



Policy for

OFFENSIVE WEAPONS

Responsibility

Principal

Ernest Bevin College will not tolerate offensive weapons being brought onto the college premises or to College organised activities. Our code of conduct makes it clear to all students and parents that students are forbidden to bring offensive weapons to College or to College organised activities. It also makes clear that bringing offensive weapons onto the College site will result in permanent exclusion except in exceptional circumstances. This is in order to minimise risk to pupils and staff.

Aims

1. The aim of this policy is to prevent and deter the carrying of knives or other offensive weapons by students of Ernest Bevin College.
2. The College will take positive action to encourage safe and acceptable behaviour and to prevent verbal and physical aggression or intimidation.
3. The Principal and Governors will ensure all staff and students feel confident that their safety is of highest priority. For this reason, there will be no tolerance in Ernest Bevin College of offensive weapons including readily foldable pocket knives of whatever length of cutting blade or any other item which could be used to inflict harm.
4. Any suspicions of offensive weapons being carried, will be followed up with searches if necessary.
5. Ernest Bevin College will take clear action which will affect the pupil and their parents, if any offensive weapon is found following a search.
6. Ernest Bevin College expects parents to be aware of all items that their children bring to College.

Guidelines

1. Offensive weapons are defined in the Prevention of Crime Act 1953 as “any article made or adapted for causing injury to the person; or intended by the person having it with him for such use by him.” Sections 139 and 139A of the Criminal Justice Act 1988 refer to “any article which has a blade or point or is sharply pointed, **except a folding pocket knife**”. A folding pocket knife is one which has a cutting edge of no more than three inches in length, and which must be readily foldable at all times.
2. The exception for folding pocket knives does not of course prevent this College from imposing our own ban on pupils carrying such weapons and we hereby do so. There are three categories of offensive weapons:”

 “Made” could include a dagger or gun;

 “Adapted” could include a broken bottle; and

 “Intended” for such use could include a rock or stone.

Clearly many articles are capable of being an offensive weapon but in the latter category there would need to be evidence of intention to use that particular article as a weapon.

3. Ernest Bevin College will work closely with the Police and other agencies in relation to prevention, deterrents and follow up to searches and incidents involving offensive weapons. Where a crime has been committed the college may involve the Police.

4. The Principal of Ernest Bevin College will use their professional judgement when deciding whether or not to permanently exclude a student found to be carrying, handling or using a weapon

Implementation

1. The ban on weapons clearly stated in the college 'Code of Conduct' which is explained to all pupils when they join the college.
2. The Principal and staff of Ernest Bevin College will work with the Police and other agencies in particular the Police School Liaison Officer to ensure all students are clear about the unacceptability of ever carrying an offensive weapon and that all students understand the dangers of weapon use.
3. Materials and programmes will be developed with schools by the Youth Offending Team, the Connexions Service and the Police. These will be for all students, to raise their awareness of the definition of offensive weapons, the risks of carrying an offensive weapon, the dangers it could lead to and the effects of the use of offensive weapons, in particular knives.
4. The programmes will be for use in Year Assemblies and with the Personal, Social, Health, Education (PSHE) Citizenship and/or Religious Education curriculum for all pupils, with a view to shaping attitudes and values and building pupils' self esteem and resistance to peer pressure. The programmes will also assist students to develop a positive approach to resisting the negative effects of 'gang' membership. The programmes could also be jointly delivered by schools and other agencies to target groups, used by schools with individual students or victims and used for staff development.
5. Ernest Bevin College will routinely consult with students on whether or not they feel safe in and around college and on ways in which the college can positively promote a safe environment with an unthreatening ethos. The College Council will contribute to this process.
6. Ernest Bevin College will reinforce ways in which students can raise concerns about their own safety in and around college.

Deterrents

1. Ernest Bevin College will make explicit to students and their parents, all aspects of our Behaviour Policy and Code of Conduct, our range of strategies to avoid and address unacceptable behaviour. We will also make explicit the steps that we will take to prevent offensive weapons coming into schools and the action which will follow if weapons are found.
2. The College's approach will also be discussed with and explained to parents at information sessions, or through the Parents' Group. Ernest Bevin College will expect the parents' commitment to our approach through signed Home/College agreements.
3. Ernest Bevin College will undertake risk assessments to ensure pupils are not able to make inappropriate use of any implements used as part of the curriculum.

Searches for Offensive Weapons

1. Ernest Bevin College will publicise to pupils and parents our approach to searches the reasons for them, the actions undertaken and the likely outcome if offensive weapons are found.
2. Ernest Bevin College will seek to avoid confrontation and any action which could provoke antagonism. We will also take steps to minimise pupils' anxiety about searches.
3. A search will only be undertaken with the co-operation of the student. If the pupil declines to co-operate the Principal may involve the Police.

4. Authorised staff may search an individual student if they have suspicions that they could be carrying an offensive weapon. The student will first be asked to hand over any offensive weapon. The individual student would be searched using metal detectors or hand searched if suspicions remained. They will be asked to remove their shoes and pull down the top of their socks. The search will be undertaken in privacy by an authorised member of staff and with another authorised member of staff present. One of the staff should be the same sex as the student.
5. The student's possessions must be searched in his/her presence and in the presence of another member of staff.
6. The pupil's parents would be informed if an individual search, following suspicion, has been undertaken regardless of whether anything had been found.
7. If a student refuses to empty pockets or bags or remove shoes, then the College may inform or call the Police. The refusal to cooperate with a search will be regarded as a serious disciplinary issue in itself and in relation to the reason that a search was considered necessary.
8. Given that it is impractical to combine daily security searches of all students entering the College, we will undertake random searches of whole groups, such as tutor groups, particular classes or individuals. Searches will also be carried out where a suspicion has been raised.

ACTION FOLLOWING SEARCHES AND/OR THE FINDING OF WEAPONS.

When an offensive weapon is found, the Principal may use his or her professional judgement to take into account the personal situation of the student and the context of the incident to decide whether or not to permanently exclude the student. Only in exceptional circumstances would the decision be not to exclude.

The Principal will use their professional judgement on whether to inform the Police.

In cases where a head teacher has permanently excluded a pupil for:

One of the above offences; the Secretary of State would not normally expect the governing body or an Independent Appeal Panel to reinstate the pupil'.

