - Diversion by the Police (Informal and Formal Warning and release and Police Cautioning and referral to a Child Diversion Parish Committee).
ii. Post-Charge/Pre-trial - Diversion by the Courts (Clerk of Court, Resident Magistrate/Judge)
iii. Post-conviction/Pre-sentencing - Diversion by the Courts (Resident Magistrate/Judge)
iv. Post-Adjudication – issuing a Child Diversion Order and referral to Child Diversion Parish Committee.

Child Diversion is designed to reduce the number of cases involving children that are processed through the formal Criminal Justice System.[20] Law Enforcement and the MOESYI must collaborate to divert students who have or may enter the justice system where possible.

4.2.6 The National Safe School Policy (NSSP) 2024

The National Safe Schools Policy (NSSP), developed by the MOESYI, provides a comprehensive framework for ensuring safe and secure learning environments across Jamaican schools. The policy is guided by international, regional, and national frameworks, aligning with Jamaica's Vision 2030 National Development Plan, the Education Act, and the Disaster Risk Management

[19] The Convention on the Rights of the Child, United Nations-Article 40
[20] National Child Diversion Report, Ruth Carey, April 2020.

Act. It seeks to address the growing threats of crime, violence, bullying, disasters, and mental health challenges affecting school communities. The NSSP is built on a multi-dimensional approach to school safety, incorporating physical security, mental well-being, disaster resilience, and institutional coordination to create a safer learning environment. The policy acknowledges emerging threats, including climate change and cybersecurity risks in virtual learning spaces. One of the core focus areas of the policy is physical safety, recognising the increasing prevalence of crime and violence in schools. The policy calls for enhanced security infrastructure, including installing CCTV cameras, access control systems, perimeter fencing, and structured emergency response mechanisms. The MOESYI's Security and Safety Policy Guidelines (2015) further complement the NSSP by outlining procedures for maintaining a safe school environment. Additionally, the policy promotes restorative justice practices and conflict resolution strategies to manage student disputes and reduce violent confrontations.

The Safe Schools Programme also integrates community engagement and partnerships to enhance student protection beyond school premises, addressing security concerns during school commutes and within school zones.

The NSSP emphasises institutional arrangements and collaboration between schools, law enforcement, and other key stakeholders. It mandates the establishment of school safety committees at national, regional, and institutional levels, ensuring that safety and security policies are effectively implemented and monitored. This framework facilitates regular school safety audits, data collection, and policy reviews to ensure continuous improvement in school security.

Jamaica is a signatory to the Caribbean Safe Schools Initiative (CSSI), further strengthening these efforts by aligning the NSSP with regional best practices in disaster preparedness, risk reduction, and emergency response management.

Concerning firearm safety, the policy acknowledges the increasing number of weapons being found in schools, including illegal firearms, and imitation weapons. **The NSSP reinforces strict prohibitions against firearm possession on school grounds and mandates that all schools report firearm-related incidents to law enforcement immediately. The policy aligns with Jamaica's Firearms (Prohibition, Restriction and Regulation) Act, 2022.**

4.2.7 Critical Incident Management Plan (CIMP) 2015

The Guidelines for Developing a Critical Incident Management Plan (CIMP) for a Safe School Environment (2015), developed by the Ministry of Education, Skills, Youth and Information, serve as a structured framework for preventing, responding to, and recovering from crises within schools. The document outlines key strategies for handling incidents that disrupt school operations, with a focus on student safety, school security, and institutional preparedness. The plan emphasises a multi- phased approach, ensuring that schools can respond promptly and effectively to emergencies while minimising disruptions to the learning environment.

A significant component of the CIMP is its structured response framework, which categorises incidents based on pre-planned actions, immediate response, and follow-up measures. The plan highlights establishing a Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT) in every school, comprising school leadership, guidance counsellors, security personnel, and other key stakeholders. This team would coordinate responses to emergencies, including firearm-related incidents, ensuring schools can swiftly mitigate threats and protect students and staff.

The National Schools Firearms Management and Response Protocol aligns closely with the CIMP, particularly in its approach to responding to incidents involving gun violence, threats, and unauthorized intrusions on school premises. It should be noted that the plan also mandates emergency drills to prepare students and staff for such scenarios, ensuring that response mechanisms are well- rehearsed and effective.

The CIMP serves as a comprehensive framework for emergency preparedness, response, and recovery in schools, detailing the roles and responsibilities of key stakeholders in handling critical incidents. To ensure consistency and alignment with existing policies, the Firearms Management and Response Protocol incorporates sections of the guidelines outlined in the Ministry of Education's Critical Incident Management Plan.

It is important to note that the priorities of an operational CIMP are to:

1. Protect human life/minimise personal injury.
2. Prevent/minimise physical damage.
3. Restore normality.

SCOPE OF THE FIREARMS PROTOCOL IN SCHOOLS

5.1 The Firearms Management and Response Protocol

The Firearms Management and Response Protocol is designed to establish a comprehensive framework for preventing and addressing firearm-related incidents within educational institutions. This protocol is based on the Firearm Prohibition, Restriction, and Regulation Act 2022 and effective practices from various jurisdictions to ensure a safe and secure environment for students, staff, and visitors.

FIREARMS RESTRICTED ON SCHOOL GROUNDS

> **FOR THE SAFETY OF STUDENTS, STAFF, AND VISITORS, THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, SKILLS, YOUTH AND INFORMATION (MOESYI) DECLARES THAT POSSESSING AND DISPLAYING FIREARMS AND AMMUNITION IS STRICTLY PROHIBITED IN SCHOOLS AND SUBJECT TO SCHOOL POLICY RESTRICTIONS.**

As a general principle, the legal frameworks governing broader society equally apply within the school community.

This Protocol will apply to all educational institutions, including public and private schools.

As a nationally mandated framework, it will extend to privately operated independent schools, which are regulated by the Independent Schools Unit of the Ministry of Education, Skills, Youth, and Information (MOESYI), as well as publicly operated schools, ensuring a consistent approach to firearm prevention and response across the education sector.

5.2 General

Under Section 63 of the Child Care and Protection Act (CCPA), children under 12 cannot be held criminally responsible for illegal activities. However, these children may still be subject to intervention or protective orders under the Act. Therefore, the child's age does not preclude

reporting incidents of concern to the police at 119 or the Child Protection and Family Services Agency (CPFSA) via the Children's Registry at 311.

THEME 1: PREVENTION

Goal: Prevent the presence and misuse of firearms in schools through early detection, awareness, and risk reduction strategies.

Preventative Objectives: Strengthening early detection mechanisms, behavioural monitoring, and proactive security.

6.1 Firearm Prevention Strategies in Schools

Ensuring school safety and security requires a comprehensive approach that prevents firearms from entering the school environment while fostering a culture of awareness, reporting, and rapid response. Firearm-related incidents pose a significant threat to the learning environment, endanger lives, and compromise school operations. This section outlines proactive strategies integrating physical security, reporting mechanisms, legal frameworks, behavioural interventions, and community engagement to minimise school firearm threats.

These strategies are aligned with established safety frameworks, including the Critical Incident Management Plan (CIMP), National Safe Schools Policy (NSSP), National School Safety Assessments, and international best practices. While no school security program is infallible, and certain factors within the broader community remain beyond school's control, the following practices are designed to significantly reduce the likelihood of a foreseeable tragedy on campus, including incidents such as school shootings.[21]

The recommendations are:

1. **Safety and security audits** should be conducted at all school levels to determine the need for ensuring that the protocol can be appropriately implemented.
2. **Conduct an access audit** of the building infrastructure to ensure accessibility for students and staff with disabilities.

[21] Website: School Shootings: Prevention, Response, Mitigation, and Recovery Resources - Campus Safety Magazine.

3. **Security Personnel**
    - **Increase in the deployment of security personnel, especially in** schools in highly volatile communities.
    - **Increase the deployment of School Resource Officers (SROs)** assigned to schools.
    - **Increase the number of Deans of Discipline engaged at secondary schools that operate on a shift system** or have more than one campus.
    - If additional SROs cannot be assigned to high- to medium-risk schools, consideration should be given to assigning select Deans of Discipline as District Constables. The Jamaica Constabulary Force (JCF) would be responsible for screening and providing thorough training to all individuals selected for these roles.
4. **School Security & Access Control** - Prevent unauthorised firearm access by reinforcing physical security infrastructure.
    - **Controlled Entry Points:**
        - Implement single designated entry and exit points for all visitors, monitored by trained security personnel.
        - Install secure vestibules to screen visitors before granting full access to the campus.
        - Introduce the logging and verification of all guests.
    - **Weapons Detection & Screening:**
        - Routine metal detector screenings for students and visitors at schools in compliance with legal guidelines and student rights policies.
        - Schedule for the servicing and maintenance of Metal Detectors and CCTV Equipment.
        - Bag checks and locker inspections, in compliance with legal guidelines and student rights policies.
        - Deploy metal detectors at sporting events, concerts, and other similar venues where a large school population is expected to be in attendance.
        - Consider implementing periodic, randomized screening, using weapons detection technology on all secondary school campuses during school hours.

- Ensure JCF attends all sporting or large gatherings on school compounds to provide security and screenings of visitors and attendees.
- Consider installing security cameras with real-time monitoring capabilities, linked directly to law enforcement agencies.[22]

INCLUSION OF A STAFF PROTECTION AND EMERGENCY TRANSFER POLICY

The MOESYI must draft a policy to ensure the safety and well-being of school staff who report, secure, or hand over firearms to the police in the course of their duties. Given the real risk of reprisals, this policy will provide a structured emergency transfer mechanism that allows affected staff members to be relocated as soon as possible while maintaining their professional standing and security.

- **Classroom & Facility Security Enhancements:**
  - Locks on classroom doors that can be secured from inside to prevent unauthorised entry.
  - Emergency panic alarms and communication systems in all classrooms and high-traffic areas.
  - Audits to be conducted of all communication systems operating in the classroom.
  - Introduce a door jammer or door bar for classrooms and assembly halls making it more difficult to open the door.
  - Implement a prohibition on the use of face coverings by visitors. such as full-face masks, balaclavas, ski masks, or any item that conceals facial identity, while on premises.

[22] National Assessment of Perceptions of School Safety and Security Report.

- **Emergency Exit and Gate Access Management**

All emergency exits must remain unobstructed, clearly marked, and fully accessible at all times to facilitate swift evacuation during critical incidents. Keys for all school gates and emergency exits must be centrally stored in an identified, secure but rapidly accessible location known to the Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT) and designated staff. A gate and exit access plan must be maintained, regularly updated, and tested during drills to ensure that no delays occur in opening perimeter access points for evacuation or law enforcement entry. Schools must conduct periodic checks to verify that all locks, gates, and emergency exit mechanisms are functioning properly, and contingency measures must be in place in case a key is lost or its retrieval delayed.

- **Emergency Preparedness Infrastructure:**
  - Install CCTV surveillance systems accessible to law enforcement during emergencies.
  - Implement and regularly service PA systems and emergency communication platforms for rapid incident response

5. **Safe and Anonymous Firearm Threat Reporting** - Encourage students, staff, and community members to report firearm-related concerns without fear of retaliation.
   a. **Formalise or establish Confidential Reporting Channels** with FLA, CPFSA (211), and MOCA (311) regarding anonymous reports of firearms in schools.
   b. **Install confidential physical reporting drop boxes** in key school locations for students to report concerns related to firearms.
   c. **No Retaliation Policy** - Implement strict policies to protect students from retaliation after reporting firearm threats.
   d. Educate students, parents, and staff on whistle blower protections.[23]
   e. Establish a Policy for the speedy transfer of staff who, in the course of their duties, report, secure, or hand over firearms to the police and have a real fear of retaliation.

