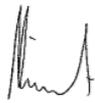




The Bridge Short Stay School

OFFENSIVE WEAPONS POLICY

Lead responsibility for policy	A Stewart Date: September 2020
Approved (Head Teacher)	 Date: September 2020
Date policy due for renewal	September 2021

Offensive Weapons Policy

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Statement of intent

The Bridge Short Stay School recognises there are occasions when school-aged children are found carrying offensive weapons, or through their social welfare issues may be at threat of harm from others. The school acknowledges our duty to ensure that students and staff are safe and that students understand the repercussions of carrying weapons.

The safety of all staff and students is paramount and as such offensive weapons are expressly forbidden from the school site and all school activities, wherever they may be taking place.

Through this policy, we aim to:

- Outline the weapons that are legally considered offensive, and the weapons that the school has placed a strict ban on.
- Establish clear and accurate reporting procedures that can be easily followed by students and staff.
- Outline a procedure for investigating any reports, which will be followed accurately and consistently.
- Provide staff with unambiguous management guidelines to follow if a student is found to be carrying a weapon.
- Establish how the school will support and reintegrate students following an incident, wherever possible.
- Outline the school's methods for ensuring students are kept safe from harm.

1. Legal framework

1.1. This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation including, but not limited to, the following:

- Prevention of Crime Act 1953
- Offensive Weapons Act 1996
- Offensive Weapons Act 2019
- Criminal Justice Act 1988
- European Convention of Human Rights 1953
- Education Act 1996
- Education and Inspections Act 2006
- Legal Aid Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012
- Crossbows Acts 1987
- Firearms Act 1968

1.2. This policy has due regard to all relevant guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- DfE (2018) 'Searching, screening and confiscation'
- Home Office (2012) 'Knives and offensive weapons information'
- DfE (2018) 'Keeping children safe in education'

1.3. This policy operates in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Safeguarding Policy
- Searching, Screening and Confiscation Policy
- Reasonable Force Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- Exclusion Policy
- CCTV Policy

1.4. It is illegal to:

- Sell a knife of any kind to anyone under the age of 18
- Buy a knife under the age of 18
- Carry a knife in public without good reason, e.g. use at work – unless it has a folding blade with a cutting edge three inches long or less, e.g. a Swiss army knife
- Carry, buy or sell a banned knife, e.g. a butterfly knife
- Use any knife or other object in a threatening way (including any legal knife)
- Possess a firearm without a licence
- Possess a corrosive substance in public, without a valid reason
- Sell a corrosive substance to anyone under the age of 18

2. Definitions

2.1. For the purpose of this policy, an offensive weapon is defined as an article that is made, adapted or intended to cause injury to another person, including mental and physical injury.

2.2. For the purpose of this policy, made, adapted or intended is defined as articles that:

- Have been designed to cause harm to another person, e.g. a butterfly knife (**made**).
- Have been altered to cause harm to another person, e.g. an otherwise inoffensive object that has been sharpened to form a point (**adapted**).
- Are being carried with the express purpose to cause harm to another person but are not necessarily an obviously dangerous item, e.g. a cricket bat could be used for sport or to cause injury (**intended**).

2.3. For the purpose of this policy, produced is defined as when a person uses, or threatens someone with, an offensive weapon.

2.4. For the purpose of this policy, not produced is defined as when a person has an offensive weapon on their person, but it is not used, including not used to threaten someone.

3. Roles and responsibilities

3.1. The management committee is responsible for:

- Monitoring the effectiveness of this policy and conducting reviews following any offensive weapon incidents

3.2. The Headteacher is responsible for:

- Implementing this policy and ensuring that all students are clear on the procedure that will be followed if a report is made that someone is in possession of an offensive weapon
- Ensuring all staff have read and understood the stipulations of this policy
- Investigating any reports of offensive weapons in liaison with the DSL

3.3. The DSL is responsible for:

- Monitoring the anonymous offensive weapons reporting form and processing any reports that are made.
- Investigating any reports of offensive weapons in liaison with the Headteacher.
- Giving termly reminders to students and staff of how to file anonymous offensive weapons reports.

3.4. All staff are responsible for:

- Reading and understanding the stipulations in this policy
- Taking part in any offensive weapons training that is organised through the school
- Making offensive weapons reports, if they have any suspicions about any member of the school community

3.5. Students are responsible for:

- Adhering to the provisions of this policy in terms of not having prohibited items on their person.
- Informing a member of staff or completing an anonymous offensive weapons report if they have any suspicions that someone is carrying an offensive weapon, in accordance with section five of this policy.

3.6. Parents are responsible for:

- Ensuring their children understand the repercussions of carrying an offensive item in a public place, including a school.
- Informing the school if they are concerned about their child's behaviour or safety, in line with the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.
- Understanding the repercussions of carrying an offensive weapon themselves.

