



Offensive Weapons Policy

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Statement of intent

Queen's Park High School recognises the increasing number of school-aged children who are found carrying offensive weapons and acknowledges our duty to ensure that students are safe and that they understand the repercussions of carrying weapons.

Through this policy, we aim to:

- Outline the weapons that are legally considered offensive, and the weapons that the school has placed a strict ban on.
- Establish clear and accurate reporting procedures that can be easily followed by students and staff.
- Outline a procedure for investigating any reports, which will be followed accurately and consistently.
- Provide staff with unambiguous management guidelines to follow if a student is found to be carrying a weapon.
- Establish how the school will support and reintegrate students following an incident, wherever possible.
- Outline the school's methods for ensuring students are kept safe from harm.

1. Legal framework

1.1. This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation including, but not limited to, the following:

- Prevention of Crime Act 1953
- Offensive Weapons Act 1996
- Offensive Weapons Act 2019
- Criminal Justice Act 1988
- European Convention of Human Rights 1953
- Education Act 1996
- Education and Inspections Act 2006
- Legal Aid Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012
- Crossbows Acts 1987
- Firearms Act 1968

1.2. This policy has due regard to all relevant guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974
- Education Act 1996
- Education and Inspections Act 2006
- The Schools (Specification and Disposal of Articles) Regulations 2012
- The School Behaviour (Determination and Publicising of Measures in Academies) Regulations 2012
- European Convention on Human Rights
- Criminal Justice Act 1988
- DfE (2022) 'Searching, Screening and Confiscation'
- DfE (2013) 'Use of reasonable force'
- DfE (2024) 'Behaviour in Schools'
- DfE (2024) 'Keeping children safe in education 2024'
- DfE (2024) 'Schools and college security'
- DfE (2018) 'Equality Act 2010: advice for schools'
- DfE (2023) 'Working together to safeguard children 2023'
- DfE (2012) 'Drugs: advice for schools'

1.3. This policy operates in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Searching, Screening and Confiscation Policy
- Reasonable Force Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- Exclusion Policy
- Invacuation, Lockdown and Evacuation Policy

2. Definitions

2.1. It is illegal to:

- Sell a knife of any kind to anyone under the age of 18
- Buy a knife under the age of 18
- Carry a knife in public without good reason, e.g. use at work – unless it has a folding blade with a cutting edge three inches long or less, e.g. a Swiss army knife
- Carry, buy or sell a banned knife, e.g. a butterfly knife
- Use any knife or other object in a threatening way (including any legal knife)
- Possess a firearm without a licence
- Possess a corrosive substance in public, without a valid reason
- Sell a corrosive substance to anyone under the age of 18

2.2. For the purpose of this policy, an offensive weapon is defined as an article that is made, adapted or intended to cause injury to another person, including mental and physical injury.

2.3. For the purpose of this policy, made, adapted or intended is defined as articles that:

- Have been designed to cause harm to another person, e.g. a butterfly knife (made).
- Have been altered to cause harm to another person, e.g. a piece of wood with nails in it (adapted).
- Are being carried with the express purpose to cause harm to another person but are not necessarily an obviously dangerous item, e.g. a cricket bat could be used for sport or to cause injury (intended).

2.4. For the purpose of this policy, produced is defined as when a person uses, or threatens someone with, an offensive weapon.

2.5. For the purpose of this policy, not produced is defined as when a person has an offensive weapon on their person, but it is not used, including not used to threaten someone.

3. Roles and responsibilities

3.1. The governing body is responsible for:

- Monitoring the effectiveness of this policy and conducting reviews following any offensive weapon incidents
- Reviewing this policy on an annual basis
- Ensuring appropriate training has been arranged for staff regarding managing offensive weapon incidents in schools

3.2. The Headteacher is responsible for:

- Implementing this policy and ensuring that all students are clear on the procedure that will be followed if a report is made that someone is in possession of an offensive weapon
- Ensuring all staff have read and understood the stipulations of this policy
- Investigating any reports of offensive weapons in liaison with the DSL

3.3. The DSL is responsible for:

- Monitoring the safeguarding email address and processing any reports that are made.
- Investigating any reports of offensive weapons in liaison with the Headteacher.
- Holding assemblies to remind students and staff how to report any concerns confidentially.

3.4. All staff are responsible for:

- Reading and understanding the stipulations in this policy
- Taking part in any offensive weapons training that is organised through the school
- Making offensive weapons reports, if they have any suspicions about any member of the school community

3.5. Students are responsible for:

- Adhering to the provisions of this policy in terms of not having prohibited items on their person.
- Contacting the safeguarding email address if they have any suspicions that someone is carrying an offensive weapon, in accordance with section five of this policy.