[23] National Assessment of Perceptions of School Safety and Security Report.

6. **Peer Support & Student Liaisons:**
    - Train student leaders to serve as peer mediators and liaisons for reporting firearm threats.
    - Establish mentorship programs to encourage students to confide in trusted faculty members.
7. **Orientation and Awareness-Raising**
    - **Mandatory Safety Orientation for Students and Parents**

      At the start of each academic year or upon enrolment, all students and their parents or guardians must participate in a mandatory orientation session outlining the school's firearm response protocols, safety procedures, and emergency roles.
    - **Education Sessions with the Firearm Licensing Authority (FLA)**

      Schools must collaborate with the FLA to deliver annual firearm awareness sessions during orientation. These sessions should cover legal responsibilities, secure firearm storage at home, and the implications of the Firearms (Prohibition, Restriction and Regulation) Act.
    - **Parenting Support Commission (PSC) Involvement**

      Schools must establish a structured partnership with the National Parenting Support Commission (NPSC) and the Firearm Licensing Authority (FLA) to deliver joint education and information sessions for parents and guardians. These sessions should be held during orientation and at key intervals throughout the school year, focusing on responsible firearm practices, early detection of at-risk behaviour, parenting strategies for violence prevention, and strengthening the home-school safety alliance. This collaborative approach ensures that families are equipped with practical tools, legal awareness, and behavioural insights necessary to support a safe school environment.
8. **Law Enforcement (JCF, JDF, FLA) Collaboration:**
    - Establish Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) with local police to facilitate rapid response.

- Conduct annual firearm safety and awareness workshops in collaboration with law enforcement.
- Establish Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) with FLA to**:**
    - develop protocols to guide licensed firearm holders in schools
    - conduct audit checks of authorised firearms holders in schools.
    - offer sensitization sessions to parents and staff on Safe Use and Handling of Firearms
    - implement awareness initiatives and training programs for parents, staff and students-tailored to be age-appropriate– that address firearm dangers, encouraging the reporting of safety concerns, and promote conflict resolution.
    - train Deans of Discipline in Firearms Handling and Safety.

9. Medical Preparedness and Nurse Station Readiness

Schools must ensure that the nurse's station is fully equipped to respond to emergency scenarios, including firearm-related incidents requiring immediate triage. This includes maintaining an inventory of essential medical supplies such as trauma kits, pressure bandages, tourniquets, gloves, antiseptics, wound dressings, and emergency medication. Equipment must be stored in an easily accessible, clearly labelled location within the nurse's station. Regular audits and replenishment schedules must be implemented to prevent stockouts. Additionally, school nurses should receive training in trauma response, triage classification, and coordination with emergency medical services.

10. Early Detection of At-Risk Students (Behavioural Warning Signs & Interventions)

- The presence of firearms in schools is often linked to deeper behavioural, psychological, and environmental factors affecting students. To reduce firearm-related incidents, schools must focus on early identification of at-risk students, applying a tiered intervention approach using the School-Wide Positive Behavioural Interventions and Supports (SWPBIS) framework, the Critical Incident Management Plan (CIMP), and the Safe Schools Policy (SSP)

- A multi-tiered intervention model should be adapted from SWPBIS and the National Safe School Policy, ensuring that all students receive universal support.

In contrast, at-risk students receive targeted interventions to prevent firearm-related behaviours.

- **Integrate drama and arts-based interventions** within schools to actively engage high-risk students, providing positive avenues for emotional expression, behavioural regulation, and social skill development. Such creative programs serve as protective measures, helping to decrease students' vulnerability to firearm-related incidents and at-risk behaviours. Schools should establish or strengthen partnerships with community arts organizations to deliver structured, interactive activities such as theatre workshops, role-playing exercises, and expressive arts therapy. By offering constructive and supervised opportunities for youth expression and collaboration, these programs can foster resilience, empathy, and conflict-resolution skills, effectively reducing the likelihood of firearm violence and other harmful behaviours within the student population.[24]
- **Student and Parent Awareness and Education Programmes**
  - Conduct parental firearm safety and awareness sessions in collaboration with law enforcement and the FLA.
  - Implement home visits and community outreach for students identified as at risk in collaboration with the Child Protection and Family Services Agency (CPFSA).
- **Supportive Staff Training**
  - Staff and Teacher Training on Firearm Threat Identification.
  - Firearm Awareness and Conflict Resolution Training.
  - Training in Crisis Management, Negotiation and De-escalation (conducted by the JCF Training College) for all Classroom Teachers, Deans of Discipline and Guidance Counsellors.

[24] Website ,Literature Review: Arts-Based Programs and Arts Therapies for At-Risk, Justice-Involved, and Traumatized Youths | Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.

- **Community and Parental Engagement**
  - Safe Firearm Storage Education for licensed firearm holders, that are Parents and Guardians, conducted by FLA.
  - School-Community Partnership for Gun Violence Prevention partnership with NGOs, faith-based groups, and civic organizations to promote gun safety initiatives.
  - Development of a safe reintegration plan for students returning to school after intervention, ensuring they are not stigmatized or isolated.

THEME 2: MANAGEMENT

Goal: Establish a coordinated, multi-agency framework to manage firearm-related risks and enhance preparedness through structured systems and active collaboration among key stakeholders.

7.1 Prohibition of Firearms on School Premises

7.1.1 Licensed Firearms Holders

The Government of Jamaica declares that possessing and displaying firearms and ammunition is strictly prohibited in schools and is subject to school policy restrictions. In accordance with this national mandate, the Firearms (Prohibition, Restriction and Regulation) Act of 2022 provides the legal framework for controlling, regulating, and restricting firearms and ammunition within the country and therefore it governs the presence of firearms on school property.

Given this designation, **it is strongly recommended that licensed firearm holders—including teachers, administrators, and general staff—seek first and foremost not to carry firearms to school unless necessary.** Even when legally authorised, firearm possession in schools introduces potential risks that must be carefully managed to prevent accidents, intimidation, or disruptions to the educational environment. When licensed firearm holders enter school premises while carrying a firearm, strict storage, handling, and concealment protocols must be followed to mitigate risks and ensure compliance with national laws and school safety policies.

Authorised law enforcement personnel and trained security staff are permitted to carry firearms in the execution of their duties, and, in limited circumstances, individuals who already hold a valid firearm user's licence, such as trained security staff, may be permitted to carry firearms on school premises. However, this must be done in strict adherence to existing national firearm laws and consultation with the Firearm Licensing Authority (FLA). The FLA does not issue special licenses for educators or school personnel; therefore, any such authorisation must fall within the bounds of the regular licensing regime and existing legal requirements.

Proper firearm storage is not only a matter of compliance but a critical aspect of school safety. All firearms must be securely stored to prevent unauthorized access, reduce intimidation risks, and eliminate the possibility of accidental discharge.

Breaches of these storage requirements carry serious legal and professional consequences under the Firearms Act, including the potential revocation of firearm licenses and criminal liability.

7.1.1.1 Secure Storage Requirements

- If an exception to the firearms prohibition is granted, the firearms must **remain securely concealed at all times while on school premises.** Firearms should never be visible to the student or staff body, as mandated by Firearms (Prohibition, Restriction and Regulation) Act, which prohibits the intentional exposure of firearms in public spaces, except in specific circumstances. If any authorised firearm holder breaches this restriction, the Firearms Licensing Authority (FLA) should be contacted: 876-390-3546 or the event reported anonymously at 888- MOCA-TIP.

7.1.1.2 Secure Firearm Storage Requirements

To prevent unauthorised access and ensure the safety of the school community, the following storage protocols must be observed:

- **On-Person Storage**—If carrying a firearm on school premises, the weapon must be fully concealed and stored in a holster with safety mechanisms to prevent accidental discharge or unauthorised access. Under no circumstances should a firearm be displayed or used as a disciplinary tool in interactions with students, staff or stakeholder.[25] The authorised person must have the appropriate firearm authorisation in their possession. [26]
- **Alternative Storage Options**—Licensed firearm holders should make prior arrangements for secure off-campus storage, whenever possible, to avoid bringing firearms onto school grounds.

[25] Firearm (Prohibition, Restriction, and Regulation) Act S 48
[26] Firearm (Prohibition, Restriction, and Regulation) Act S 47.

Consideration can be given to storing firearms at the closest police station to the school that the person is visiting/working at. The list of temporary storage or custody facilities can be found in the Firearms (Prohibition, Restriction and Regulation) Act, 2022.

- **After-Hours Storage Prohibition** – Firearms must not be stored overnight on school property. Licensed holders are required to secure their weapons at approved off-site storage facilities, in accordance with Firearm Licensing Authority (FLA) regulations.
- The use of firearms to intimidate students or staff members is strictly illegal, in line with the Firearms (Prohibition, Restriction and Regulation) Act, which criminalises the use or possession of firearms with intent to commit or aid in the commission of offences.
- The possession of firearms or ammunition during teacher-student interactions is unlawful, as per the Firearms (Prohibition, Restriction and Regulation) Act, which prohibits unauthorised possession of firearms in any context.
- Teachers are legally prohibited from using firearms to address or manage disturbances involving students or staff members. The Firearms (Prohibition, Restriction and Regulation) Act expressly restricts the discharge of firearms except in situations of lawful self-defence or protection of property.
- Parental Responsibility: Schools and the FLA are encouraged to disseminate information and educate parents and guardians about the importance of safe firearm storage at home to prevent incidents involving students.

7.1.1.3 Legal and Disciplinary Implications for Policy Violations

Failure to adhere to school firearm policies may result in severe legal and professional consequences:

1. **Legal Consequences** – Under the Firearms (***Prohibition, Restriction and Regulation***) ***Act, 2022***, individuals found in unauthorised possession of a firearm on school property may face criminal charges, including imprisonment and fines.

   Licensed firearm holders who misuse or improperly handle their weapons within a school setting may lose their firearm license and be subject to legal prosecution.

2. **Employment of Disciplinary Actions**—Schools reserve the right to impose disciplinary actions against employees who violate firearm policies. Depending on the nature and severity of the violation, consequences may range from formal warnings to suspension or termination.

7.1.1.4 Firearm Visibility and Student Exposure Risk Mitigation

To minimise the risks associated with firearm visibility and student exposure, the following measures must be strictly observed:

1. **Full Concealment at All Times** – Firearms must remain out of sight and securely holstered to prevent student anxiety, fear, or undue influence.
2. **Compliance Checks** – Schools may also conduct routine policy compliance assessments to ensure adherence to safety protocols.[27]27

7.2 Emergency Services

7.2.1 Critical Incident Management Plan (CIMP)

The Ministry of Education's Critical Incident Management Plan (CIMP) provides comprehensive guidance for emergency services and their roles in responding to critical school incidents. The Firearm Protocol adopts the same procedures outlined in this plan. Therefore, the Critical Incident Management Team will be activated in the event of a critical incident.

Extracted from CIMP:

7.2.1.1 Roles and Responsibilities of the CIMT

The roles and responsibilities of team members are as follows:

[27] Firearm (Prohibition, Restriction, and Regulation) Act S 84.

1. Team leader (principal or his/her designate):

This person assumes ultimate responsibility for all school-based decisions. He/she will initially be concerned with emergency notification, coordination of subordinate activities, and accountability of students. The team leader will keep an incident log of the actions taken.

