



Castle View
Enterprise
Academy

Weapons Policy and Practice Guidance

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SIGNATURES:

Principal	<i>Mrs J. Owens</i>
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Introduction

There are many reasons why children take a weapon into a Academy, and this could have a devastating and long-term impact on their future, whether the weapon is used or not. Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) highlights that some children, particularly those who are being criminally or sexually exploited, may be coerced or intimidated into carrying a weapon or begin to carry a weapon or knife for a sense of self-protection. The reasons why a child or young person carries a weapon can include fear, protection and peer pressure. It is imperative that Academy staff are curious and explore the reasons for each incident in their own individual circumstances.

The purpose of this policy is to clearly indicate the actions Academy will take in the event of a child bringing a weapon on to site. Immediate action will be taken where there is evidence of the deliberate and intentional bringing in and use of weapons on the Academy site. 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.

If a student deliberately and intentionally brings a weapon onto the Academy site, the student will be placed on a fixed term exclusion and a return from suspension meeting will be carried out where the reasons behind the incident are discussed. The student will also be referred to the YOLO project and other agencies will be informed if necessary.

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 Academy 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 Academy site.

This policy only relates to incidents where a weapon or knife has been brought into Academy. Where there is information about a student carrying a weapon or knife in the community then this should be discussed with the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL). The DSL will then share the information with the Police and Youth Justice Service.

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., zombie-style knives, machetes, pocket knives, butterfly knives; craft knives, scissors and anything else that could be perceived as being a weapon;
- explosives, including fireworks, aerosol sprays, lighters, matches;
- a corrosive substance including glue ;

- 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, knuckle dusters and other martial arts objects;
- Screwdrivers, hammers, chisels, bradles and any tool that could be offensively used;
- razor, razor blades or chains.

This list is not exhaustive and includes replica weapons.

N.B Zombie-style knives and machetes were added to the list of prohibited weapons in the criminal justice act 1988 on 24th September 2024. Any student found with this type of weapon will be reported to the Police.

Preventative Strategies

Recognition

For all Academics 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 students having them to 'feel safe' from peers or gangs.

Firstly, and most importantly for Academics 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 Academy'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 Academy 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 life skills lessons and the RHSE programme should support students in understanding the risks around the use of weapons, the legal implications of carrying weapons and the Academy'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 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 local authority social care and the Police.

Teachable Moments

It is important to consider that when a child picks up and carries a knife, especially if they bring it into Academy because of fear or for self-protection, they may be a victim of criminal or sexual exploitation, and this may require a safeguarding or contextual safeguarding response. If there are concerns around a child being exploited this should be discussed with the Designated Safeguarding Lead and a safeguarding referral submitted to the local authority. All staff should explore the reasons for each incident. It is necessary for all professionals to understand if the young person has brought in the weapon due to mental health concerns or for self-harm. Where a child is found to have brought a weapon or knife into Academy, or where there are reports that a child is carrying a weapon or knife, and the Academy have intervened, it is important we see this as a 'reachable or teachable moment.' A 'reachable or teachable moment' is a moment where a child will be more accepting to the offer of support and in such instances provide an opportunity for those involved to engage with the child and for the child to share information about any worries or concerns, they may have which could be placing them at risk. It is important that those involved try to engage with the child in a way that helps to gain a greater understanding of what is going on for the child, their vulnerabilities, any indicators of the child being at risk or/being exploited and think about what additional support they may.

Working with parents

Parents need to be aware of the Academy'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 **Academy 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 Academy 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 Academy. 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 Castle View Enterprise Academy, we will continue to promote positive working relationships with Together for Children and other local authorities children services and the police to ensure that 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 2022 updated July 2023

Searching

The Principal and nominated, authorised staff 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, Academy 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.

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. It is important that staff maintain a calm approach and not surprise the student.

If a student continues to refuse to co-operate, the member of staff will sanction the student in line with the Academy'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 including bags.

The following may be a useful reference and provide structure to the search prior, during and after the event.

- Ensure that the place you are going to conduct the search is away from other students, in a safe environment.
- Communicate who you are, what position you hold and if the pupil knows you or you them.
- Explain to the pupil what the object of the search is and how it is going to be conducted.
- State your grounds for the search; be confident in your powers under the Department of Education guidance, reassure them that their dignity and safety is paramount.
- Search them. Technique: There should be two people present during a search. One designated person to search (they should be the same sex as the person being searched) and one witness. The designated person's job is to conduct the search, and the witness will engage the student in conversation, watch for any escalation of behaviour and act as a safety officer.
- Record the event, what was found/not found and subsequent actions. You should also update CPOMS. Inform parents/carers

Searching with consent

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

Academics 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.