4. Offensive weapons list

4.1. The following items are banned by law, regardless of their intended use:

- Flick knives
- Butterfly knives
- Disguised knives
- Belt buckle knives
- Push daggers
- Gravity knives
- 'Airport' or stealth knives
- Sword-sticks
- Samurai swords
- Knuckle-dusters
- Hand-claws
- Foot-claws
- Blowpipes or guns
- Hollow kubotan
- Shuriken
- Telescopic truncheons
- Kusari-gama
- Kyoketsu shoge
- Kusari
- Straight, side handled or fiction-lock truncheons – also known as a baton

- A sword with a curved blade of 50 centimetres or over in length
 - Bump stocks.
- 4.2. As outlined in the Crossbows Act 1987, crossbows are prohibited under the age of 18.
- 4.3. Firearms are also considered prohibited items. Firearms include, but are not limited to, the following:
- Starting pistols
 - Air guns
 - Any type of replica or toy gun
- 4.4. The police will be contacted immediately if any student is found to be in possession of any of the illegal items listed above. The school will support the police in any investigations as far as possible, e.g. providing student information.
- 4.5. The maximum penalty for carrying an offensive weapon is four years imprisonment, a fine or both.
- 4.6. The maximum penalty for possessing a corrosive substance in a public place without a valid reason is four years imprisonment, a fine or both.
- 4.7. In addition to the above, the school also considers the following items to be prohibited:
- Fireworks
 - Laser pens
 - Paintball guns
 - Tasers
- 4.8. Any student found to be in possession of an item listed in paragraph 4.7 will have them confiscated in line with the searching, screening and confiscation policy and may result in a fixed term exclusion.
- 4.9. Students will be reminded termly during tutorials about what will happen if they are suspected to be carrying an offensive weapon, and the serious repercussions that students could face for carrying any of the items mentioned above.
- 4.10. It is recognised that some religions require the wearing of a knife, in these instances only replicas that cannot be removed from their sheath will be permitted – the Headteacher’s written permission will be required for this.

5. Reporting procedure

- 5.1. The school encourages all members of the community to report any concerns, but will implement and monitor an anonymous reporting procedure that is available to students, staff and the wider community.
- 5.2. The anonymous reporting procedure can be completed by inputting details through the SHARP system which is linked from the school website, alternatively an anonymous note can be passed to the DSL
- 5.3. The DSL and their deputies will monitor any reports which are made
- 5.4. At the start of each term, the DSL will remind all students and staff how they can make anonymous reports.
- 5.5. Upon receiving a report, the DSL and Headteacher will be responsible for informing the Chair of Governors and the designated Safeguarding Governor and investigating the report.
- 5.6. If a report is made regarding a parent, the DSL will call the police immediately – the school will not investigate this report; however:
 - The parent may be banned from the school premises until the police investigation has been completed
 - Social services may be informed of the investigation
- 5.7. If a report is made regarding a staff member, the DSL, Headteacher and Chair of Governors will use their professional judgement to determine whether to:
 - Hold a meeting with the staff member to investigate the allegation; or
 - Call the police
- 5.8. If a member of the public is on the school site with a weapon, all students and staff will be directed to remain in a safe place

6. Investigation procedure

- 6.1. When a report of a student who may be carrying an offensive weapon is made, the Headteacher and DSL will promptly risk assess the situation, determining:
 - Where the student can be located
 - What risks their surroundings are likely to pose, e.g. a confined space resulting in close proximity to other students
 - Where the student is likely to be carrying the offensive weapon, e.g. on their person or in their bag
- 6.2. Once the student has been located and the Headteacher and DSL have risk assessed the situation, two members of staff will be asked to escort the student to a safe location, e.g. the Headteacher's office.

- 6.3. Once the student is in a safe location, the Headteacher will contact the student's parents and invite them to the school. They will be informed why they are being invited to the school by the Headteacher, who will remain calm and non-accusatory.
- 6.4. The Headteacher will not wait for the parents to arrive at school before moving the student to a safe location.
- 6.5. Once the student's parents have been contacted the Headteacher will make a judgement as to whether to wait for their arrival to discuss the concern with the student. In all cases the Headteacher will wait no longer than 15 minutes.
- 6.6. When the Headteacher discusses their concerns with the student, they will not be confrontational or judgemental.
- 6.7. If the students' parents cannot be present when the Headteacher discusses the concern another member of staff will be present.
- 6.8. The Headteacher will explain why the need to talk to the student and ask the student to empty their bag, the Headteacher will search their outer clothing, in line with the school's Searching, Screening and Confiscation Policy.