2. Staff coordinator (vice principal):

This individual will carry out the orders of the coordinator and will liaise with the teachers and support staff. This person is also the deputy team leader.

3. Perimeter coordinator (senior teacher):

Controls access to and from the school compound; directs emergency services and school transportation; and assists with all security issues.

4. Transport coordinator (senior teacher/ other teacher/ office staff):

This person should have a reliable vehicle and should possibly be a travelling officer. This person will also liaise with the perimeter coordinator regarding the entry and exit of emergency vehicles into and out of the compound. He/she will direct emergency transportation.

5. Physical plan coordinator (caretaker/teacher):

Locks or unlocks gates to support security or evacuation needs and helps direct emergency services to crucial areas.

6. Parent coordinator (senior teacher):

Handles parent contacts; refers parents to the school's spokesperson and mass media; establishes pickup locations for students.[28]28

7. Inclusion Coordinator (Special Education Unit)

The CIMT should include a representative from the Special Education Unit or a trained professional within the school, such as a Special Education Teacher, who can provide support for students and staff with disabilities during and after firearm-related incidents.

[28] CIMP, page 32

7.3 Emergency Codes

The CIMP establishes standardised emergency signals to guide school staff and students in the event of a crisis. Schools must develop clear and recognizable signals to indicate:

- **Full lockdown:** One long and three short tones or rings of the bell.
- Full lockdown means no movement is allowed except by police or emergency service personnel.
- **Lockdown:** Two long and three short tones or rings of the bell.
- A lockdown means movement only by CIMT members and other authorized persons.
- **Evacuation:** Two long tones or rings of the bell.
- An evacuation means that everyone leaves the building according to evacuation routes or according to other instructions that the CIMT coordinator or his designate might give.
- **All clear:** Three long tones or rings of the bell.
  All clear means that everyone returns to classes.

7.4 Role and Responsibilities of First Responders

7.4.1 Activation of the Critical Incident Management Team

The Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT) is the first line of response in a school-based emergency. When a critical incident occurs, the CIMP is activated. The team members should include 7 – 10 persons, including, the principal (Team Leader), vice principal, senior teachers, other teachers, guidance counsellor, school nurse, administrative staff members, students, parents, security personnel, and possibly one member of the wider school community.[29] Alternates should also be considered, should any team member be absent. Their duties include:

[29] CIMP page 30.

- Assessing the situation and activating the school's response plan.
- Ensuring student and staff safety by implementing lockdown, evacuation, or other emergency procedures.
- Coordinating with external emergency responders, including medical personnel, law enforcement, and fire services.
- Providing accurate information to parents, students, and school authorities.
- Activating the Regional Trauma Response Team (RTRT) [now referred to as Community of Care Team]

7.4.2. Medical Services

In the event of a firearm-related or other critical incident, medical services play a vital role in ensuring timely medical attention, trauma care, and coordination with external healthcare facilities. The school nurse is the first line of medical response, administering initial treatment, assessing injuries, and escalating cases to emergency services as needed.

To ensure **timely and organised medical intervention** for all affected individuals, including **injured students, staff, and the offender (if still alive),** following the neutralisation of an active shooter or neutralisation of an offender with a firearm. Given the limited availability of EMTs in Jamaica, this protocol prioritises the role of the Jamaica Fire Brigade (JFB), police officers, and school medical personnel (nurses or trained first responders) in managing on-site medical triage, stabilisation, and hospital coordination.

Responsibilities of the School Nurse include:

1. Initial Medical Assessment and First Aid

The school nurse will provide immediate first aid.

- The school nurse must immediately assess injured individuals and administer first aid.
- In cases of gunshot wounds, severe trauma, or other life-threatening conditions, immediate stabilisation procedures must be applied while awaiting professional medical intervention.
- If the injury is severe, emergency medical services (EMS) must be contacted for urgent care.
- Police officers trained in first aid should assist in bleeding control, CPR, and casualty evacuation if needed with the guidance of the nurse.
- The injured individual should be immediately transported by the designator CIMT member to the nearest medical facility or designated medical provider.[30]

2. Emergency Contact and Coordination

- The school nurse must immediately notify the closest hospital, emergency medical service (EMS), or designated private doctor for further intervention.
- Schools should maintain an updated emergency contact list, including local hospitals, ambulance services, private physicians and the fastest evacuation route to nearby medical facilities for quick access during critical incidents

[30] CIMT member – Transport Coordinator (Senior Teacher) -This person should have a reliable vehicle and should possibly be a travelling officer. This person will also liaise with the perimeter coordinator regarding emergency vehicles to enter and exit the compound. He/she will direct emergency transportation.

- The school nurse should triage all victims of a firearm incident:

- **Use pressure bandages, tourniquets, or makeshift wound dressings to control bleeding.**
- **Ensure all victims remain in stable positions while awaiting transport.**

3. Student and Staff Medical Records

- The nurse must have access to students' and staff's medical records to identify pre-existing conditions or allergies that may affect treatment.
- In the case of a firearm-related incident, knowing a student's medical history can help determine appropriate emergency care and post-trauma interventions.

4. Communication with Parents and Guardians:

- The school nurse or designated personnel from the CIMT must contact parents/guardians immediately if a student sustains injuries.
- If a student requires hospitalisation, they must be accompanied by a staff member until a guardian arrives.

5. Coordination with Hospital Transport

- If ambulance services are delayed, JCF and JFB must coordinate alternative transport.
- Police units should escort injured individuals in available vehicles to the nearest hospital.
- The nurse must alert hospitals in advance about incoming trauma cases.
- Parents/guardians should be notified as soon as students are transported.
- Teachers and CIMT members are responsible for assisting injured students, staff or other injured individuals until EMS arrives.
- The school nurse must maintain updated student medical records and emergency contact information for quick reference.

7.4.3 Law Enforcement

The Safe Schools Programme, launched in 2004, is a collaborative effort involving the Ministries of National Security and Education, Skills, Youth, and Information. It aims to create a safer learning environment by addressing violence and promoting positive interactions between students and law enforcement. A school Resource Officer (SRO) is a Police Officer placed in a school to help maintain and sustain discipline. Specifically, the SRO is responsible for identifying students who are troubled or disruptive and bringing them to the attention of the school's administration.

A School Resource Officer (SRO) is a trained police officer assigned to a school, with a mandate to address illegal and unlawful acts while maintaining a child-centred approach. SROs receive specialised training to work with children and operate under the guidance of the Office of the Children's Advocate (OCA) Child Justice Guidelines, the Jamaica Constabulary Force (JCF) Child Interaction Policy, and the Child Diversion Act, which emphasises rehabilitation over punishment for minors involved in legal matters. SROs are knowledgeable in Restorative Practices, a method aimed at promoting accountability, repairing harm, and fostering positive relationships among students. These practices ensure that disciplinary actions are handled legally and age appropriate.

It is critical to understand that SROs are not Deans of Discipline and should not be treated as such. While Deans of Discipline focus on enforcing the school's code of conduct and behavioural management, SROs are mandated to act within the confines of the law, addressing matters of illegality and school safety. Under the Ministry of Education's purview, administrators

should refrain from calling on SROs for routine disciplinary or academic matters. SROs work with school staff to uphold safety and ensure interventions are carried out in the child's best interests.

When addressing firearm-related incidents within a school, an SRO operates under the provisions of the Firearms Act, which prohibits the illegal possession, use, and discharge of firearms. As trained law enforcement personnel, SROs are uniquely equipped to manage these situations under the law, prioritizing the safety and security of all individuals on the school premises. Their response is governed by strict legal guidelines, ensuring that incidents are dealt with decisively and that all actions are consistent with the statutory framework outlined in the Act.

7.4.4 Fire Services

The Jamaica Fire Brigade (JFB) is critical in fire suppression, emergency medical response, hazardous material management, and disaster response. While their primary function is firefighting, they are also key responders in emergencies that require rapid medical intervention, evacuation, and support to law enforcement in crises. In the context of firearm-related incidents in schools, the fire services serve as an integral component of the emergency response system, working alongside police and school authorities to preserve life and minimise risk.

When to Call Fire Services for Firearm-Related Incidents in Schools

Fire services should be called in firearm-related school incidents under the following circumstances:

- **Gunfire Results in Injury** – If a firearm is discharged on school premises, resulting in injuries, the JFB should be contacted immediately to provide emergency medical care and transport victims to a hospital. Firefighters are often trained in trauma response and basic life support, making them essential in stabilising victims before paramedics arrive.
- **Firearm Discharge Causes Fire or Explosion** – If a firearm is discharged near flammable materials, gas lines, or chemicals in a school laboratory, resulting in a fire or explosion, the fire brigade must be called immediately to contain the blaze and prevent further destruction.
- **During Lockdown Evacuation for Safety Risks** – In cases where a firearm-related threat or active shooter escalates and an evacuation is required, the fire brigade may assist in safe

extraction procedures. Their expertise in handling fire, smoke inhalation, and structural hazards ensures that students and staff can be evacuated safely.

- **If a Firearm Is Concealed in a Fire-Prone Area**—If authorities receive credible intelligence that a firearm or ammunition is hidden in a hazardous location such as a boiler room, chemical storage area, or near electrical systems, the fire brigade should be engaged to assess the risk of ignition, explosion, or accidental discharge due to environmental conditions.
- **Support in Mass Casualty Incidents** – If a firearm incident at a school escalates into a mass casualty event, involving multiple injuries, the fire services provide triage and emergency response support to paramedics/police. They coordinate with medical personnel to stabilise critically injured victims and ensure they receive urgent medical care.

7.4.5 Regional Trauma Response Team (RTRT) [now referred to as Community of Care Team] Deployment Process

Schools can call upon the **Regional Trauma Response Team (RTRT) [now referred to as Community of Care Team]** in a crisis. This team will respond within **24 hours** of the incident and will assist by:

- Providing stress debriefing
- Facilitating the grief process for those affected
- Providing media briefing if necessary
- Providing follow-up support and school visits.
- Supporting and advising parents.
- Assisting in the restoration of normalcy
- Providing post-trauma counselling for those involved
- Following up on the writing of reports and the evaluation response to the incident.[31]

[31] MOEYC- Guidelines for Developing a Critical Incident Management Plan for a Safe School Environment.

7.5 Internal And External Communications Protocols

Effective communication protocols are essential in managing firearm-related incidents in schools, ensuring a coordinated and timely response that prioritises the safety of students and staff. Recommendations from various jurisdictions emphasise the importance of establishing clear internal and external communication strategies as part of comprehensive school safety plans.

7.5.1 Internal Communication: Schools are advised to implement structured internal communication systems that enable rapid dissemination of information among staff during emergencies. This includes utilizing tools such as public address systems, emergency notification apps and direct telephone calls to alert personnel about potential threats promptly. Regular training for school personnel on these communication protocols is crucial to ensure preparedness and swift action during critical incidents.

7.5.2 External Communication: The Critical Incident Management Plan designates the Mass Media Coordinator as the individual responsible for establishing predefined channels of communication with external entities, specifically the media.

The Principal and Dean of Discipline will directly communicate with law enforcement agencies, and emergency responders. The Principal or their designee, along with guidance counsellors, will communicate with parents/guardians.

Designating official spokespersons to manage information dissemination helps maintain accuracy and consistency, reducing the spread of misinformation.