Academics should make clear in their Academy 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 Academy'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, Academics 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 Academy 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 Academy staff authorised by the Principal. This is dependent on 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 different 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 Principal and nominated staff 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 prohibited items, or all items set out in the Academy's behaviour policy. This is on an individual incident basis but tends to be the senior leadership team and the pastoral team.

NB. A strip search is a search involving the removal of more than outer clothing. Strip searches on Academy 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, Academy staff retain a duty of care to the student(s) involved and will advocate for student wellbeing at all times.

Recording Searches

Any search by a member of staff for a prohibited item and all searches conducted by police officers will be recorded in the Academy'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. The Principal will make a record of all searches for items banned by the Academy rules.

At Castle View Enterprise Academy 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; and
- what follow-up action was taken as a consequence of the search

Screening

Academy's 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 hand-held metal detector (wand) to scan all students for prohibited items (including weapons) before they enter the Academy premises.

Parents and students have been informed of the Principal's decision in July 2025 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.

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 Academy rules for which a search can be made; or
- is evidence in relation to an offence

Informing Parents

Academy will reinforce the whole-Academy approach by building 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.

Training for Academy 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

Academy 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.

The powers allow Academy 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.

Academy staff will consider, where necessary, 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 Academy 2023 updated July 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 Academy 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. Under the updated Offensive Weapon Act 2019 police have the power to enter, intervene and search Academy in the event of the threat of, or use of a weapon (as per stated list) on Academy site. 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 Academy 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 Academy'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 Academy/setting's own 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 Academy 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

It is essential that Academics have a range of tools to establish high standards of behaviour and maintain the safety of Academy communities, including, as a last resort, suspensions and permanent exclusions. Following the outcome of the investigation the Academy must decide on the level of risk the student poses in Academy. 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 Academy. We are aware that evidence indicates that suspension and exclusion may remove a child from their existing supportive networks and protective factors, increasing their vulnerability and potentially their involvement in anti-social behaviours and exploitation. Exclusion can increase isolation and risk-taking and, in turn, raise further safeguarding concerns. A decision to exclude a child cannot be taken lightly and must be balanced against the potential risk they pose to the rest of the Academy community. However Castle View Enterprise Academy adopt a zero-tolerance approach in relation to weapons and a student who is found with a weapon will be given a fixed-term suspension which could result in a permanent exclusion after investigation.

Multi Agency Planning Meeting

Where appropriate a multi-agency planning meeting should be convened to support a child with any additional services that may be required. This meeting should include Academy, early help/front door services, police-single point of contact and any other services engaged with the child or family to agree a safety plan for the child.

Returning to Academy/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 Academy. 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 Academy/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 Academy. Safety plans are available in Academy 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 Academy/setting to consider if anything could have been done differently. Any internal lessons learnt can support in identifying what necessary changes within the Academy need to occur. This demonstrates our Academy'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.

Police Intervention

Once the police have recorded and investigated the incident they will:

- Put a knife/weapon warning marker on the young person's record. This is for the purposes of intelligence but also the safety of officers, if the young person is stopped and searched in the future, for example.

- Submit a child concern notification to children’s social care. This is again for intelligence purposes but will also help social care form a picture of the young person, put appropriate interventions in place or/and update the young person’s worker, if they have one.
- Make a referral to the young person’s local Youth Justice Services.

On deciding the outcome for the young person, CPS guidance states:

- 16/17-year-olds – simple possession Charge unless exceptional circumstances make it more appropriate to issue a Youth Conditional Caution. History of violence, previously dealt with for a weapon/knife offence, or an offence under investigation is an offence other than a simple possession and therefore the young person should be charged.
- Under 16s Simple possession, no previous – Youth Conditional Caution. Or alternate disposal in truly exceptional circumstances. History of violence, previously dealt with for a weapon/knife offence, or an offence under investigation is an offence other than a simple possession and therefore the young person should be charged.
- Where a decision is taken not to charge, the young person will be referred to the Youth Justice Service for an Out of Court Disposal (OOC) assessment. The Out of Court Panel, with reference to the guidance, makes the decision as to the most appropriate disposal

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

Searching, screening and confiscation: advice for Academics July 2022 updated in 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: Addressing Child-on-Child Abuse: A resource for Academics and colleges 2024.

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

Safeguarding Matters Child-on-Child Abuse Policy 2025-2026

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

DFE: Keeping Children Safe in Education. September 2025

Child Protection Policy

Child on Child Abuse Policy

Behaviour and Discipline Policy