



Barley Fields Primary School

Weapons Policy and Guidance

Date Issued:	April 2025
Prepared by:	Head Teacher
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1. Aim

The purpose of this policy/practice guidance is to set out clearly the preventative actions and procedures taken following the deliberate and intentional bringing in and use of weapons on our school site. This policy/practice guidance will also show the direct actions the school will take around the use of weapons on site considering the full context around every incident. 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 children and adults alike.

We are committed to the safety and well-being of all our children, staff and parents and will always take immediate action to reduce the risk of harm to any individual on the school site.

2. 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 or pointed objects i.e., Swiss Army knives, pocketknives, craft knives, scissors, zombie style knives etc;
- explosives, including fireworks, aerosol sprays, lighters, matches;
- a corrosive substance
- 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-chuks, death stars and other martial arts objects;
- screwdrivers, hammers, chisels and any tool that could be offensively used;
- razor, razor blades or chains.
- Any item that a member of staff reasonably suspects has been, or is likely to be, used to commit an offence or to cause personal injury to, or damage the property of, any person (including themselves)

3. Preventative Strategies

Recognition

For all schools, it is important to develop appropriate strategies 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 is the 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

For children 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. A strong culture of safeguarding within our school ensures that all individuals accessing the site feel safe to raise concerns, seek support and allows for seamless and consistent responses to incidents to be followed. To create this environment, the whole workforce and children will receive appropriate learning and training around the expectations upon them if a weapon is brought onto school site. This includes, how to raise the alarm, procedures for lockdown, use of social media and

critical incident response. Staff and children should feel able to contribute to this learning/training to understand what to do in several potentially different circumstances.

Effective Use of the Curriculum

The school PSHE curriculum will be responsive to ensuring children understand 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 children to think twice about the consequences of carrying a weapon and equally will create opportunities for children to share useful intelligence around 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 must be passed on to the appropriate Authority and to the police.

4. Working with Parents

Parents will be made aware of the school's stringent policy around weapons which will be published on the website) and should 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** 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 put in place without an incident occurring.

By continuing good communication between home and school a positive safety plan will be created to manage the safety and the well-being of any child who may need it.

5. Working with Partnership Agencies/Signposting Services

Multi agency working may consolidate in-house procedures in school. 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. At Barley Fields Primary School we will continue to promote positive working relationships with the Local Authority and the police to ensure that effective responses and partnership working can achieve positive outcomes for children.

External services or support programmes will be brought in to talk to young people about specific issues in support of the prevention of child-on-child abuse mapped out clearly in the curriculum.

Staff conduct

All staff members are expected to act in accordance with this policy. Any breach of this policy will be managed in line with the school's Disciplinary Policy and Procedure.

Staff members who conduct searches without consent but are not authorised to do so will be managed in line with the Disciplinary Policy and Procedure. Under no circumstances will a member of staff conduct the strip search of a child.

Staff members will consider the age, needs and wellbeing of children at all times during searching and screening procedures.

6. Understanding the Law and Current Guidance (taken from Searching, Confiscation and Screening, July 2024)

Searching

Heads can search for an extended list of items including weapons, alcohol, illegal drugs and stolen property.

Headteachers and the staff they authorise have a statutory power to search a child or their possessions where they have reasonable grounds to suspect that the child may have a prohibited item. Under common law, school staff have

the power to search a child for any item if the child agrees. The member of staff should ensure the child understands the reason for the search and how it will be conducted so that their agreement is informed.

With consent

Formal written consent is not required for this sort of search and informed verbal consent will suffice. All staff members will ensure that any child subject to a search with consent understands the reason for the search and how it will be conducted.

Searches with consent will be undertaken on the basis that a child is, or is suspected to be, in possession of a prohibited or banned item as identified in this policy and the Behaviour Policy.

Searches with consent will be implemented consistently, proportionately, fairly, and in line with this policy.

The school will ensure that banned items are made clear in communications with parents.

If a member of staff suspects a child is in possession of a banned item, the child will be instructed to turn out their pockets, desk and/or bag.

When exercising their authority to search with consent, staff members will assess and consider the age and needs of the child being searched. Where required, reasonable adjustments will be put in place where a child has additional needs or a disability.

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

Searches without consent

The headteacher and authorised staff have the statutory power to search children or their possessions, without consent, where they have reasonable grounds for suspecting that the child may be in possession of a prohibited item.

The staff member will decide what constitutes reasonable grounds for suspicion on a case-by-case basis.

An item banned by the school rules will only be searched for without consent if it is identified in this policy and/or the Behaviour Policy that it is an item that can be searched for.

Staff members who are not authorised by the headteacher to implement searches without consent will not do so.

Where a search is required, and the child does not give their consent to be searched, unauthorised staff members will contact an authorised member of staff immediately.

Authorised members of staff will assess whether a search without consent is needed urgently and consider the risk to staff and other children if a search is not conducted.

Before a search without consent is conducted, the authorised member of staff will explain to the child why they are being searched and how the search will take place. They will also provide the child with an opportunity to ask any questions.

Where possible, the authorised member of staff will seek the co-operation of the child prior to the commencement of the search without consent. The child may be sanctioned in line with the Behaviour Policy if they refuse to co-operate.

During the search

Definitions:

- **“Outer clothing”** – clothing that is not worn next to the skin or immediately over a garment that is being worn as underwear, e.g. hats, shoes, gloves.
- **“Possessions”** – any goods over which the child has or appears to have control, including desks, lockers and bags.

A child's possessions, their locker or desk will only be searched in the presence of the child and another member of staff, except where there is a risk that serious harm will be caused if the search is not conducted immediately.