It is recommended that the **crafting pre-approved message templates for various scenarios would be useful and would also expedite communication during emergencies, ensuring that all stakeholders receive timely and accurate updates.**

7.6 Performance Monitoring, Incident Reporting and Evaluation

7.6.1 Firearm-Related Incident Data Collection & Reporting

The Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT) must establish a structured and secure system for collecting and reporting firearm-related incident data to ensure accurate documentation, facilitate trend analysis, and support timely decision-making. Each school must maintain critical incident reports that detail the nature of the threat, the response actions taken, the outcomes, and the lessons learned. These reports are to be compiled, reviewed, and shared with the MOESYI, law enforcement (JCF, FLA), and relevant oversight bodies to help identify trends, high-risk areas, and emerging threats.

To enhance data quality and promote equity, incident data should be disaggregated by age, sex, grade level, school type (public/private), disability status, and location (urban/rural). Schools should identify whether students impacted by incidents require psychosocial or reintegration support and ensure timely referrals to guidance counsellors or appropriate external agencies.

7.6.2 Child-Centred Performance Indicators

To measure the effectiveness of firearm protocols in safeguarding students and improving school preparedness, the following child-related indicators are recommended for monitoring, review, and improvement of responses, at the school or Ministry level:

- Percentage of firearm-related incidents where affected students received timely psychosocial support (e.g., within 48 hours).
- Rate of successful reintegration of affected students into the school environment (e.g., return to regular attendance, stable classroom behaviour within one month).
- Number of students participating in firearm safety and emergency drills per term.
- Student and caregiver satisfaction with the school's response, based on feedback surveys or post-incident debrief sessions.
- Percentage of schools conducting at least one debriefing session with students following firearm response drills.

- Number of referrals made to the Parenting Support Commission (PSC) following identified behavioural or family support needs.
- Reduction in repeat incidents involving the same students or same school zones over the academic year.

7.6.3 Feedback Loops for Continuous Learning

Schools should conduct termly or annual reviews of all firearm-related incidents and response actions. These reviews should guide protocol updates, training needs, and allocation of resources. The CIMT should implement age-appropriate and anonymous feedback tools to collect insights from students, teachers, and parents on how incidents were managed and perceived. These insights will help identify safety gaps and build trust in the school's emergency procedures.

7.6.4 Quarterly School Safety & Security Audits

To ensure ongoing readiness and compliance, the CIMT must lead quarterly school safety audits in partnership with the JCF, FLA, emergency responders, and MOESYI regional offices. These audits will evaluate physical infrastructure, security systems, emergency preparedness, and policy compliance. Firearm response drills—both simulated and unsimulated—must be included to assess real-time coordination, decision-making, and student response. Following each drill, the school's Guidance Counsellor(s) should debrief students and provide support where the drill has caused visible distress or fear.

7.6.5 Promoting Accurate and Fear-Free Reporting

Reporting firearm incidents is essential to ensuring early intervention and long-term safety. Underreporting due to fear, stigma, or distrust weakens response capacity and creates systemic vulnerabilities.

Schools must build a culture of safe, non-punitive reporting, where students, staff, and caregivers feel empowered to share concerns confidentially while ensuring that formal reports and disciplinary processes are followed as necessary. Schools must understand the many channels that reporting can take place, including: MOCA Tipline: 888-MOCA-TIP | 888-662-2847.

RESPONSE- IMMEDIATE ACTIONS AND EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

Ensuring a swift, coordinated, and effective response to emergencies is critical to protecting the safety and well-being of students, staff, and visitors within the school environment. This section outlines immediate actions and standardised emergency procedures to respond to firearm threats, security breaches, and other critical incidents.

The procedures in this section align with the Critical Incident Management Plan (CIMP), National Safe School Policy, and international best practices, ensuring that all stakeholders are equipped with the knowledge and tools to respond appropriately in high-risk situations.

This section provides step-by-step guidance for school personnel on:

- Activating emergency response systems
- Initiating lockdowns, evacuations, and shelter-in-place protocols
- Coordinating with law enforcement and first responders
- Managing student safety and communication during critical incidents

A well-trained and prepared school community minimises casualties, prevents panic, and ensures a controlled resolution to any crisis. Therefore, all school staff and students must be regularly trained on these response procedures to enhance preparedness and reduce response times in real-world scenarios.

This protocol should be extensively distributed to ensure all personnel are well-acquainted with the specifics. In responding to a gun-related incident, it is essential to consider that persons with disabilities may require tailored support and assistance from special education personnel, staff, and even fellow students to ensure their safety and inclusion in emergency procedures.

8.1 Four-Tiered System

In recognition of the diverse and evolving nature of firearm-related threats in school settings, this protocol adopts a unified, tiered response model designed to streamline decision-making and enhance safety outcomes. Rather than separating responses into multiple, complex scenarios, this system categorises threats into four levels (Tiers 1–4), each corresponding to a specific degree of urgency and required action. By aligning the level of risk with a clear, structured response pathway, school staff can respond swiftly and proportionately, minimising confusion and improving coordination with law enforcement and emergency services.

Table: Highlighting the Four-tiered System

Threat Tier	Definition	Examples
Tier 1 – Low	Potential or unverified threat with no immediate danger	Rumour, social media post, verbal threat
Tier 2 – Moderate	Suspected presence of a firearm or imitation firearm	Student seen with bulge, replica weapon found, student reports presence of a firearm.
Tier 3 – High	Firearm brandished, confirmed possession, no discharge	Student shows firearm, staff witness concealed weapon
Tier 4 – Critical	Active shooter or imminent attack	Gunfire heard, multiple reports, suspect advancing

8.1.1 Tier 1 – Low- Potential or Unverified Threat with No Immediate Danger

Verbal or indirect firearm threats refer to situations where a student, staff member, or outsider makes statements implying intent to use a firearm or suggesting knowledge of a firearm's presence on school grounds. These threats may be expressed through spoken words, written messages, social media posts, or rumours circulated among students. Although no immediate physical danger exists, these threats must be taken seriously to prevent escalation and ensure school safety.

Step 1: Detection and Identification

School personnel, including the Principal, Dean of Discipline, Guidance Counsellors, Teachers, Administrators, must remain vigilant for verbal threats, written messages, or social media posts indicating a potential firearm-related incident.

- If a student, staff member, or parent reports such a threat, the Principal is to report it to the Jamaica Constabulary Force (JCF) at 119 or the nearest police station must be informed immediately.
- Staff should document the nature of the threat on the Critical Incident Report Form, including who made the statement, where and when it was said, and any corroborating evidence, such as written notes or social media screenshots.

Step 2: Notification and Initial Action

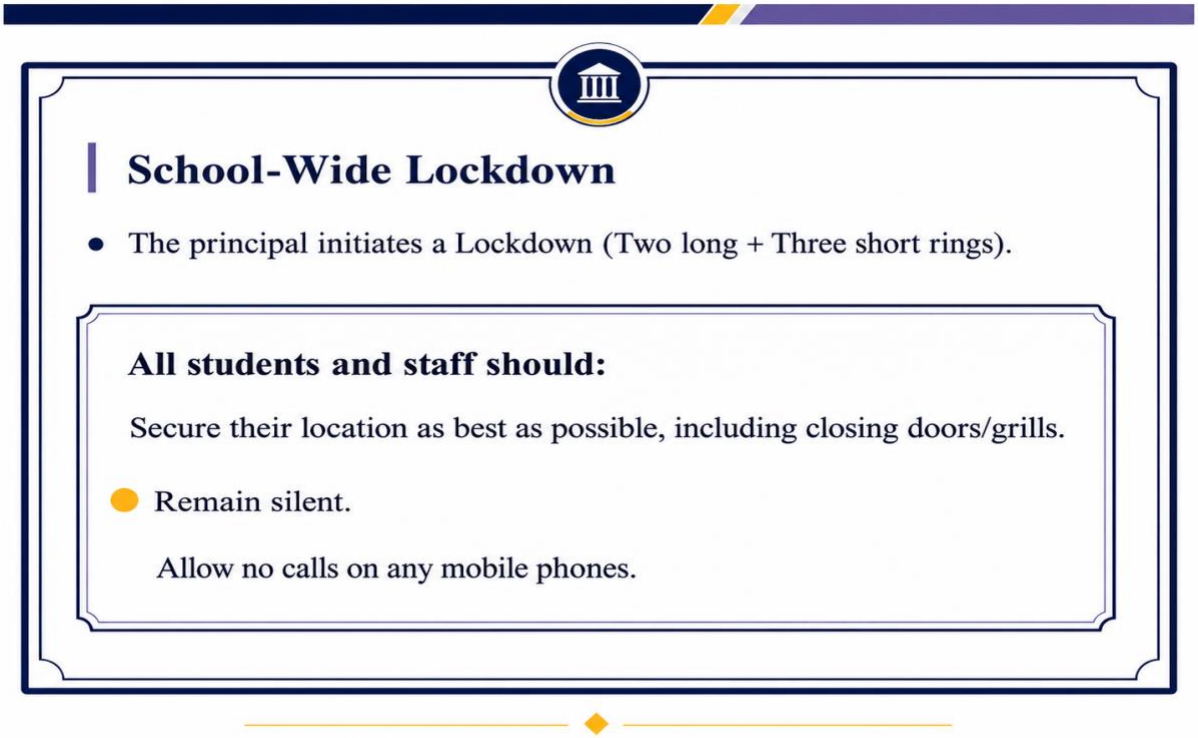
- The school's **Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT)** must assess the threat's credibility and determine the risk level.
- If the threat is **serious or credible, the police must be notified immediately**, and the individual suspected of carrying a firearm must be escorted to a **secure, supervised location** away from the general student population.
- If the individual suspected of carrying a firearm is s student, the Vice Principal should provide an incident report to the student's parents/guardians.

- If the threat was made on **social media**, it should be reported to JCF at 119 or the nearest police station, who should be involved in tracking the source and verifying its authenticity.
- The parent/guardian should be advised that the incident was reported to the JCF.

Step 3: Investigation and Risk Assessment

- The principal should immediately interview the student(s) who made the threat in the presence of a school guidance counselor and the Dean of Discipline.
- The School Resource Officer (SRO), Dean of Discipline, or principal must search the student's belongings or personal storage areas only if school policy allows and with proper legal oversight.
- The SRO or police from the nearest police station should gather witness statements from students or staff who heard or saw the threat.
- If a firearm is suspected to be present on campus, the principal must initiate a school-wide lockdown and go to Tier 2 Response.

School-Wide Lockdown



Do NOT:

- Attempt to search for the firearm.
- Leave the classroom unless directed by law enforcement.
- Panic or spread unverified information.

Law enforcement officers will lead a controlled search based on available information.

Step 4: Resolution and Follow-Up

- If the threat is **deemed false or a hoax,** appropriate **disciplinary actions** must be taken per school policies, while providing guidance and counselling to the students involved.
- The CIMT and law enforcement will determine the next steps before resuming normal operations.

- If a firearm is discovered or the threat is found to be credible, the student must be removed from the school immediately by the JCF, and legal consequences should be pursued based on firearm regulations.
- The CIMT should conduct a post-incident review to assess the effectiveness of the school's response and recommend protocol updates through the Education Officers.
- It is essential that the JCF ensures that students and staff are informed about the seriousness of firearm-related threats and the consequences of making false threats.

8.1.2 Tier 2 – Moderate- Imitation/or Replica Firearms Found in School

Given the inherent risks, all firearm-related threats must be treated with the highest level of caution until assessed adequately by the JCF or JDF or a trained firearm specialist from the FLA.

The presence of an imitation or replica firearm on school premises poses a serious security concern, as these objects are often indistinguishable from real firearms.

