

KINGSDOWN SECONDARY SCHOOL

POLICY ON SCREENING & SEARCHING PUPILS FOR OFFENSIVE WEAPONS

Introduction

The Staff of the Kingsdown Secondary School are committed to providing a safe working and learning environment for pupils, staff and visitors to the School. **The principle upon which this protocol is based is that the personal safety of each individual in the School is of paramount importance.**

This protocol should be read in conjunction with the Behaviour Policy and the Positive Handling Policy of Kingsdown Secondary School, which make it clear that we always take into consideration the circumstances of every incident and deal with every young person on an individual, case by case basis. It also stresses the importance we place on building good relationships and we would want this protocol to be seen in the light of that policy. The Department for Schools and Families' Guidance of May 2007 gives further details about the legal basis for screening and searching pupils without consent. http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/doc/11454/Screening_and_searching_pupils_for_weapons_guidance_DfES_final_3.doc

Strategies for Reducing Risk and Promoting a Safe Environment

We work with pupils who have emotional and behavioural difficulties and many have been excluded from school(s) for a variety of reasons, including violence and in some cases taking weapons to school. Our job is to provide these pupils with another chance at education in an environment that is carefully structured to meet their needs and imposes firm boundaries. However, it is acknowledged that working with potentially violent pupils poses risks. **We cannot eliminate these risks. This protocol is about how we assess and manage these risks.** There are a number of things which are fundamental to this process;

1. Staff who are skilled in managing conflict; this requires access to regular, appropriate training and an agreed behaviour policy which is consistently applied.
2. Clear strategies for managing violent incidents if and when they happen;
3. Clear policies for assessing risk and reducing these wherever possible. This includes our policy on screening and searching pupils
4. Good communication and information sharing among the staff team.
5. Working closely with parents and carers and maintaining good communication with them. Tutors play a vital role in this.
6. Working closely with other agencies and in particular the local Police and Social Services. (especially where a pupil is LAC)
7. A reflective strategy for dealing with the aftermath of incidents.

Offensive Weapons

An offensive weapon is anything which is being carried with the intention of using it either to attack someone else or defend oneself from attack. In law there is no such thing as a 'defensive' weapon and anyone carrying a knife without a legitimate reason is deemed to be carrying an offensive weapon. Offensive weapons are not only knives and include broken bottles, hammers, chisels and any similar object which the bearer has no good reason to be carrying.

Offensive weapons will not be tolerated in the Kingsdown Secondary School. The Head and members of staff will carry out random screening checks, holding a hand held metal detector. If a pupil is found to be carrying an offensive weapon the Police will be informed. The pupil will either be handed over to the Police or sent home (depending on the Police response). In either event the weapon will be confiscated and locked away and used as evidence **Having a knife on school premises is an arrestable offence.** Pupils who are found with an offensive weapon will receive a 10 day exclusion whilst a full risk assessment is carried out and a decision made as to whether the pupil's placement can be continued.

We recognise our responsibility for working with pupils with challenging behaviour, including those who may be at the School because they were excluded for carrying knives or other weapons. However if we consider that the actions or attitude of a pupil represent a risk to the Health and Safety of other students and staff in the School then we will not allow that person to remain in the School.

All permanent members of staff at Kingsdown school are authorised by the Headteacher to screen and search pupils for weapons provided they follow the guidance below.

Screening

- Screenings will be carried out by 2 members of staff
- They may take place at the beginning of the day – before pupils have entered the building, before off-site visits and trips or at any other time staff feel is appropriate (for example during a lesson if 'intelligence' suggests there may be a weapon on site or during an off-site visit if there is a suggestion that pupils may have acquired a weapon(s))
- Throughout the screening pupils will be talked to and reassured that there is no threat to them and that they have nothing to fear if they are not carrying anything.
- Staff will use a hand held metal detector
- Pupils will be asked to remove any metallic objects (eg mobile phones) before the screen
- Pupils will be asked to remove outer coats and hats
- Pupils' bags may also be screened.
- If a pupil refuses to be screened s/he will not be allowed to enter the school (or go on the trip) and parents/carers will be informed.
- Parents and carers will be informed on the days that screenings have taken place

Searches

- Searches will be carried out by Senior members of the teaching staff if they suspect a pupil may be carrying an offensive weapon.
- Searches will be carried out out of sight of other pupils (eg in the school office)
- Suspicion may be aroused:
 - As a result of a positive screening
 - Because a pupil is acting suspiciously (eg attempting to hide something)
 - As a result of a 'tip off' – by a parent/carer or another pupil
 - Because of something said by the pupil
- There will always be two members of staff present when a search takes place. Both members of staff will be of the same sex as the pupil.
- Pupils will **NOT** be frisked or asked to remove clothing other than outerwear but they may be asked to remove their coats, turn out their pockets and bags and lift up their trouser legs to reveal their socks.
- Throughout the screening pupils will be talked to and reassured that there is no threat to them and that they have nothing to fear if they are not carrying anything.
- If pupils refuse to be searched or if they abscond the Police will be informed. If pupils become abusive or threatening the search will be stopped, the pupil isolated and the Police called.
- All searches will be logged
 - name, year, sex, ethnicity of every pupil searched
 - rounds of suspicion
 - time and place
 - who searched
 - who else was present
 - what if any reasonable force was used, and if so why
 - how the search began and progressed
 - the pupil's responses and how staff managed them (e.g. steps taken to calm the pupil)
 - outcomes and follow-up actions.
- Parents/Carers will always be informed if a pupil has been searched and the result of that search.
- If an offensive weapon is found it will be confiscated and locked away in a secure place and the Police informed. Staff will endeavour to keep the pupil securely until the Police arrive but will not put themselves at risk so to do.
- Any illegal substances that are found will be confiscated and kept securely locked away and the Police informed.

Staff safety is paramount and no member of staff is required to take part in screening or searching pupils. If staff feel threatened in any way they should immediately stop the screen/search and inform the Police.

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