Staff will always remain aware that the power to search without consent **only** enables a personal search involving the removal of outer clothing and the searching of pockets, desks, lockers, etc.

Staff will never conduct an intimate search and remain aware that only a person with more extensive powers, i.e. a police officer, can conduct an intimate search.

If a child does not consent to a search or withdraws their consent, then they may be subject to a search without consent, but only for prohibited items.

A strip search is a search involving the removal of more than outer clothing. Staff members will never conduct a strip search on a child. 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 children involved and will always advocate for children's wellbeing.

Who can search?

The law states the member of staff conducting the search must be of the same sex as the child being searched. There must be another member of staff present as a witness to the search. There is a limited exception to this rule. This is that a member of staff can search a child of the opposite sex and/or without a witness present only:

- if the member of staff carrying out the search reasonably believes there is risk that serious harm will be caused to a person if the search is not carried out as a matter of urgency; and
- in the time available, it is not reasonably practicable for the search to be carried out by a member of staff who is same sex as the child or it is not reasonably practicable for the search to be carried out in the presence of another member of staff.

Authorised Members of Staff

- Only the Headteacher, or a member of staff authorised by the Headteacher, can carry out a search. The Headteacher will authorise individual members of staff to search for specific items, or all items set out in the school's behaviour policy.
- At this school, all members of staff identified as Designated Safeguarding Leads and their deputies are authorised.

Recording Searches

Any search by a member of staff for a prohibited item and all searches conducted by police officers will be recorded in CPOMS the school's safeguarding reporting system, including whether or not an item is found.

This will allow the designated safeguarding lead (or deputy) to identify possible risks and initiate a safeguarding response if required. Headteachers may also decide that all searches for items banned by the school rules should be recorded.

At Barley Fields Primary School the following records of every search will be made:

- the date, time and location of the search;
- which child was searched;
- who conducted the search and any other adults or children present;
- what was being searched for;
- the reason for searching;
- what items, if any, were found;
- what follow-up action was taken as a consequence of the search.

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 children;
- is prohibited, or identified in the school rules for which a search can be made; or
- is evidence in relation to an offence.

Informing Parents

School will reinforce the whole-school approach by establishing and maintaining positive relationships with parents.

Parents will always be informed of any search for a prohibited item that has taken place, and the outcome of the search as soon as is practicable.

A member of staff will inform the parents of what, if anything, has been confiscated and the resulting action taken, including any sanctions applied.

Complaints about searching, screening or confiscation will be managed via the school's complaints procedure, in line with the Complaints Procedures Policy.

Training for School Staff

Appropriate training is in place to enable all staff to carry out their responsibilities. Any weapons or items which are evidence of a suspected offence WILL be passed to the police as soon as possible.

Taken from Searching, screening and confiscation: advice for schools, July 2024

Screening

Schools' statutory power to make rules on child behaviour and their duties as employers in relation to the safety of staff, children and visitors enables them to impose a requirement that children undergo screening. Screening is the use of a walk-through or hand-held metal detector (arch or wand) to scan all children for weapons before they enter the school premises. If the Headteacher decides to introduce a screening arrangement, they will inform children and parents in advance to explain what the screening will involve and when and why it will be introduced.

Where a child has a disability, reasonable adjustments to the screening process will be made. If a child refuses to be screened, the member of staff should consider why the child is not co-operating and assess whether it is necessary to carry out a search.

7. 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 will 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 will occur including contacting the police and parents immediately. Under the updated Offensive Weapon Act 2019 police have the power to enter, intervene and search school in the event of the threat of, or use of a weapon (as per stated list) on school site.

The child will be isolated immediately.

If the weapon has been identified because it has been used to harm e.g., another child or member of staff, the school will 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 will speak to all the children involved separately, gain a statement of facts from them and use consistent language and open questions for each account. This will occur by asking the children directly to tell you what has happened.

Staff should only interrupt the child 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 child has said in their own language will be made (and no individual interpretation of the facts made which could impact on the disclosure) and stored following the school's recording procedures.

Consideration of Intent

From the information gathered the next step will be to consider intent. Did the child intend to bring a weapon onto the school site 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 concerning, however one shows a deliberate attempt of harm and therefore both circumstances will have different outcomes.

Deciding on the Next Course of Action

From the outcome of the investigation the school will decide on the level of risk the child poses in school. The following sanction may be employed:

- If the risk is clear and the intent is obvious then a fixed term exclusion and a disciplinary hearing may follow or a decision to permanently exclude may be made following the necessary protocols.
- depending on the intent, the age of the child, the circumstances surrounding the incident and any contextual issues it may be a fixed term exclusion (internal or external) may be given, followed by a risk assessment/safety plan put in place following the child'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 should fully include parents and staff and should include opportunities to:

1. identify internal safety practices for children such as bag checks/ escorts to and from school,
2. engage in planned intervention to support children in feeling secure in the school,
3. help children identify behaviours that may leave them feeling anxious or at risk,
4. discuss positive 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 will be put in place by the Designated Safeguarding Lead with the child and their parents.

Review of Circumstances

Following any incident of harm/weapons brought into school, it is necessary for the school to consider if anything could have been done differently. Any internal lessons learnt, can support in identifying what necessary changes within the school need to occur. This demonstrates our school's commitment to continually reviewing its policies and systems in effectively keeping children safe.

Any review of circumstances will then be discussed between senior leadership and the Governing Body to put immediate and necessary changes into effect.

Policy Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed every two years

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

Searching, Screening and Confiscation: Advice for Schools, July 2024

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1091132/Searching__Screening_and_Confiscation_guidance_July_2022.pdf

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

- DFE: Keeping Children Safe in Education.
- Child Protection Policy
- Child-on-Child Abuse Policy
- Behaviour Policy