While they may not be functional weapons, they have the potential to cause fear, panic, and disruption, and in some cases, they may be illegally modified to discharge live ammunition.

UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES SHOULD ANYONE TOUCH, MOVE, OR ATTEMPT TO INSPECT THE FIREARM.

Expert Handling Directive

A firearm, whether real or imitation, must always be treated as a live weapon until professionally assessed. Modern imitation firearms are often manufactured to be near-identical in weight, appearance, and operational features to real weapons. In some cases, these replicas are illegally modified to fire live rounds, making them just as dangerous as actual firearms. Furthermore, handling an unfamiliar firearm—real or imitation—can result in an unintentional discharge if the weapon is loaded or tampered with.

For safety reasons, no one should attempt to inspect or determine the authenticity of a firearm without the proper technical knowledge and training. Only trained law enforcement or firearm specialists should engage with the object.[32]

Step 1: Initial Awareness & Immediate Actions

i. The Teachers or other staff should keep students away from the area and maintain order.
ii. Discreetly and immediately notify the Principal, Vice Principal, Dean of Discipline, School Resource Officer, Police, and Security Officer of the discovery.
iii. The Principal must ensure that no staff member, including security personnel, attempts to handle, touch, pick up, or inspect the firearm unless specifically trained to do so. If a member of law enforcement, they must ensure it is done while wearing gloves.
iv. All staff in the area should keep a safe distance and ensure that others do not approach and return to a classroom.
v. Stay calm and avoid spreading panic—only school leadership should communicate official information.

Step 2: Risk Assessment & Verification

Upon notification of a suspected firearm, the Principal/Security Officer/Dean of Discipline/ School Resource Officer must immediately:

i. **Secure the area** and prevent unauthorised access.
ii. **Visually assess the object from a safe distance** (without handling it).
iii. **Call JCF (119) immediately** if there is any doubt regarding the weapon's authenticity.
iv. **If it is confirmed to be an imitation firearm**, follow disciplinary and intervention procedures while ensuring law enforcement documentation.
v. The Principal **must** disclose to the nearest Police station any imitation firearms found at a school, as per the Firearm (Prohibition, Restriction and Registration) Act 2022.

[32] Definition of **Imitation Firearm** in the Firearm (*Prohibition, Restriction and Registration) Act 2022,* Sect. 2: anything which has the appearance of being a firearm, but is not a firearm, whether or not such imitation firearm is capable of discharging a shot, bullet or other projectile.

Step 3: Emergency Signals & Lockdown Considerations

If initial reports **suggest a real firearm, the Principal must activate a LOCKDOWN** following the **CIMP emergency signals:**

DISCIPLINARY ACTION & FOLLOW-UP

- Students found in possession of an imitation firearm will be subject to: Immediate suspension pending investigation.

A. **Student Consequences**

- Refer to the school board for further disciplinary action if the possession was intended to intimidate or threaten others.
- Counselling or intervention if the possession was non-malicious.
- The JCF should be contacted if the replica incited fear or disrupted school operations to sensitize the student on the implications of Firearm use (including the Firearms Act) and the criminal charges associated with possessing firearms.

B. **Communication with Parents & Stakeholders**

Parents/Guardians of the Student Involved should be notified immediately regarding the incident and disciplinary actions outlined to the parent/guardian.

The Parents/Guardians should receive a sensitisation session by the JCF on the risks, legal implications, and responsible practices related to replica or fake firearms, ensuring they take proactive steps to prevent their misuse by children and youth within the household.

The student should not be sent home on a suspension but it is recommended that they shall participate in sensitisation programs with the Community Safety and Security Branch (CSSB) of the Police or any other available Police Youth Group.

C. **Entire School Community** (If the Incident Caused Fear or Panic):

School administration will release an official notice explaining the event and reinforcing safety policies.

D. **JCF & Ministry of Education:**

A formal Critical Incident Report must be submitted to the relevant authorities.

8.1.3 Tier 3 – High - Firearm Brandished, Confirmed Possession, No Discharge / Loaded Firearm/Fully Assembled Firearm with Ammunition on School Premises

A suspicion of a firearm threat, the brandishing of a gun, but not shots are fired, or a fully assembled firearm with ammunition on school premises requires an immediate and measured response to ensure the safety of students, staff, and visitors. Every reported or observed suspicion shall be treated seriously and confidentially.

Step 1: Initial Identification/Awareness & Immediate Actions

1. Immediately assess the threat level:
   - Firearm displayed only – The individual has removed the firearm from a bag or pocket but has not pointed it at anyone (this could indicate intimidation, an attempt to show off, or a prelude to further escalation).
   - Firearm pointed at someone – The individual is actively threatening another student, staff member, or group (this is an immediate high-risk situation requiring rapid intervention).
2. **DO NOT** attempt to touch, move, or inspect the firearm—it may be unstable or have a sensitive trigger mechanism.
3. **DO NOT** alert students or unauthorised staff in a way that could cause panic.
4. **Immediately notify** the principal, security officer, school resource officer, or Dean of Discipline.
5. Maintain a safe distance from the firearm and ensure that no student or unauthorised person approaches it. If the firearm is inside a bag, desk, or locker, DO NOT attempt to remove it—wait for law enforcement.
6. If the firearm is found in an open area, ensure that students and unauthorised staff are moved away from the location.

Step 2: Immediate Notification & Lockdown Activation

If a **student or staff member suspects** that an individual **may have a firearm:**

1. Do NOT attempt to confront or disarm the individual suspected of possessing a firearm-WAIT FOR THE POLICE.

2. Students should advise the classroom teacher, the Dean of Discipline, the SRO, or any other staff member.

3. Send a discreet emergency alert to the Principal, Security Officer, Dean of Discipline or any other member of the School Administration.

4. Notify Law Enforcement (119) Immediately—provide details on:
    - A physical description of the individual brandishing the firearm.
    - The last known location of the suspect.
    - Whether they are moving through the school or stationary.
    - Whether they have pointed the firearm at someone or simply displayed it.

5. Remain calm and avoid alerting the suspected individual—maintain a neutral demeanour to prevent panic or defensive actions.

6. Prioritise personal safety and the safety of others.

Step 3: Actions by Principal/Dean of Discipline/ Security Officer's Immediate Actions

1. Upon receiving a report of a suspected firearm threat, the principal should **activate CIMT**.
2. **Notify Law Enforcement (119)** Immediately—provide details on:
    - Exact location of the firearm
    - Whether students or staff are near it
    - If the firearm has been brandished or used
3. **Consult school security/SRO/JCF** before taking any direct action. The Principal should deploy school security personnel (if available) to secure the immediate area where the firearm was found.
4. **Determine the appropriate emergency response** based on risk level (low, medium, or high)
5. **All teachers must secure their classrooms.** Senior Teachers shall ensure that all classrooms are adequately secured, with students and staff remaining indoors.
6. If the firearm was found in a specific location (e.g., classroom, hallway, or bathroom), the Dean of Discipline or the School Resource Officer must isolate the area without causing panic. Move students to the other side of the compound or the assembly hall and close the doors.

7. Students outside the classroom should be sent to the Auditorium/Assembly Hall, gymnasium, or return to their classroom.
8. All Teachers must conduct an immediate headcount and ensure students remain away from all exits until the situation is cleared.
9. The classroom Teacher should not leave the firearm unattended unless the SRO, Security Guard or Dean of Discipline has taken responsibility for the area.
10. **The Reporting Individual should seek to provide specific details, if possible, to the police,** including:
    - The person's physical description (clothing, height, bag type, etc.)
    - The last known location of the individual.
    - Any observed behaviour (e.g., attempting to conceal something, verbal threats).

Risk Assessment Levels & Response Protocols

Lockdown Procedures in Response to Firearm Suspicion

Risk Level	Indicators	Response Actions
Low Risk	A rumour or uncorroborated suspicion without direct evidence of a firearm.	Monitor the situation discreetly. Gather additional information from reliable sources. Advise security personnel to remain alert.
Medium Risk	Multiple reports or suspicious behaviour, but no direct visual confirmation of a firearm.	**Initiate a partial lockdown** (Two long + Three short rings) Conduct a controlled assessment of the suspect's location. Contact police (119) immediately. Prepare for escalation.
High Risk	A firearm is visibly seen.	**FULL LOCKDOWN** (One long + Three short rings). Contact police (119) immediately. Secure all students and staff in classrooms. Any students outside of a classroom should be sent to the Auditorium, Assembly Hall, or gymnasium. Do NOT approach the suspect—wait for law enforcement intervention.

If the firearm is found in a classroom, the Classroom Teacher must remain calm and maintain neutral demeanor to prevent panic or defensive actions.

A. If the Suspect is inside a classroom and the firearm is stored

Step 4: The Classroom Teacher:

1. **Remain calm and avoid alerting the individual suspected of carrying a firearm** — maintain a neutral demeanor to prevent panic or defensive actions.
2. Do **NOT** attempt to touch or inspect the bag—the firearm may be loaded or have a sensitive trigger mechanism.
3. **Send a discreet emergency alert** to the Principal, Security Officer, School Resource Officer/ Dean of Discipline, or any staff outside the classroom.
4. **Assess the risk and de-escalate** the situation with the individual suspected of carrying a firearm. Ask the students in the classroom to leave and go directly to the designated assembly area. If students cannot leave the classroom, ensure they remain seated and quiet to minimise panic or sudden movements.
5. **Slowly approach the suspect from a non-confrontational angle** (e.g., standing at their side rather than directly in front).
6. **Use Verbal De-escalation techniques:** Acknowledge the individual's fear, reassure them, encourage small, safe actions, and avoid making direct demands. Encourage the individual to step away from the firearm and allow the students to leave the classroom.
7. **Ensure the suspect cannot access the bag** (if safely possible) while awaiting law enforcement.

Step 5: Notification & Lockdown Activation

1. **All other classroom Teachers should lock all classroom doors/grills** and prevent movement in hallways and external areas.
2. Non-involved classrooms continue normal operations but remain on high alert.
3. Teachers & staff must immediately await further instructions.

Step 6: Law Enforcement & Controlled Search

1. Allow law enforcement to control the situation upon arrival on the compound.
2. If a student has a firearm, DO NOT attempt to confiscate it—wait for trained officers to intervene.
3. Be briefed on the **suspect's description and the location of the weapon**.
4. Law enforcement officers or trained security personnel enter the classroom discreetly.
5. Secure the firearm without opening the bag in front of students—firearms should be handled only by trained personnel.
6. If a suspect is identified, they must be removed from the classroom or school area by law enforcement, not school personnel.
7. Conduct controlled evacuation of students if required.

Step 7- Lockdown Lift & Controlled School Reopening

1. Once the firearm is secured and the premises are safe, law enforcement must authorise the "All Clear" signal (Three long tones/rings).
2. If no additional threats are found, **ONLY** the Principal will issue the "**ALL CLEAR**" Signal (Three long tones/rings).
3. **Resume school operations and initiate post- incident trauma support measures.**
4. Conduct structured debriefing sessions with the CIMT and other staff involved in the incident.
5. The Guidance Counsellor or Regional Trauma Response Team (RTRT) [now referred to as Community of Care Team] should offer psychological first aid (PFA) directly to students who are involved.
6. The Vice Principal must communicate with parents and guardians directly about the incident.
7. The Senior Teacher should inform parents/ guardians via official school communication channels to prevent the spread of misinformation or panic.