3.6. Parents are responsible for:

- Ensuring their children understand the repercussions of carrying an offensive item in a public place, including a school.
- Informing the school if they are concerned about their child's behaviour or safety, in line with the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.
- Understanding the repercussions of carrying an offensive weapon themselves.

4. Offensive weapons list

4.1. The following items are banned by law, regardless of their intended use:

- Flick knives
- Butterfly knives
- Disguised knives
- Belt buckle knives
- Push daggers
- Gravity knives
- 'Airport' or stealth knives
- Sword-sticks
- Samurai swords
- Knuckle-dusters
- Hand-claws
- Foot-claws
- Blowpipes or guns
- Hollow kubotan
- Shuriken
- Telescopic truncheons
- Kusari-gama
- Kyoketsu shoge
- Kusari
- Straight, side handled or fiction-lock truncheons – also known as a baton

- A sword with a curved blade of 50 centimetres or over in length
 - Bump stocks.
- 4.2. As outlined in the Crossbows Act 1987, crossbows are prohibited under the age of 18.
- 4.3. Firearms are also considered prohibited items. Firearms include, but are not limited to, the following:
- Starting pistols
 - Air guns
 - Any type of replica or toy gun
- 4.4. The police will be contacted immediately if any student is found to be in possession of any of the above items. The school will support the police in any investigations as far as possible, e.g. providing information. The police's decision regarding the student will be final.
- 4.5. The maximum penalty for carrying an offensive weapon is four years imprisonment, a fine or both.
- 4.6. The maximum penalty for possessing a corrosive substance in a public place without a valid reason is four years imprisonment, a fine or both.
- 4.7. In addition to the above, the school also considers the following items to be prohibited:
- Fireworks
 - Laser pens
 - Paintball guns
 - Tasers
 - Lighters and matches
- 4.8. Any student found to be in possession of an item listed in paragraph 4.7 may be immediately excluded from the school, in accordance with the school's Exclusion Policy.
- 4.9. The Headteacher will hold an annual assembly to remind students about what will happen if they are suspected to be carrying an offensive weapon, and the serious repercussions that students could face for carrying any of the items mentioned above.
- 4.10. In terms of religious knives, only replicas that cannot be removed from their sheath will be permitted – the Headteacher's written permission will be required for this.

5. Reporting procedure

- 5.1. The school will implement and monitor a reporting procedure that is available to students, staff and the wider community.
- 5.2. Reporting should be done by use of the safeguarding@qphs.co.uk email address

- 5.3. The DSL and their deputies will monitor any reports made via the safeguarding email
- 5.4. On a termly basis, the DSL will hold an assembly reminding students and staff how they can make reports.
- 5.5. Upon receiving a report, the DSL and Headteacher will be responsible for informing the Chair of Governors and the designated Safeguarding Governor and investigating the report.
- 5.6. If a report is made regarding a parent, the DSL will call the police immediately – the school will not investigate this report; however:
 - The parent may be banned from the school premises until the police investigation has been completed
 - Social services may be informed of the investigation
- 5.7. If a report is made regarding a staff member, the DSL, Headteacher and Chair of Governors will use their professional judgement to determine whether to:
 - Hold a meeting with the staff member to investigate the allegation; or
 - Call the police
- 5.8. If a member of the public is on the school site with a weapon, the school's Invacuation, Lockdown and Evacuation Policy will be followed.

6. Investigation procedure

- 6.1. When a report of a student who may be carrying an offensive weapon is made, the Headteacher and DSL will promptly risk assess the situation, determining:
 - Where the student can be located
 - What risks their surroundings are likely to pose, e.g. a confined space such as the changing rooms resulting in close proximity to other students
 - Where the student is likely to be carrying the offensive weapon, e.g. on their person or in their bag
- 6.2. The Headteacher maintains a log of staff who have received offensive weapons and searching, screening and confiscation training.
- 6.3. Once the student has been located and the Headteacher and DSL have risk assessed the situation, two members of trained staff will be asked to escort the student to a safe location, e.g. the Headteacher's office.
- 6.4. Once the student is in a safe location, the Headteacher will contact the student's parents and invite them to the school. They will be informed why they are being invited to the school by the Headteacher, who will remain calm and unaccusing.
- 6.5. The Headteacher will not wait for the parents to arrive at school before moving the student to a safe location.

