Aon's 2017 Independent Schools' Risk Report

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

1. CYBER RISK

- **Fluidity of school IT networks** – remote access for students and parents opens up additional cyber risk exposure

- **Rise in ransomware attacks** – the most prevalent form of attack in other areas of the economy, and must be considered as a potential risk exposure in schools

- **Social and cyber bullying** – protection can come from awareness-raising campaigns coupled with cyber and social network policies linked to enrolment terms

- **Regulation** – new data breach rules and what they mean for schools

2. SCHOOL GOVERNANCE

- **Best practice** – means continually reviewing and refreshing how the board operates

- **Governance effectiveness** – wide and varied techniques used by school boards to ensure governance effectiveness in their schools

  - **Popular techniques** – written protocol documents, inductions, internal reviews and external training are the most popular ways to achieve governance effectiveness

  - **Developing techniques** – external consultants, sharing best practice and using a formal assessment tool are all areas that could be worth exploring further, to move towards ensuring board governance effectiveness

3. BRAND AND REPUTATION

- **Highly ranked** – this year's second most pressing risk concern

- **Fresh issues each year** – cyber bullying, terror attacks, allegations of child abuse, allergic reactions

- **Instantaneous nature of communication** – ease of publishing to social media decreases control of an event

- **Not set and forget** – it is important to acknowledge the difference between having a plan in place, and being able to execute it

4. BUSINESS CONTINUITY

- **Resilience is key** – it's about building a resilient school

- **Critical incident planning** – majority of schools have a critical incident plan in place to help deal with the immediate impacts of an event

- **Business continuity planning** – picks up where the critical incident plan ends. For example, the business continuity plan (BCP) gets students back in front of a teacher, as soon as possible, after a natural disaster damages school buildings

  - Roughly half of schools surveyed have no BCP in place

- **BCP testing** – on the increase among schools, it is key to test any plans that you have in place

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5. STUDENT TRAVEL

- **International travel** – schools show no sign of limiting their overseas excursions and student travel, however a more holistic approach to risk is being taken, including:
  - Comprehensive risk assessments
  - Local knowledge of destination
  - Purchasing group travel insurance for any overseas school excursion

6. STUDENT AND STAFF WELLBEING

- **Correlation exists** – between student safety and wellbeing, and a school's sustainability

- **Spread of information or misinformation is accelerated** – safety or wellbeing incidents can easily turn into media hype

- **Psycho-social challenges** – supporting teaching staff is key as jobs become more stressful – psycho-social challenges require more than just a written policy

- **Mental health programmes** – mitigate risks of mental health which include a decline in productivity, increase in absences, and greater incidence of claims by employees

- **Consider the environment both physically and only** – a safe working environment that extends beyond school walls into the online social realm should be a priority for schools

7. TALENT AND ENGAGEMENT

- **War for talent** – access to skills and experience can impact on a school's performance and reputation – could threaten long term viability

- **Reward** – not just quantum of salary, but perceived fairness by staff

- **Measurement of staff engagement varies** – schools are slightly behind the curve compared to industry in general

- **Effective talent management** – the result of an intentional well thought out and executed strategy requiring executive leadership, ownership and drive

- **Succession planning** – should be included in any robust talent management strategy

8. COMPLIANCE

- **Staying compliant** – imperative for all staff to have valid and current skills for a school to deliver quality education and a safe environment, including appropriate and current qualifications and registrations

- **Record keeping is manual** – most schools surveyed keep manual records, managed by an administrator. Reliance on manual processes exposes schools to risks

- **Technology can assist** – increased usage of central system to store qualifications, and send automatic renewal reminders and rebook courses