The following should be noted:

- The age of criminal responsibility in Jamaica is 12 years old (Child Care and Protection Act).
- Firearm possession by a minor is a serious offence under the Jamaica Firearms Act and could result in criminal charges.
- Diversion programs and rehabilitation options should be considered where appropriate.
- Preserve evidence (e.g., bag, firearm) and ensure that the firearm is not tampered with before police arrival.
- DO NOT attempt to question the student about the firearm without parental consent or legal representation.

Step 8: Post-Incident Review & Trauma Management

1. The Principal, in consultation with the Dean of Discipline or SRO, will conduct a risk assessment to determine how the firearm entered the school premises and identify potential security lapses that require strengthening.
2. The Principal will conduct emergency debriefing sessions for students and staff affected by the incident.
3. Offer PFA and trauma counselling services through the Regional Trauma Response Team (RTRT) [now referred to as Community of Care Team].
4. Guidance Counsellor to identify students and staff needing further support and provide appropriate referrals.
5. The CIMT will conduct a security review to assess vulnerabilities that allowed a firearm onto school premises.
6. If any information is revealed that a student is linked to a firearm, notify the police and allow them to contact parents/guardians and follow the necessary legal procedures.

8.1.4 Tier 4 – Critical - Active Shooter or Imminent Attack or Nearby Community Firearm Incident Affecting School

This tier addresses the most severe firearm-related threats, including active shooter situations, imminent armed attacks, or nearby community firearm incidents that pose an immediate and unpredictable danger to students, staff, and the wider school environment.

An active shooter situation involves one or more individuals actively engaging in killing or attempting to kill people in a confined and populated area, typically using firearms.

Characteristics include:

- Unpredictable and rapidly evolving circumstances.
- Immediate risk to multiple individuals.
- There is a need for swift law enforcement intervention to prevent further harm.

A nearby firearm incident refers to any situation where gunfire, armed confrontations, or

criminal activities involving firearms occur in the surrounding area but not directly on school property.

- May involve gang-related violence, domestic disputes, or police operations.
- Poses an indirect threat but could escalate, leading to stray bullets, intrusion, or panic within the school.
- Requires immediate assessment and precautionary measures to ensure school safety.

Step 1: Immediate Recognition & Initial Actions

1. If gunfire is heard or reports indicate a firearm incident nearby:
    - DO NOT dismiss gunfire sounds—assume it is a threat until confirmed otherwise
    - DO NOT attempt to confront, disarm, or engage with the individuals.
2. Visually assess the situation from secure locations (e.g., CCTV, elevated indoor areas).
3. Immediately assess the threat level:
    - Identify the shooter's location (if safely possible).
    - Determine the number of shooters and types of weapons (i.e., rifle or handgun) involved if possible.
4. Alert Principal and Security Personnel immediately.
5. The Principal should activate the CIMT.
6. The CIMT should -
    - Use a pre-determined emergency communication system to notify all staff discreetly.
    - Determine the incident's proximity to school boundaries and assess whether a soft or full lockdown is required.
7. **Implement the following:**

RUN Fast, HIDE smart — DROP, CRAWL, or ROLL. FIGHT only if you must — and fight to survive.

- **RUN:** Evacuate the premises if a safe route is available. Leave belongings behind and keep hands visible.
- **RUN:** Run in the opposite direction to where the shots are fired. If in an open environment, immediately go to a closed environment.
- **DROP, CRAWL, OR ROLL** to a safe space.
- **HIDE:** If evacuation isn't possible, find a secure hiding place out of the shooter's view, lock or barricade doors, and silence electronic devices.
- **FIGHT:** As a last resort, and only if in immediate danger, attempt to incapacitate the shooter using aggressive force and improvised weapons.

Step 2: Lockdown Activation & Law Enforcement Notification

1. The principal should **activate CIMT**.
2. **The Principal should initiate a Full Lockdown** (One long tone + Three short tones/rings).
3. Immediately contact the Jamaica Constabulary Force (JCF) at 119, providing:

- **Exact location** of the incident.
- **Description of the shooter(s):** number, physical appearance, clothing, and weapons.
- **Number of potential victims** and any injuries observed.

4. **All teachers must secure their classrooms**—lock doors/grills, turn off lights, move students to designated safe zones, and maintain silence.
5. Instruct individuals to remain hidden until law enforcement arrives.
6. Classroom Teachers should **lock all doors but not bolt them, turn off lights, and remain silent.**
7. Senior Teachers must ensure that all students and staff in the vicinity remain secured inside classrooms and away from the area where the shooting is taking place.
8. Any staff and students in open areas must find immediate secure locations or proceed to the nearest lockdown area.
9. Senior Teacher shall ensure that all classrooms are adequately secured, with students and staff remaining indoors.
10. If nearby shooting, the school is near an open field or roadway, security personnel and Dean of Discipline or Senior Teacher must relocate students to interior rooms with solid walls. Senior Teachers and Classroom Teachers must move students and staff away from perimeter fencing, windows, and exposed areas.

11. Classroom Teachers must keep students calm and informed without causing panic.

12. **If a student or staff member is shot:**

- The nurse should respond to this individual and seek immediate attention.
- Apply pressure to prevent bleeding. Be mindful of the level of the pressure being applied, since this could move the bullet and complicate the existing problem.
- Do not give water to the individual, this only hastens the speed that poisoning will occur in the body.
- Avoid crowding of the individual.

Step 3: Law Enforcement Response & Suspect Containment – Led by JCF

Allow law enforcement to control the situation upon arrival on the compound.

1. If the firearm is pointed at someone, officers will initiate an active threat containment strategy, requiring controlled engagement and the potential use of force.
2. All members of the school body must take instructions from law enforcement.
3. Scool staff must fully cooperate with law enforcement, avoiding independent interventions.
4. The Principal must **liaise with JCF incident commanders** for ongoing situational updates.
5. **Law enforcement must systematically sweep the premises** to confirm that no accomplices, additional weapons, or further threats exist.
6. All students and staff must remain locked until the threat is neutralised.
7. The Principal must allow law enforcement to handle all questioning and disciplinary actions.

Step 4: Safe Evacuation Procedures in Coordination with JCF – Led by JCF

Only evacuate under JCF instruction and proceed to designated safe zones.

1. **Follow single-file evacuation procedures**, keeping hands raised and visible.
2. Do not pick up belongings or attempt to record the situation on mobile devices.

Step 5: Post-Threat Neutralization & Controlled Evacuation- – Led by JCF

1. **Once the shooter is neutralised:**
    - **The JCF will signal the end of the lockdown** after thorough verification.
    - **The Fire Brigade, Police and CIMT will organise a systematic evacuation**, starting with areas closest to the incident.
2. **The Vice Principal must set up a reunification point** for students and staff to meet with families.
3. At the Reunification point, a designated Parent Information Center must be established to coordinate family communications.
4. Ensure the Regional Trauma Response Team (RTRT) [now referred to as Community of Care Team], Guidance Counsellor, and other mental health professionals can immediately support those affected.
5. The Senior Teacher will distribute class rosters, and all classroom teachers will take a roll call before any evacuation procedure.

Step 6: Medical Response Team – Led by Nurse, JCF and JFB

1. **The School Nurse must immediately classify injuries based on severity:**

2. The School nurse pressure bandages, tourniquets, or makeshift wound dressings to control bleeding and ensure all victims remain stable while awaiting transport.
3. If ambulance services are delayed, JCF and JFB must coordinate with the CIMT alternative transport.
4. The Nurse must ensure that a police officer, under the direction of a medical practitioner or a Teacher, escorts injured minors in available vehicles to the nearest hospital.
5. School administrators must alert hospitals in advance about incoming trauma cases.
6. All staff transporting patients must be directed to the most accessible entry points for rapid patient transport.
7. The Vice Principal must notify parents/guardians when students are transported.

Step 4: Lockdown Lift & Controlled School Reopening

1. Once the suspect is neutralised and the JCF has announced that the compound/campus and premises are secure, law enforcement must authorise the "All Clear" signal (three long tones/rings).

2. The CIMT must conduct a structured exit from the lockdown, ensuring a controlled return to normal operations.

3. All Classroom Teachers must follow structured evacuation procedures as directed by police. They must follow single-file evacuation procedures, keeping hands raised and visible, and not pick up belongings or attempt to record the situation on mobile devices.

4. The Senior Teacher should inform parents/guardians via official school communication channels to prevent misinformation or panic.

Step 5: Post-Incident Review & Investigation –

1. The Principal will contact the Chairman of the Board and update them on the incident.

2. The Principal will conduct an emergency debriefing session for students and staff directly affected by the discovery.

3. The CIMT will collaborate with law enforcement for criminal investigations or legal actions.

4. The Guidance Counsellor and the Regional Trauma Response Team (RTRT) [now referred to as Community of Care Team] will offer PFA and trauma counselling services.

5. Guidance Counsellor to identify high-risk students or staff experiencing post-incident anxiety for follow-up mental health support.

6. The Dean of Discipline and Guidance Counsellor will assist law enforcement with their investigation, including providing witness reports and surveillance footage. The Dean of Discipline will liaise with law enforcement about witness and evidence management.

7. The CIMT will conduct a security review to assess vulnerabilities that allowed a firearm onto school premises.

School events such as sports days, concerts, and public gatherings attract large crowds, including students, parents, staff, and community members.

The open and dynamic nature of these events heightens security risks. Therefore, schools are required to ensure that the JCF is present at all significant gatherings or events organised by the school.

RECOVERY

9.1 Trauma Support & Counselling

9.1.1 Debriefing and Counselling

Firearm-related incidents on school premises pose a significant psychological and emotional burden on students, staff, and the wider school community. The CIMP outlines the need for emergency debriefing and trauma management following critical incidents. However, firearm-related incidents demand an enhanced trauma response framework that specifically addresses the immediate and long-term psychological effects of gun violence exposure.

The Regional Trauma Response Team (RTRT) [now referred to as Community of Care Team], in collaboration with the school's Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT), plays a pivotal role in delivering immediate and structured post-incident psychological support. This ensures that individuals affected by firearm-related threats or violence receive timely intervention, minimising the risk of long-term psychological distress and facilitating emotional recovery.

9.1.2 Key Considerations for Firearm Trauma Debriefing and Support

9.1.2.1 Immediate Response (Within the First Few Hours) – Psychological First Aid (PFA)

Stabilise individuals in acute distress, provide immediate emotional regulation, and assess initial psychological needs. Initial interventions should focus on re-establishing a sense of safety, addressing immediate emotional needs, and providing structured guidance on coping mechanisms.

On-site crisis responders should be available to support students and staff in processing initial reactions and guiding them through the next steps in trauma recovery.

Key Actions:

- Activate the Community of Care Team to provide on-site psychological support.
- Identify and prioritise high-risk individuals, including those who were in direct danger or witnessed the firearm incident.
- Implement Psychological First Aid (PFA) to help individuals process immediate shock, fear, or panic.
- Provide safe spaces for affected students and staff to discuss their initial reactions in a controlled environment.
- Ensure immediate parental contact and involvement for younger students in distress.
- Reassure students and staff about security measures in place to prevent further harm.

9.1.2.2 First 24 Hours – Initial Trauma Debriefing Sessions

Begin structured trauma debriefing to provide initial emotional support, normalise reactions, and assess for signs of deeper trauma responses.

Key Actions:

- Conduct group debriefing sessions led by trained trauma counsellors to allow affected individuals to process their emotions.
- Provide individual debriefing opportunities for students and staff who need one-on-one psychological support.
- Identify and document students/staff showing signs of acute stress reactions.
- Inform the school community of available counseling services and encourage voluntary participation.