- 6.6. Once the student's parents have been contacted, and they have confirmed that they are coming to the school, the Headteacher will wait no longer than 15 minutes before discussing the concern with the student.
- 6.7. When the Headteacher discusses their concerns with the student, they will not be confrontational or judgemental.
- 6.8. The student's parents will be present when the Headteacher discusses the concern with the student. If they cannot be present, another member of staff will be present.
- 6.9. Once all relevant parties are present, the Headteacher will explain to the student, and their parents if they are present, why they need to talk to the student.
- 6.10. The Headteacher will ask the student to empty their bag, and the Headteacher will search their outer clothing, in line with the school's Searching, Screening and Confiscation Policy.

7. Management of students

- 7.1. If no weapon has been found after the student's bag and outer clothing has been searched, the Headteacher will use a metal detector wand to search the student.
- 7.2. If still no weapon has been found, the Headteacher will thank the student and their parents for cooperating, answer any questions (where appropriate, e.g. maintaining confidentiality by not informing parents of who raised the report) and send the student back to class.
- 7.3. If the Headteacher searches the student and discovers a weapon, they will use their professional judgement to determine:
 - What kind of weapon it is, e.g. an offensive weapon or a school-banned item
 - The likely intention to cause harm
 - The context of the situation, including the student's educational history, bullying and behavioural records, and any explanations that the student can provide
- 7.4. If a potential weapon is found, the Headteacher will use their professional judgement in considering whether to call the police. For example:
 - If the student brings in an offensive weapon, e.g. a samurai sword, the police will be called immediately
 - If a student brings in a Swiss army knife, the school will establish the context of the situation before making a decision
- 7.5. The Headteacher will keep a record of all searches that have been conducted, which will be stored in their office and kept in line with the Confidentiality Policy.
- 7.6. The school understands the negative effect that exclusion can have on students and will do everything within its power to support, protect and help students; however, will follow the procedures within the Exclusion Policy where necessary.

- 7.7. If a weapon of any description is produced and used to threaten, physically or mentally, or harm another person, the headteacher will call the police immediately.
- 7.8. While waiting for the police to arrive, staff will understand and adhere to the following procedure:

The Invacuation, Lockdown and Evacuation Policy will be invoked

- Staff will ensure their own and students' safety
- Staff will do all they can to contain the student, e.g. in a classroom; however, staff will not risk their own safety
- Staff will try to calm the student down
- Staff will ensure they keep a safe distance between themselves and the student and they will try to keep items in between themselves and the student, e.g. desks
- Staff will never put themselves at risk

- 7.9. If a student has produced a weapon, the school's Reasonable Force Policy will be void and staff will wait for the police to arrive.
- 7.10. If someone is attacked with an offensive weapon, the emergency services (police and ambulance) will be called immediately and the school will cooperate with the police's decision, e.g. regarding punishments.
- 7.11. Following any incident where a weapon has been produced, this policy will be reviewed by the DSL and Headteacher.
- 7.12. The school's Searching, Screening and Confiscation Policy will be adhered to at all times.

8. Reintegration

- 8.1. While the school never condones carrying a weapon, we understand that there are many reasons as to why a student may feel the need to carry a weapon, e.g. they are being bullied
- 8.2. If a student who has been found to be in possession of a weapon remains at the school, the DSL will be responsible for supporting and monitoring the student.
- 8.3. The DSL will establish the student's reasons for carrying a weapon and will put appropriate support systems in place.
- 8.4. The DSL will hold weekly meetings with the student to monitor their safety and wellbeing until the DSL is satisfied with the student's wellbeing.
- 8.5. Carrying a weapon can be an indicator of a safeguarding concern, e.g. county lines exploitation or neglect, and the DSL will investigate any concerns and make a referral to the appropriate body, e.g. the police, if appropriate.
- 8.6. Other students will not be informed that the student was suspected of carrying a weapon.
- 8.7. The student's parents will, if appropriate, be involved in the reintegration plan, e.g. attending the weekly meetings with the DSL.

8.8. The school will offer counselling services to the student, if appropriate.

9. Safeguarding

- 9.1. In line with 'Keeping children safe in education', the school has a duty to protect students from harm.
- 9.2. The school will conduct annual surveys to establish whether students feel safe, how students could be made to feel safer and to ensure students understand the school's reporting procedures.
- 9.3. The school will hold awareness days in which students will learn about what it means legally to carry or threaten someone with a weapon.
- 9.4. The school will invite local law enforcement officers into the school to give assemblies on the dangers of carrying an offensive weapon.
- 9.5. The school will provide students with a range of workshops/assemblies to raise awareness of the dangers of offensive weapons.
- 9.6. The school uses hand-held metal detector wands to identify students who are carrying weapons.
- 9.7. All students and parents will be made aware of the school's reporting procedures and the school's commitment to protecting the school community – parents will receive a letter annually.
- 9.8. The school's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy will be adhered to by all staff, parents and students.
- 9.9. The school will ensure raising awareness on the dangers of offensive weapons is part of the PSHE curriculum.
- 9.10. Students will have read and understood the school's Behaviour Policy.
- 9.11. All staff participate in bi-annual offensive weapons training, including de-escalation techniques, invacuation, lockdown and evacuation procedures, and searching, screening and confiscation procedures.
- 9.12. The school understands that certain students are likely to be more at risk than others in terms of carrying a knife.
- 9.13. Staff will be aware that the following characteristics may make a student more susceptible to carrying an offensive weapon:
 - Disadvantaged backgrounds
 - Students with SEND, e.g. they are more susceptible to county lines or gang exploitation
 - Students from difficult family situations
 - Severely bullied students
- 9.14. If any member of the public, a parent or a staff member produces a weapon on the school premises, the school's Invacuation, Lockdown and Evacuation Policy will be followed.

