



Castle View
Enterprise
Academy

Weapons Policy and Practice Guidance

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SIGNATURES:

CEO Principal	Mrs J. Bridges Mrs J. Owens
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Introduction

The purpose of this policy/practice guidance is to state clearly that the **deliberate** and **intentional** bringing in and use of weapons on our school site will not be tolerated. The use of such weapons on site would create unacceptable risks of bullying, injury and death and is extremely intimidating and frightening for students and adults alike.

If a student deliberately and intentionally brings a weapon onto the school site, the student will be placed on a fixed term exclusion and a disciplinary hearing will be carried out.

Purpose and aim

At Castle View Enterprise Academy, the purpose of this policy/practice guidance is to set out clearly the preventative actions in place to prevent the use of any weapons on our site. This policy/practice guidance will also show the direct actions a school will take around the use of weapons on site considering the full context around each and every incident.

At Castle View Enterprise Academy, we are committed to the safety and well-being of all of our students, staff and parents and will always take immediate action to reduce the risk of harm to any individual on our school site.

What is a weapon

For the purpose of this policy a “weapon” is:

- a firearm of any description, including starting pistols, air guns and any type of replica or toy gun, pellet guns or BB guns;
- knives, including all variations of bladed objects i.e., pocket knives, craft knives, scissors etc;
- explosives, including fireworks, aerosol sprays, lighters, matches;
- laser pens or other objects, even if manufactured for a non-violent purpose but has a potentially violent use i.e., the purpose of keeping or carrying the object is for use, or threat of use, as a weapon;
- Num chukkas, death stars and other martial arts objects;
- Screwdrivers, hammers, chisels, bradles and any tool that could be offensively used;
- razor, razor blades or chains.

Preventative Strategies

Recognition

For all schools and settings, it is important to develop appropriate strategies in order to prevent the issue of weapon misuse or any contextual issues around the misuse of weapons such as children having them to ‘feel safe’ from peers or gangs.

Firstly, and most importantly for schools and settings is recognition that incidents where children bring weapons onto site may happen intentionally as well as unintentionally even with the most stringent of policies. In these cases, the immediate actions taken by staff must be prompt and consistent and therefore ALL staff must know and understand this policy and the expectations of keeping children safe.

In any circumstance where this occurs it is important that senior leaders take forward any learning from such incidents to improve policy, revise training and improve practice.

Creating a safeguarding culture

In order for students and staff to feel safe it is necessary that everyone agrees to and works within the school's ethos and culture of vigilance and positively contributes to the sharing of information where there may be risk. By creating a strong culture of safeguarding within school all individuals accessing the site should feel safe to raise concerns, seek support and for a seamless and consistent response to incidents to be followed. In order to create this environment, the whole workforce and students should receive appropriate learning and training around the expectations upon them in the event that a weapon may be brought onto site. This includes, how to raise the alarm, procedures for lockdown, use of social media and critical incident response. Staff and students should feel able to contribute to this learning/training to understand what to do in a number of potentially different circumstances.

Effective use of the curriculum

Having an effective curriculum in place via PSHE/RHSE (life skill lessons) should support students in understanding the risks around the use of weapons, the legal implications of carrying weapons and the school's response to such incidents. A curriculum that allows strong discussion around the use of weapons may act preventatively to allow students to think twice about the consequences of carrying a weapon and equally may create opportunities for students to share useful intelligence around peer on peer/child on child abuse, gang related behaviours and contextual issues in the local area that may impact on the increased use of weapons. Any such intelligence shared would need to be passed on to the appropriate front door services, police and social care.

Working with parents

Parents need to be aware of the school's stringent policy around weapons and support the decision made by senior leaders in the event of an incident. Parents should always be vigilant of the behaviours of their own children and seek support and intervention when necessary. If parents believe that their child may be carrying a weapon, they should inform the **school immediately** and the **police** in order to protect not only their child but other children and adults. By sharing the information immediate intervention can be offered and a plan of support and services could be put in place without an incident occurring. By continuing good communication between home and school a positive safety plan could be created to manage the safety and the well-being of any child who may need it.

Working with partnership agencies/signposting services

Multi agency working can consolidate in-house procedures in schools/settings. By accessing advice, support and guidance when required, effective decisions can be made in collaboration to improve outcomes for children who may be at risk of harm. Seeking advice and guidance can act as a preventative measure so that the right course of action is taken at the earliest opportunity. If schools continue to promote positive working relationships with front door services such as the police and social care, effective responses and partnership working can achieve positive outcomes for children.