- Ensure the Principal, teachers, and staff are briefed on potential trauma responses and how to provide in-school support.
- Facilitate an emergency staff meeting to outline continued mental health support strategies.

9.1.2.3 24–48 Hours – Targeted Support & Monitoring for PTSD Symptoms

Provide continued trauma support, identify at-risk individuals for further intervention, and begin structured trauma screenings.

Key Actions:

- Follow up with students and staff who exhibited high distress in initial debriefing sessions.
- Deploy school counsellors and trauma specialists to conduct targeted mental health screenings for individuals struggling to regulate emotions.
- Ensure teachers are provided with guidelines for recognising delayed trauma responses in students.
- Begin classroom-based support strategies, including structured discussions about safety and emotional well-being.
- Introduce traumatically informed teaching methods to minimise stress triggers in the classroom.
- Engage parents/guardians in follow-up discussions, guiding them on how to support children at home.

9.1.2.4 3–7 Days – Structured Intervention & Reintegration Support

Transition from crisis intervention to structured recovery, reinforcing resilience and providing continuous monitoring.

Key Actions:

- Monitor students and staff for emerging delayed trauma responses (e.g., sleep disturbances, heightened anxiety, difficulty concentrating).
- Provide additional counselling for individuals still experiencing distress beyond the first 48 hours.
- Host resilience-building workshops for students and staff, focusing on coping strategies**,** emotional regulation, and post-trauma recovery.
- Engage peer support networks to facilitate recovery through social connectedness.
- Ensure any student exhibiting persistent signs of distress is referred for longer-term counselling or professional psychiatric evaluation.

9.1.2.5 7 Days & Beyond – Long-Term Recovery & Trauma-Informed Monitoring

Establish long-term trauma recovery strategies and ensure a sustained support system for affected individuals and specialised interventions for any students or staff at risk of complex PTSD (C-PTSD).

Key Actions:

- Continue mental health monitoring and structured counselling sessions as needed.
- Identify students and staff with past exposure to chronic violence, domestic abuse, or repeated trauma, as they may be at higher risk for developing C-PTSD following a firearm-related incident. Staff should be referred to a private clinical psychologist, and students

should be referred to the Ministry of Health and Wellness- Child Guidance Clinic.

- Review incident response and refine protocols based on effectiveness.
- Conduct ongoing staff training in trauma-informed classroom management.
- Integrate trauma-sensitive school policies that foster long-term emotional resilience.
- Organise post-incident review meetings with the Regional Trauma Response Team (RTRT) [now referred to as Community of Care Team] to assess the effectiveness of interventions.
- Engage community partners, law enforcement, and social workers in strengthening school-wide firearm risk prevention efforts.
- Follow up at 30-day, 60-day, and 90-day intervals to assess long-term emotional and psychological impacts.

9.1.3 Long-Term Trauma Support & Counselling Plan

The Guidance and Counselling Unit will implement a long-term support and counselling plan for students and staff suffering from severe PTSD.

9.2 Incident Debriefing & Lessons Learned

Following a firearm-related incident, the Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT) is responsible for leading structured debriefing sessions to assess the response, address emotional recovery, and implement lessons learned for future preparedness.

The CIMT must facilitate a coordinated post-incident review, engaging students, staff, law enforcement, and emergency responders in a comprehensive evaluation of the incident and its management. This process ensures that all stakeholders can reflect on their roles, discuss challenges encountered, and recommend improvements to strengthen school security protocols. A structured debriefing fosters psychological recovery, operational effectiveness, and community trust in the school's crisis management framework.

A trauma-informed debriefing approach must be prioritized, particularly for students and staff affected by the incident. The CIMT, in collaboration with mental health professionals, guidance counsellors, and Regional Trauma Response Team (RTRT) [now referred to as Community of Care Team], must organize age-appropriate debriefing sessions to help students process their emotions in a supportive and structured environment. These sessions should include guided discussions, stress management techniques, and reassurance strategies to normalize emotional responses and promote healing. The CIMT must also ensure that individual counseling referrals are available for students and staff experiencing heightened distress, PTSD symptoms, or difficulties reintegrating into daily activities.

From an operational perspective, the CIMT must conduct a formal post-incident review with law enforcement, security personnel, and school administration to analyze the effectiveness of the emergency response and identify areas for improvement. This review should examine communication effectiveness, lockdown or evacuation procedures, law enforcement coordination, and response timelines to determine strengths and gaps in the school's crisis response framework. Based on this assessment, the CIMT must prepare a Report. These lessons learned from the debriefing should also be documented and shared with relevant education and security authorities to contribute to broader school safety policies.

Finally, the CIMT must ensure that the school community receives ongoing support and reassurance following the incident. This includes organizing follow-up safety meetings with parents and staff, keeping stakeholders informed about security improvements, and ensuring long-term access to mental health resources.

By leading a thorough debriefing and post-incident review, the CIMT reinforces the school's commitment to safety, resilience, and continuous improvement, helping students, staff, and parents regain confidence in their school environment.

Appendix 1- School Evacuation Plan Form (Extracted from Critical Incident Management Plan)

First Option:	
CIMT post:	
Student assembly site:	
Parent site:	
Media site	
Second Option:	
Student assembly site:	
Parent site:	
Media site:	
Third Option:	
CIMT post	
Student assembly site	
Parent site	
Media site	

Appendix 2 - Emergency Contact List Template

(To be updated and reviewed annually)

SCHOOL INFORMATION EMERGENCY CONTACT LIST

- **School Name:** _____
- **School Address:** _____
- **Principal's Name:** _____
- **Primary Emergency Contact Person:** _____
- **Alternate Emergency Contact Person:** _____

Emergency Assembly Point: _____

External Evacuation Point: _____

LAW ENFORCEMENT & SECURITY RESPONSE

Agency	Contact Person	Emergency Hotline	Secondary Contact	Notes
Jamaica Constabulary Force (JCF) - Nearest Police Station		119		For reporting active threats, weapons, or school intrusions
JCF School Resource Officer (SRO)				Assigned officer for school security

Ministry of Education Security Unit				For school-related security concerns
Private Security Provider (if applicable)				
MEDICAL & FIRE SERVICES				
Jamaica Fire Brigade - Nearest Station				For fire emergencies and medical response
Nearest Public Hospital (Emergency Unit)				
Nearest Private Hospital/Clinic				
School Nurse/First Aid Coordinator				On-site medical assistance
Ambulance Service (if available)				
Agency	**Contact Person**	**Emergency Hotline**	**Secondary Contact**	**Notes**

CHILD PROTECTION & PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT				
Child Protection & Family Services Agency (CPFSA)		211		
School Guidance Counselor				
Regional Trauma Response Team (RTT) – MOE				
Ministry of Health – Mental Health Unit				
Local Social Services Department				
OTHER ESSENTIAL EMERGENCY CONTACTS				
Disaster Management Office (ODPEM - Natural Disasters)				
Electricity Provider (JPS) - Report Hazards				
Water & Sewage Authority (NWC) - Emergency Repairs				
Member of Parliament				

- **This list must be posted in all staff rooms, administrative offices, and key areas.**
- **All school personnel must know primary emergency contacts.**
- **Ensure a copy is included in all school emergency kits and digital records.**
- **Review and update emergency contacts annually.**

Appendix 3 - Stakeholder Consultations

No.	Name	Gender	Position	Organisation	Date and Time
1	Dr. Timar Stephenson	Male	Senior Education Officer	Planning & Development Division Ministry of Education, Skills, Youth and Information (MOESYI)	December 19, 2024, 9:00 a.m.
2	Mr. Marlon Williams	Male	Senior Officer	Performing Arts Department, MOESYI	December 19, 2024, 10:00 a.m.
3	Miss Jennifer Williams	Female	President	Association of Principals & Vice Principals	January 13, 2024, 9:30 a.m.
4	Mrs. T Thompson Reid	Female	Vice Principal	Queens High School	
5	Ms. Charmaine Muirhead	Female	Technical Specialist for Governance	Planning Institute of Jamaica (PIOJ) Community Renewal Program (CRP)	January 14, 2024, 11:30 p.m.
6	Dr. Steven Kerr	Male	Director, Policy Analysis & Research Unit	Planning & Development Division, MOESYI	January 15, 2025, 10:00 a.m.
7	Mr. Dave Brown	Male	Deputy Superintendent of Police	The Counterterrorism and Organised Crime (C-TOC)	January 16, 2025. 11:00 a.m.
8	Kennecy Haynes Davidson	Female	Assistant Chief Education Officer, Guidance and Counselling Unit.	Guidance & Counselling Unit, MOESYI	January 21, 2025, 9:00 a.m.
9	Georgia Lowe	Female	Inspector, Kingston and St Andrew	Community, Safety and Security Branch, JCF	January 23, 2025 3:00 p.m.
10	Ms. Anna Kay Magnus Watson	Female	Senior Education Officer	Health and Family Life Education Core Curriculum Unit, MOESYI	January 24, 2025 12:00p.m.
11	Ms. Yanique Williams	Female	Senior Director, Acting	Youth and Adolescent Policy Division, MOESYI	January 24, 2025 No show
12	Jade Williams	Female	Policy and Advocacy Specialist	Jamaicans for Justice (JFJ)	January 24, 2025, 10:00 a.m.
13	Ms. Shashion Thomas	Female	Senior Project Economist	Planning Institute of Jamaica	
14	Ms. Delores Wade	Female	Director, Multilateral Technical Cooperation Unit		January 24, 2025 2:00p.m.
15	Stewart Jacobs	Male	President	National Parent Teachers Association of Ja.	No meeting confirmed.
16	Ms. Jamie Ann Chevannes	Female	Principal Director, Social Justice Division	Ministry of Justice	January 27, 2025 1:00 p.m.
17	Dr Mark Smith	Male	President	Jamaica Teachers Association	January 29, 2025, 10:00 a.m.
18	Dr. Rene Level	Female	President	National Association of Deans of Discipline	Attended Focus Group Discussion
19	Yanique Williams	Female	Senior Director, Acting	Youth and Adolescent Policy Division, MOEYSI	January 28, 2025, 10:00 a.m. (no meeting held)
20	Ms. Valerie McKenzie	Female	Director of Advocacy	Jamaica Psychological Society	January 30, 2025, 2:00 p.m.
21	Linda Gallimore Miller (Region 3)	Female	Focus Group Discussion Regional Education Officers	MOESYI	February 3, 2025, 9:00 a.m.
22	Lesbert Drysdale (Region 2)	Male			
23	Patrice Supria (Region 7)	Female			
24	Jacqueline Gardiner (Region 4)	Female			
25	Janet Davis (Region 1)	Female			
26	Fiona Morris Webb (Region 6)	Female			
27	Mr. Richard Troupe	Male	Safety and Security Director (Acting)	MOESYI	February 4, 2025, 3:30p.m.
28	Renee Mair (Reg. 6)	Female	Focus Group Discussion Guidance Counsellors- Regional Presidents	MOESYI	February 5, 2025, 10:30 a.m.