10. Monitoring and review

- 10.1. The Headteacher, Governing board and DSL will review this policy on an annual basis.
- 10.2. The next scheduled review date for this policy is November 2025
- 10.3. Any changes made to this policy will be immediately communicated to all employees, students and parents.

Managing Offensive Weapon Reports Flowchart

This flowchart outlines what schools should do if a report of a student carrying an offensive weapon is raised.

If appropriate, call the student's parents and invite them to the school. Inform them why they are being invited to the school, ensuring you remain calm and unaccusing. **Do not wait for parents to arrive at the school before moving the student to a safe location.**

Move the student to a safe location, e.g. the Headteacher's office. When asking the student to come with you, do not act confrontational or judgemental.

Explain to the student, and their parents if they're present, why you need to speak with them.

Ask the student if you can search their bag and outer clothing. School staff have the authority to do this; however, asking for permission is less confrontational.

If no weapon has been found upon searching the students bag and outer clothing, use a metal detector wand to search the student.

If no weapon has been found, you have not been accusing, judgemental or inappropriate and parents were informed/present, thank the student for cooperating and allow them to return to their class.

If an offensive weapon is found, you should use your professional judgement to determine what's next. You should:

- Establish what kind of weapon it is, e.g. butterfly knife or pen knife.
- Assess the potential intention to cause harm.
- Remember context, including the student's educational history, any reports of bullying, and explanations that the student can provide.

The police do not always need to be called. Have confidence in your policies to establish if you can support the student.

Keep a record of the search.

Do not discount the student in the future – if more reports are made, continue to investigate them.

Letter to Parents Regarding Managing Offensive Weapon Incidents

Address line one

Address line two

City/town

Postcode

Date

RE: The school's management of offensive weapons

Dear *name of parent*,

As I am sure you are aware, there have been a lot of recent news stories regarding young people carrying offensive weapons such as knives. I would like to reassure you that your child is safe at school by explaining how the school aims to manage any incidents of offensive weapons and keep your children safe.

The school operates an anonymous reporting procedure that can be found on the school's website, at URL. All students, staff, parents and the wider community are invited to use this reporting procedure if they have any concerns over safeguarding issues, including fears that a student may be carrying a weapon.

Upon receiving this report, the school conducts a thorough investigation procedure, which is outlined below:

- The student concerned is located and taken to a safe location – usually the Headteacher's office.
- The student's parents are contacted and invited into the school.
- The Headteacher conducts an interview with the student (and their parents, if they're present) to establish whether the student would like to admit to having a weapon on their person.
- The Headteacher asks to search the student's bag and outer clothing.
- If a weapon is not found from this search, the Headteacher uses a hand-held metal detector wand to establish whether the student has a weapon on their person.
- If no weapon is found, the Headteacher keeps a record of the search and monitors the situation.
- If a weapon is located, the Headteacher will establish what the appropriate next steps will involve.

Where a student is found to have a weapon on their person, the Headteacher will use their professional judgement to determine:

- What kind of weapon it is, e.g. an offensive weapon or a school-banned item.
- The likely intention to cause harm.
- The context of the situation, including the student's educational history, bullying and behavioural records, and any explanations that the student can provide.

The Headteacher will also consider whether to call the police. For example:

- If the student brings in an offensive weapon, e.g. a samurai sword, the police will be called immediately.
- If a student brings in a Swiss army knife, the school will establish the context of the situation before making a decision.

The school understands the negative effect that expulsion can have on students and will do everything within its power to support, protect and help students; however, we will follow the procedures within the Exclusion Policy where necessary.

If you have any questions regarding this letter, please ask the TALs office for a copy of our Offensive Weapons Policy which explains our procedures in full.

If you have any further questions, please feel free to contact me on **contact details** – I will endeavour to respond as quickly as I am able.

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter.

Yours sincerely,

Headteacher

Date