



Normanhurst School

Offensive Weapons Policy

Context

It is illegal to carry knives or other offensive weapons on and around school premises. The Governing Body at Normanhurst School recognises that the presence of weapons, or items that could potentially be offensive weapons, in the School would not only create unacceptable risks of bullying, injury or death, but also create a climate that undermines the educational purposes of the School.

It is therefore the School Policy to forbid the possession, custody and use of weapons by unauthorised persons in, on, or around the school premises and during school activities.

These rules apply at all times except where an item, which could potentially be an offensive weapon, is issued to a student by a member of staff at the School, or is required by the School, for the purposes of teaching and learning, as necessary, for the delivery of the curriculum. Misuse of such items will be dealt with as though possession is not authorised.

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
- knives, including all variations of bladed objects, such as 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 such as keeping or carrying the object for use, or threat of use, as a weapon.

Any student found to be in breach of this Policy shall be subject to action under Normanhurst School’s Behaviour Policy. This could mean fixed or permanent exclusion from the school.

The Police will normally be informed if a pupil is found to be carrying, using or transporting an offensive weapon that could seriously harm or kill another person whilst in school.

Procedure for Dealing with Knives and Offensive Weapons

Under most circumstances, the Police should be informed of any incident believed to involve a weapon. However, where, in the judgement of the staff, the circumstances are wholly innocent and there is no suggestion of the use of the article as a weapon, the matter may be dealt with internally on a disciplinary basis.

When contacting the Police, the School’s senior member of staff dealing with the matter should give his/her evaluation of the seriousness of the incident, (ie in progress, threat to life, or weapon secure, for collection only) to help the Police to make their own judgement on the nature and immediacy of the response required.

Police Community Support Officers, have no powers to act under this legal framework, it is only Police officers or School staff.

There may also be some exceptional circumstances where members of staff, who have been made aware that a weapon may be on school premises, decide that they need to take action before the Police arrive. If this is the case:

Designated staff should always be called to assess and manage any situation where an offensive weapon is suspected:

- where there are reasonable grounds to suspect that a student might have in their possession an offensive weapon, knife or blade, it might be appropriate for the Headmistress, or an authorised member of staff, to conduct an immediate search of that student or his/her possessions, with or without the student's consent
- in making that decision, a risk assessment approach should be adopted and it should be noted that such immediate preventive action could either prevent a potentially dangerous situation escalating or could, conversely, inflame the situation
- such a search may only be carried out where the member of staff and student are on School premises or are elsewhere and the member of staff has lawful control or charge of the student.

A member of staff carrying out a search:

- may not require a student to remove any clothing other than outer clothing, ie any item of clothing not being worn wholly next to the skin or immediately over a garment being worn as underwear
- must be of the same sex as the student
- may carry out the search only in the presence of another member of staff who is also of the same sex as the student
- a student's possessions (including any goods over which he/she appears to have control) may not be searched except in his/her presence and another member of staff
- if in the course of a search the member of staff finds anything he/she suspects of falling within the knives and offensive weapon category, or any other thing he/she suspects is evidence in relation to an offence, he/she should seize and retain it
- members of staff may, on occasion, take possession of a knife or other weapon brought to School by a person in circumstances which contravene the Offensive Weapons Act 1996
- possession of the weapon in such circumstances by a member of staff is likely to be with good reason or lawful authority, and thus not an offence under the Act, but a member of staff in possession of a weapon in such circumstances should secure it, and pass it immediately to the Headmistress or, in the Headmistress's absence, another senior member of staff, and arrange without delay to surrender it to the Police, or
- where satisfied that it is reasonable to do so, arrange for it to be taken away by the parent/carer of the person from whom it was taken.

Police Investigation

In most cases, the Police will carry out an independent investigation and the School will cooperate with the Police at all times. The School will take guidance from the Police as to how best to proceed.

Disciplinary Action

Disciplinary action will be taken as set out in the School's Behaviour Policy and Exclusion Policy.