

High Tunstall College of Science



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Child Protection Policy Addendum: Weapons Policy and Practice Guidance

Revised	-	October 2023
Stakeholder Consulted	-	Admissions and Safeguarding Committee
Review Date	-	October 2024
Responsibility for Review	-	Headteacher/Designated Safeguarding Lead

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 college 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 college site, an investigation will take place to decide the level of risk that the student poses in college. The incident could result in a suspension and a disciplinary hearing may follow or the decision to permanently exclude may be made following the necessary protocols.

Purpose and aim

At High Tunstall College of Science, 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 college will take around the use of weapons on site taking into account the full context around each and every incident.

At High Tunstall College of Science, 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 college 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, etc;
- explosives, including fireworks, aerosol sprays, gas canisters, 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;
- Nunchucks, death stars and other martial arts objects;
- Screwdrivers, hammers, chisels, bradawls and any tool that could be offensively used;
- Razor, razor blades or chains;
- Catapults;
- Knuckle dusters and studded arm bands;
- Whips or similar items;
- Pepper spray;
- Dangerous chemicals

Preventative Strategies

Recognition

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 the college 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 college'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 college 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 SMSC or PSHE should support students in understanding the risks around the use of weapons, the legal implications of carrying weapons and the college'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 college'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 college **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 college 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 college. 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 the college 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 peer on peer abuse.

Searching, confiscation and screening

Searching

College staff can search a student for any item if the student agrees.

Headteachers and staff authorised by them have a statutory power to search students or their possessions, without consent, where they have reasonable grounds for suspecting that the student may have a prohibited item.

Searches will be conducted by a same-sex member of staff, with another same-sex staff member as a witness, unless there is a risk that serious harm will be caused to any person(s) if the search is not done immediately, and it is not practicable to summon another member of staff.

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

Confiscating

College staff can seize any prohibited item found as a result of a search. They can also seize any item they consider harmful or detrimental to college discipline.

Searching with consent

College 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 or locker and for the student to agree.

It is clear in the behaviour policy and in communications to parents and students what items are banned.

If a member of staff suspects a student has a banned item in his/her possession, they can instruct the student to turn out his or her pockets or bag and if the student refuses, the teacher can apply an appropriate punishment as set out in the college's behaviour policy.

When a student refuses to co-operate, further assistance will be requested from senior leadership.

Searching without consent

What can be searched for?

Knives or weapons, and 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 banned by the college which has been identified in college's policies as an item which may be searched for.

Who can search?

A Headteacher, or a member of college staff authorised by the Headteacher.

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 practicable 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

The Headteacher permits searches to be carried out by the Senior Leadership team and the pastoral team. There is no requirement to provide authorisation in writing.

Staff can be authorised to search for some items but not others; for example, a member of staff could be authorised to search for stolen property, but not for weapons or knives.

Training for college staff

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

Establishing grounds for a search

College 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 college 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.

College staff may wish to consider utilising CCTV footage in order to make a decision 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.

For further guidance on searching, please read the [Searching, Screening and Confiscation \(July 2022\)](#) document.

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 college 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 college 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 college'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 recorded on CPOMS.

Consider intent

From the information gathered the next step would be to consider intent. Did the student intend to bring a weapon onto the college 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 college must decide on the level of risk the student poses in college. If the risk is clear and the intent is obvious then a suspension 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 suspension is given followed by a risk assessment/safety plan put in place following the student's return to college.

Returning to college/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 college. 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 college, 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 college.

Review of circumstances

Following any incident of harm, it is necessary for the college to consider if anything could have been done differently. Use of Pam Gartland: Safeguarding First (PG: SF) proforma for internal lessons learnt, can support in identifying under the business model of PG:SF what identified changes within the college need to occur. This demonstrates how proactive the college is in continually reviewing its policies and systems in effectively keeping children safe.

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

Searching, screening and confiscation: advice for Headteachers, school staff and Governing Bodies, September 2022

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/searching-screening-and-confiscation>

Farrer and Co: Peer on Peer Abuse Toolkit 2022

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

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

DFE: Keeping Children Safe in Education. September 2022

Child Protection Policy

Behaviour Policy