No.	Name	Gender	Position	Organisation	Date and Time
29	Marcia Reid Walker (Reg. 1)	Female			
30	Oneil Lewin (Reg.)	Male			
31	Kerry Ann Bennett (Reg.	Female			
32	Leighton Campbell (Reg.	Male			
32	Clemen Law (Reg. 2)	Female			
34	Venesha Williams (Reg. 7)	Female			
35	Verna Vassell (Reg. 5)	Female			
36	Chaleen Webb Hines	Female			
37	Christine Hews Johnson (Denham Town High – President Reg. 1)	Female	Focus Group Discussion Deans of Discipline	MOESYI	February 5, 2025, 2:30 p.m.
38	Dean Humes (Denbeigh High School- Region 7)	Female			
39	Patrick Jones (Knox College, Reg 7)	Male			
40	Ryan Henry (Kellits High School, Reg 7)	Male			
41	Participant (Claude Mckay High)	Female			
42	Nicoy Reid (May Day High)	Male			
43	Dr. Level (President)	Female			
44	Duane Hartley(Region 2)	Male			
45	Angella Davidson (Reg 5)	Female			
46	Michael Irving (Foga Road High School, Region 7)	Male			
47	Renee Mair (Bridgeport High- Reg. 6)	Female	Focus Group Discussions Guidance Counsellors/Social Workers	MOESYI	February 7, 2025, 2:00 p.m.
48	Maria Reid Walker (Whitfield Primary, Reg. 1)	Female			
49	Leighton Campbell (Knox College, National President)	Male			
50	Veneshia Williamson Carty (Vere Technical High, Reg7)	Female			
51	Clement Lawes (Port Antonia Primary, Reg 2)	Male			
52	O'Neil Lewin (Principal Vere Technical)	Male	Focus Group Discussions Principals	MOESYI	February 6, 2025, 9:00 a.m.
53	Jeniffer Williams President	Female			
54	Alfred Thomas (Browns Town High, Reg.3)	Male			
55	Erica Ewbanks (Garvey Maceo High School, Reg 7)	Female			
56	Mark Malabver (Yallahs High School, Reg. 2)	Male			
57	Anthony Garwood (Dinthill Technical High)	Male			
58	Marvin Clowson	Male (Principal)	Ocho Rios High School - St Ann Site Visit Principal Guidance Counsellor Dean of Discipline	MOESYI	February 10, 2025

No.	Name	Gender	Position	Organisation	Date and Time
59	Dwayne Parkinson	Male (Guidance Counsellor)			
60	Teresa Lyle Anderson	Female (Dean of Discipline)			
61	Mr. Newton Douglas	Male	Director, Policy Planning and Evaluation	Child Protection Family Services Agency	February 12, 2025, 2:30 p.m.
62	Mr. Shane Dalling	Male	Chief Executive Officer	Firearms Licensing Authority	February 14, 2025, 11: 00 a.m.
63	Courtney Berry (Reg 7)	Male	Focus Group Discussions Regional Safety Coordinator	Jamaica Constabulary Force	February 18, 2025
64	Nina Dixon (Reg 3)	Female			
65	Sade Smith-Joseph (Reg 1)	Female			
66	Tajnah Rowe (Reg 4)	Female			
67	Angella Davidson (Reg. 5)	Female			
68	Sylvia Johnson-Taylor (Reg 6)	Female			
69	Charlene McLaughlin (Rep. MOEYSI)	Female	Focus Group Discussions Members	Jamaica Prefects Association Campion College, MOEYSI	February 18, 2025 6:00 p.m.
70	Rasheed Downer Jr. (Vice President Reg 6- Hidel High School)	Male			
71	Lisa Simone Taylor (VP Reg 7, Glenmuir High School)	Female			
72	Amoy Sterling (National Chairperson- Wolmer's Boys School)	Male			
73	Rheanna Robison (National President, Reg 1 Immaculate Conception High School)	Female			
74	Elijah McDonald (General Secretary-Meadowbrook High School)	Male			
75	Ajuanie Wright (National Treasurer- Glenmuir High School)	Male			
76	Gabriella Forrester	Female	Focus Group Discussions Members	National Secondary Student Council (NSSC)	February 19, 2025 6:00 p.m.
77	Lisanne McKenzie	Female			
78	Leroy Carter (MOESYI Representative)	Male			
79	Laurel Williams	Female			
80	Mrs. Diahann Gordon Harrison	Female	Children's Advocate	Office of the Children's Advocate (OCA)	February 19, 2025 10:00 a.m.
81	Mr. Michael Morgan	Male	Chief Technical Director Law Enforcement, Border Security, Forensics, Defense and Protective Security Division	Ministry of National Security	March 4, 2025 10:00 a.m.
82	Ms. Samantha Allen	Female	Senior Director, Protective Security & Small Arms		
83	Sergeant Andrew Williams	Male	Focus Group Discussions	Community Safety Security Branch -	March 6, 2025 9:00 a.m.
84	Dr. Paulette Ferrari	Female			
85	Corporal George Morgan	Male			

No.	Name	Gender	Position	Organisation	Date and Time
86	Corporal Nellesia Daley	Female	School Resource Officers	Jamaica Constabulary Force	
87	Corporal Moesha Allen	Female			
88	Sergeant Delroy Cole	Male			
89	Sergeant Wayne Wallace	Male			
90	Constable Joel Robinson	Male			
91	Corporal Michael Wright	Male			
92	Mr. Maleke Bennett	Male	Law Student (Former student of Johnathan Grant High School	MOESYI	Tuesday, March 18, 2025 @ 11:00 a.m.
93	Ms. Kaysia Kerr	Female	National Parent Support Commission	MOESYI	April 4, 2025 @1:30 p.m.
94	Mrs. Kennecy Davidson	Female	Guidance & Counselling Unit	MOESYI	April 7, 2025
95	Ms. Simone Smith Parkins	Female	Senior Education Officer, Guidance and Counselling Unit		
96	Ms. Kimberly Osborne	Female	Guidance Counselling Unit		
97	Ms. Angella Murphy	Female			
98	Ms. Tamika McCreath	Female			
99	Kareme Aikens-Mitchell	Female	Consultant	Technical Consultant- National Safe School Policy	April , 2025 @ 11:00 a.m.
100	Mr. Michael Morgan	Male	Chief Technical Director, Law Enforcement, Border Security, Forensics, Defence and Protective Security	Ministry of National Security	April 7, 2025
101	Ms. Samantha Allen	Female	Snr. Policy Director, Protective Security and Small Arms		
102	Vonetta Johnson-Smith	Female	President	School Nurses Special Interest Group	May 9, 2025
103	Shantoi Tinker	Female	Executive Member		
104	Mr. Lloyd Holmes	Male	Principal Hillel Academy	Jamaica Independent Schools Association	May 8, 2025
105	Heather Gooden	Female	Regional Officers	Jamaica Independent Schools Association	May 19, 2025
106	Trudy Hardy	Female			
107	Audette Isaacs	Female			
108	Blondel Duffus	Female			
109	Executive Management	Not Captured	Members	Umbrella Group of Churches	June 5, 2025
110	Mrs. Dionne Gayle	Female	Chief Education Officer	Special Education Unit, MOESYI	June 5, 2025
111	Mr. Vivian Blake	Male	Education Officer		

Appendix 4 – Technical Working Group Members

No.	Name	Position	Organisation
1	Richard Troupe	Director, Acting	Safety and Security in Schools Unit, MOEYSI
2	Steven Kerr	Director, Policy Analysis & Research Unit	Planning & Development Division, MOEYSI
3	Timar Stephenson	Senior Education Officer	Planning & Development Division, MOEYSI
4	Kennecy Haynes Davidson	Assistant Chief Education Officer, Guidance and Counselling Unit.	Guidance & Counselling Unit, MOEYSI
5	Anna Kay Magnus Watson	Senior Education Officer	Health and Family Life Education Core Curriculum Unit, MOEYSI
6	Marlon Williams	Senior Officer	Performing Arts Department, MOEYSI
7	Yanique Williams	Senior Director, Acting	Youth and Adolescent Policy Division, MOEYSI
8	Delores Wade	Director, Multilateral Technical Cooperation Unit	Planning Institute of Jamaica
9	Shashion Thomas	Senior Project Economist	Planning Institute of Jamaica
10	Charmaine Muirhead	Technical Specialist for Governance	Planning Institute of Jamaica (CRP)
11	Jennifer Williams	President	Association of Principals & Vice Principals, MOEYSI
12	Mark Smith	President	Jamaica Teachers Association, MOEYSI
13	Stewart Jacobs	President	National Parent Teachers Association of Ja., MOEYSI
14	Rene Level	President	National Association of Deans of Discipline, MOEYSI
15	Rochina Anderson	President	Jamaica Association of Guidance Counsellors in Education (JAGC), MOEYSI
16	Jamie Ann Chevannes	Principal Director, Social Justice Division	Ministry of Justice
17	Marlon Singleton	Education Officer	MoEY's Planning & Development Division
18	Dave Brown	DSP	C-TOC--JCF
19	Laurel Williams	National President	National Secondary Student Council (NSSC) - Glenmuir High
20	Aimar Sterling	Chairman	Jamaica Prefects Association Campion College, MOEYSI
21	Oshane D Hall	Region 3, Vice President	National Secondary Student Council (NSSC) - Ferncourt High
22	Shaquan Whyte	Region 6, Vice President	National Secondary Student Council (NSSC) - Charlemont High, MOEYSI
23	Georgia Lowe	Community, Safety and Security Branch	Jamaica Constabulary Force (JCF)
24	Andrew Williams	National Safe Schools Coordinator, Community, Safety and Security Branch	Jamaica Constabulary Force (JCF)

No.	Name	Position	Organisation
25	Simone Parkins	Senior Education Officer, Guidance and Counselling Unit	Guidance & Counselling Unit. MOESYI.
26	Andrea Murray	Inspector, Community Safety and Security Branch	Jamaica Constabulary Force (JCF)
27	Alyssa Allen	Child Protection Officer	UNICEF
28	Ruth Carey	Technical Consultant - Drafting the Protocols for the Ministry of Education, Youth, Skills and Information	UNLIREC
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Appendix 5 – Four-Tiered Firearm Threat Response Protocol – Quick Reference Guide

This guide provides a structured overview of the school's tiered response system to firearm-related incidents. Each tier represents an escalating level of risk and includes specific response actions to be followed by school personnel.

TIER 1 – LOW

Potential or unverified threat with no immediate danger (e.g., verbal, written, or social media threats).

- **Key Response Actions:**

1. Detection and reporting of threat to Principal and JCF.
2. Initial assessment by CIMT.
3. Interview and incident documentation.
4. Escalation if firearm suspected; otherwise, disciplinary action and review.

TIER 2 – MODERATE

Suspicion of or discovery of imitation/replica firearm.

- **Key Response Actions:**

1. Keep area clear; DO NOT touch suspected weapon.
2. Notify Principal, SRO, and JCF.
3. Secure and visually assess area.
4. Initiate lockdown if authenticity unclear.
5. Disciplinary action and parent communication.

TIER 3 – HIGH

Confirmed possession or brandishing of a firearm without discharge.

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a. Key Response Actions:

1. Immediate lockdown and police notification.
2. Area secured by trained staff only.
3. Classroom and perimeter security activated.
4. Controlled engagement with student and firearm containment.
5. Post-incident debrief and trauma support.

TIER 4 – CRITICAL

Active shooter or imminent armed attack (on campus or nearby).

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a. Key Response Actions:

1. RUN – if safe; HIDE – Drop, Crawl, Roll; FIGHT – last resort.
2. Full lockdown; notify JCF immediately.
3. Secure classrooms; silent mode activated.
4. Evacuation only under JCF instruction.
5. Medical triage, reunification, and post-crisis trauma support.

Appendix 6 – Bibliography

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