7. Management of students

- 7.1. If no weapon has been found after the student's bag and outer clothing has been searched, the Headteacher will use a metal detector wand to search the student.
- 7.2. If still no weapon has been found, the Headteacher will thank the student and their parents for cooperating, answer any questions (where appropriate, e.g. maintaining confidentiality by not informing parents of who raised the report) and send the student back to class.
- 7.3. If the Headteacher searches the student and discovers a weapon, they will use their professional judgement to determine:
 - What kind of weapon it is, e.g. an offensive weapon or a school-banned item
 - The likely intention to cause harm
 - The context of the situation, including the student's educational history, bullying and behavioural records, and any explanations that the student can provide
- 7.4. If a potential weapon is found, the Headteacher will use their professional judgement in considering whether to call the police. For example:
 - If the student brings in an offensive weapon, e.g. a samurai sword, the police will be called immediately

- If a student brings in a smaller or banned item, e.g. Swiss army knife, the school will establish the context of the situation before making a decision
- 7.5. The Headteacher will keep a record of all searches that have been conducted, which will be stored securely in their office.
- 7.6. The school understands the negative effect that exclusion can have on students and will do everything within its power to support, protect and help students; however, possession of an offensive weapon is likely to result in a fixed term exclusion; depending on the context a permanent exclusion is possible
- 7.7. If a weapon of any description is produced and used to threaten, physically or mentally, or harm another person, the headteacher will call the police immediately.
- 7.8. While waiting for the police to arrive, staff will understand and adhere to the following procedure:
- Staff and students will be instructed to move to, or remain in, a safe space
 - Staff will ensure their own and students' safety
 - Staff will do all they can to contain the student, e.g. in a classroom; however, staff will not risk their own safety
 - Staff will try to calm the student down
 - Staff will ensure they keep a safe distance between themselves and the student and they will try to keep items in between themselves and the student, e.g. desks
 - Staff will never put themselves at risk
- 7.9. If someone is attacked with an offensive weapon, the emergency services (police and ambulance) will be called immediately and the school will cooperate with the police's investigation and decision making
- 7.10. Following any incident where a weapon has been produced, this policy will be reviewed by the DSL and Headteacher.
- 7.11. The school's Searching, Screening and Confiscation Policy will be adhered to at all times.

8. Reintegration

- 8.1. While the school never condones carrying a weapon, we understand that there are many reasons as to why a student may feel the need to carry a weapon, e.g. they feel that they are being bullied or threatened
- 8.2. If a student who has been found to be in possession of a weapon remains at the school, the DSL will be responsible for supporting and monitoring the student. The DSL will be responsible for producing and regularly reviewing an individual risk assessment for the student
- 8.3. The DSL will establish the student's reasons for carrying a weapon and will put appropriate support systems in place.
- 8.4. The DSL will hold weekly meetings with the student to monitor their safety and wellbeing until the DSL is satisfied with the student's wellbeing.
- 8.5. Carrying a weapon can be an indicator of a safeguarding concern, e.g. county lines exploitation or neglect, and the DSL will investigate any concerns and make a referral to the appropriate body, e.g. I-ART, if appropriate.
- 8.6. Other students will not be informed that the student was suspected of carrying a weapon.
- 8.7. The student's parents will, if appropriate, be involved in the reintegration plan, e.g. attending the weekly meetings with the DSL.

9. Safeguarding

- 9.1. In line with 'Keeping children safe in education', the school has a duty to protect all students from harm.
- 9.2. The school will conduct annual surveys to establish whether students feel safe, how students could be made to feel safer and to ensure students understand the school's reporting procedures.
- 9.3. The school will hold awareness sessions as part of the PSHE curriculum, in which students will learn about what it means legally to carry or threaten someone with a weapon.
- 9.4. The school will work with other agencies e.g. The Police to hold sessions raising the awareness of the dangers of carrying an offensive weapon.
- 9.5. The school uses hand-held metal detector wands to screen students on entry to school and may be used to identify anyone who is in possession of weapons
- 9.6. All students and parents will be made aware of the school's reporting procedures and the school's commitment to protecting the school community – parents will receive a letter annually.

- 9.7. The school's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy will be adhered to by all staff, parents and students.
- 9.8. All staff receive annual updates including de-escalation techniques, invacuation, lockdown and evacuation procedures, and searching, screening and confiscation procedures.
- 9.9. The school understands that certain students are likely to be more at risk than others in terms of carrying a knife.
- 9.10. Staff will be aware that the following characteristics may make a student more susceptible to carrying an offensive weapon:
 - Disadvantaged backgrounds
 - Students with SEND, e.g. they are more susceptible to county lines or gang exploitation
 - Students from difficult family situations
 - Severely bullied students

10. Monitoring and review

- 10.1. The Headteacher and DSL will review this policy on an annual basis.
- 10.2. The next scheduled review date for this policy is September 2021.
- 10.3. Any changes made to this policy will be immediately communicated to all employees, students and parents.

Managing Offensive Weapon Reports Flowchart

This flowchart outlines what schools should do if a report of a student carrying an offensive weapon is raised.

