



April 2019

Dear Parents/Carers

Police and schools in the city are committed to working together to protect our young people from becoming victims of knife and weapon related crime.

We use a range of tactics including educational inputs and in-school searches to ensure that students are well-informed about the consequences of carrying weapons; and identify those that continue to do so.

It is important that the police, schools and families work together to protect young people. To do this, parents must be aware of the warning signs and talk to children about carrying weapons. The consequences of being found in possession of a knife are serious and long lasting, affecting education, employment and travel opportunities, but most critically the risk to life.

Some young people carry weapons because they feel it will provide protection or increase the respect they are given by their friends, but the sad fact is that they are more likely to become victims of serious violence. Parents should also be aware that girls sometimes carry or store weapons for their boyfriends or other male friends because they believe they are less likely to be stopped by the police. Their reasons are often misguided loyalty or love. However, it is still a crime if they are caught carrying a knife or other weapon.

WARNING SIGNS:

These signs don't always mean the worst is happening and could just be normal teenage behaviour:

1. Have they become withdrawn from the family and/or school?
2. Is their school or college reporting worrying changes in behaviour, academic achievement or attendance?
3. Have they lost interest in positive activities such as sports clubs?
4. Do they stay out unusually late without giving a reason and are vague about their whereabouts?
5. Have they stopped seeing old friends and started hanging out with a new group?
6. Are they secretive about the contents of their bag?
7. Are they defensive if you ask what is in their possession or if they are hiding anything?
8. Has their attitude changed about carrying knives/weapons? For example, justifying it by saying people carry them for self-defence?
9. Have any items gone missing from the kitchen, tool box or garage?
10. Have you found a weapon hidden amongst their possessions?

WHAT TO DO IF YOU'RE CONCERNED

Speak to them calmly and explain the risks and consequences. Further advice on talking to your child is available at: www.noknivesbetterlives.com/parents/having-the-conversation

You may wish to contact your child's Head of Year or any member of the Senior Leadership Team at school, if you feel your child isn't listening or is at risk - we can talk through your concerns and plan a way forward together.

For the latest guidance and signposting opportunities please visit: www.policeandschools.org.uk

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SCHOOL POLICY FOR WEAPONS POSSESSION

It is essential that we work together to reduce the chances of children bringing a weapon into school. Ours, like most other schools, will take firm action in relation to any student found to be carrying a knife, both on and off the school premises and the police will be informed. This may include the loss of your child's school place, by way of a permanent exclusion, as a sanction.

THE POLICE RESPONSE TO WEAPONS POSSESSION

Where young people are involved in crime, the police will try to avoid criminalising them. However, carrying a knife or other weapon is very serious and the most likely outcome will be a charge and court appearance or a caution, delivered by the Youth Offending Service.

Update: West Midlands Police can use **Section 60** powers to stop and search young people.

"Section 60 of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 gives senior police officers powers to authorise use of stop and search without reasonable grounds, where there is a risk of violence or it is believed that weapons are being carried".

If a young person has been stopped by police using **Section 60** powers, it does not necessarily mean they are doing anything wrong, but officers have been given extensive search powers where they can search to prevent violence without needing suspicion that they may be carrying a weapon. This tool is being used to end violence and keep young people safe. West Midlands Police realise that it may be upsetting for some innocent young people, but with fear of weapons growing, we cannot take chances.

If you are aware that a fight or trouble is brewing, or if you hear someone has a knife, please report this to the police. If a young person is scared of someone, the answer is not to carry a knife or weapon.

If you know of an individual, or a group of young people, that are potentially carrying weapons, always contact the Police - via Live Chat: <https://west-midlands.police.uk/contact-us/live-chat> or by calling 101.

Alternatively you can call Crimestoppers anonymously on: 0800 555 111 | <https://crimestoppers-uk.org>

If a crime is taking place or a life is in danger always call 999 immediately.

Yours faithfully,



Brynley Evans
Headteacher
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Kenny Bell
Chief Superintendent
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