It is important that signposting is also available to students in the event that they don't feel confident raising an issue to staff or a peer. It is useful to have a resource board with support services on a wide range of issues so young people can seek their own solutions should they wish to. In the same way external services or support programmes could be brought in to talk to young people about specific issues in support of the prevention of child on child abuse.

Understanding the Law and Current Guidance

Taken from Searching, Confiscation and Screening, July 2023

Searching

Before any search takes place, the member of staff conducting the search should explain to the student why they are being searched, how and where the search is going to take place and give them the opportunity to ask any questions.

If a student continues to refuse to co-operate, the member of staff will sanction the student in line with the school's behaviour policy, ensuring that they are responding to misbehaviour consistently and fairly. If the student still refuses to co-operate, the member of staff will assess whether it is appropriate to use reasonable force to conduct the search.

A member of staff will search a student's outer clothing, pockets, possessions, desks or lockers.

A strip search is a search involving the removal of more than outer clothing. Strip searches on school premises can only be carried out by police officers under the PACE (Police and Criminal Evidence Act, 1984 Code A). While the decision to undertake the strip search itself and its conduct are police matters, school staff retain a duty of care to the student(s) involved and will advocate for student wellbeing at all times.

Confiscating

An authorised staff member carrying out a search can confiscate any item that they have reasonable grounds for suspecting:

- poses a risk to staff or students;
- is prohibited, or identified in the school rules for which a search can be made; or
- is evidence in relation to an offence

Screening

Schools' statutory power to make rules on student behaviour and their duties as employers in relation to the safety of staff, students and visitors enables them to impose a requirement that students undergo screening.

Screening is the use of a walk-through or hand-held metal detector (arch or wand) to scan all students for weapons before they enter the school premises.

If the Headteacher decides to introduce a screening arrangement, they will inform students and parents in advance to explain what the screening will involve and why it will be introduced.

Where a student has a disability, reasonable adjustments to the screening process will be made.

If a student refuses to be screened, the member of staff should consider why the student is not co-operating and make an assessment of whether it is necessary to carry out a search.

Searching with consent

School staff can search students with their consent for any item.

Schools are not required to have formal written consent from the student for this sort of search – it is enough for the teacher to ask the student to turn out his or her pockets or if the teacher can look in the student's bag and for the student to agree.

Schools should make clear in their school behaviour policy and in communications to parents and students what items are banned.

If a member of staff suspects a student has a prohibited item in their possession, they can instruct the student to turn out their pockets or bag and if the student refuses, the teacher can apply an appropriate consequence as set out in the school's behaviour policy.

A student refusing to co-operate with such a search raises the same kind of issues as where a student refuses to stay in a detention or refuses to stop any other unacceptable behaviour when instructed by a member of staff – in such circumstances, schools can apply an appropriate consequence.

Searching without consent

What can be searched for? (for the purposes of this policy)

Knives or weapons,

Any article that the member of staff reasonably suspects has been, or is likely to be, used to commit an offence, or to cause personal injury, or damage to property; and

Any item prohibited by the school rules which has been identified in the rules as an item which may be searched for.

Who can search?

A Principal, or a member of school staff authorised by the Principal. This is dependent the individual situation.

Under what circumstances?

You must be the same sex as the student being searched; and there must be a witness (also a staff member) and, if possible, they should be the same sex as the student being searched.

There is a limited exception to this rule. You can carry out a search of a student of the opposite sex to you and / or without a witness present, but only where you reasonably believe that there is a risk that serious harm will be caused to a person if you do not conduct the search immediately and where it is not reasonably practicable to summon another member of staff.

When can you search?

If you have reasonable grounds for suspecting that a student is in possession of a prohibited item.

The law also says what must be done with prohibited items which are seized following a search.

The requirement that the searcher is the same sex as the student and that a witness is present will continue to apply in nearly all searches. Where it is practical to summon a staff member of the same sex as the student and a witness then the teachers wishing to conduct a search must do so.

Authorising members of staff

Only the Principal, or a member of staff authorised by the Principal, can carry out a search. The Principal will authorise individual members of staff to search for specific items, or all items set out in the school's behaviour policy. This is on an individual incident basis but tends to be the senior leadership team and the safeguarding leads.

Training for school staff

When designating a member of staff to undertake searches under these powers, the principal should consider whether the member of staff requires any additional training to enable them to carry out their responsibilities.

