



Starbank School

Dear Parents/Carers

Police and schools in the West Midlands are committed to working together to protect our young people from becoming victims of knife and weapons 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 crucially, 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, but 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 Have they become withdrawn from the family and/or school?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 a member of the Pastoral 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.

If you or your child are aware that other young people in school or the community are carrying knives or weapons, you should contact the police directly via 101. Alternatively you can contact Crimestoppers anonymously on 0800 555 111 or via www.crimestoppers-uk.org

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

SCHOOL POLICY FOR WEAPONS POSSESSION

It is essential that we work together to reduce the chances of children bringing a weapon to 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 use of 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 result will be a charge and court appearance or a caution delivered by the Youth Offending Service.**

JOINT ACTION PLAN TO TACKLE KNIFE CRIME

West Midlands Police is working closely with schools, colleges and wider partners including the local authority to tackle knife related crime in the community. Although incidents do not occur often the consequences for the victim, community and offender are significant. Several initiatives are underway in your community to tackle knife and weapon related crime. Some examples are:

- 1) Police and community led weapons sweeps in parks and open spaces. This aims to recover weapons hidden for use in offences.
- 2) Test purchase operations and responsible retailer visits to ensure retailers are complying with the law on the sale of knives.
- 3) A strong focus on the identification, arrest and management of offenders who use knives.
- 4) Proactive police operations within key locations in the community to identify and tackle weapon related crime.
- 5) School and college engagement to ensure students are informed of the law, risks and consequences of carrying knives. **This is being supported within secondary schools and colleges with the delivery of random knife bar searches. Next half term Starbank School will engage with knife arch searches. A date for this will be chosen at random and will take place before the start of school.**

If you wish to know more about Police work within your community including what is being done to tackle weapon related crime, please consider signing up to West Midlands Police free messaging service here: www.wmnow.co.uk

If you would like to discuss this issue in more detail, please contact the school.

Yours sincerely



Mr G Ferrante
Secondary Headteacher