Establishing grounds for a search

School staff can only undertake a search without consent if they have reasonable grounds for suspecting that a student may have in his or her possession a prohibited item. The member of staff must decide in each particular case what constitutes reasonable grounds for suspicion. For example, they may have heard other students talking about the item or they might notice a student behaving in a way that causes them to suspect that the student is concealing a prohibited item.

In the exceptional circumstances when it is necessary to conduct a search of a student of the opposite sex or in the absence of a witness, the member of staff conducting the search should bear in mind that a student's expectation of privacy increases, as they get older.

The powers allow school staff to search regardless of whether the student is found after the search to have that item. This includes circumstances where staff suspect a student of having items such as illegal drugs or stolen property which are later found not to be illegal or stolen.

School staff may wish to consider utilising CCTV footage in order to decide as to whether to conduct a search for an item.

Any weapons or items which are evidence of an offence must be passed to the police as soon as possible.

Taken from Searching, screening and confiscation: advice for school 2023

Taking action in the event of a weapon on site

If it has been identified that a weapon is on site and the appropriate searching and confiscating has occurred, then the school must begin a full and thorough investigation into what has occurred. If it can be proven that a weapon was brought on site with intent to harm then immediate action should occur including contacting the police and parents immediately. The student should be isolated immediately.

If the weapon has been identified because it has been used to harm e.g., another student or member of staff, the school should instigate its critical incident management protocols immediately inclusive of lock down procedures, secure and isolate the student and weapon if possible and again contact the police immediately.

If the context of the situation is not so easily identified then a full and thorough investigation is required to establish the school's next course of action.

Gathering the facts

In all circumstances, staff need to speak to all the students involved separately, gain a statement of facts from them and use **consistent language** and **open questions** for each account. The easiest way

to do this is not to have a line of questioning but to ask the students to tell you what happened. Only interrupt the student from this to gain clarity with open questions, 'where, when, why, who'. (What happened? Who observed the incident? What was seen? What was heard? Did anyone intervene?) A full and clear record of exactly what the student has said in their own language should be made (and no individual interpretation of the facts made which could impact on the disclosure) and stored following each school/setting's own recording protocols (paper or electronic systems).

Consider intent

From the information gathered the next step would be to consider intent. Did the student intend to bring a weapon onto the school site in order to harm someone in a deliberate act or did the young person bring the weapon on site as a form of defence or for their own safety? Both situations are of equal concern, however one shows a deliberate attempt of harm and both circumstances may have different outcomes.

Deciding on the next course of action

From the outcome of the investigation the school must decide on the level of risk the student poses in school. If the risk is clear and the intent is obvious then a fixed term exclusion and a disciplinary hearing may follow or the decision to permanently exclude may be made following the necessary protocols. However, depending on the intent, the age of the child and also the circumstances surrounding the incident or the contextual issues it may be a fixed term exclusion is given followed by a risk assessment/safety plan put in place following the student's return to school.

Returning to school/safety planning

Safety planning is a positive way of supporting a child who may benefit from a planned approach to support or intervention following an incident where a weapon has been brought to school. Safety plans support the child by considering the behaviour behind the use of a weapon and plan ways to manage any identified risks/triggers and seek support from adults and peers. They are inclusive of parents and staff and are a planned intervention to support young people in feeling secure in the school/setting, helping young people identify behaviours that may leave them feeling anxious or at risk and have strategies that they can apply to keep themselves feeling safe. The language of safety planning is more positive than risk assessment and can give security to the child that a joined-up approach is being followed by all in school. Safety plans are available in school and will be put in place by the DSL with the child and the parents.

Review of circumstances

Following any incident of harm, it is necessary for the school/setting to consider if anything could have been done differently. Use of PG: SF proforma for internal lessons learnt, can support in identifying under the business model of PG: SF what identified changes within the school/setting need to occur. This demonstrates how proactive the school is in continually reviewing its policies and systems in effectively keeping children safe. Any review of circumstances will then be discussed between SLT and the governing body to put immediate and necessary changes into effect.

This policy/practice guidance has been heavily supported by the following key documents:

Searching, screening and confiscation: advice for schools July 2023

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1091132/Searching_Screening_and_Confiscation_guidance_July_2022.pdf

Farrer and Co: Child on Child Abuse Toolkit 2023.

<https://www.farrer.co.uk/globalassets/clients-and-sectors/safeguarding/addressing-child-on-child-abuse.pdf>

SF Peer on Peer/Child on Child Abuse Policy 2022

This policy/practice guidance should be read in conjunction with:

DFE: Keeping Children Safe in Education. September 2023

Child Protection Policy

Peer on Peer/Child on Child Abuse Policy

Behaviour and Discipline Policy