

Southlands School

Weapons Policy

Date: September 2026

Review date: September 2027 or earlier where legislation, statutory guidance or school practice changes

Responsible: Headteacher / Senior Leadership Team

1. Statement of Intent

Southlands School is committed to maintaining a safe environment in which pupils and staff can learn and work without fear of harm. The possession or use of weapons on school premises presents a serious risk to safety and wellbeing and will always be taken seriously.

Southlands School do not tolerate the deliberate and intentional bringing of a weapon onto the school site. Where a pupil deliberately and intentionally brings a weapon onto the school site, the established Southlands School response is that the pupil will be subject to suspension and a disciplinary hearing, in accordance with the school's Suspension and Exclusion Policy.

This policy does not mean that every incident involving an object capable of causing harm will be treated identically. The school will consider the circumstances in which the object came into school, the pupil's age and developmental needs, intent, understanding, vulnerability, coercion or exploitation, and any relevant safeguarding or contextual factors.

The school's response will always begin with safety. Staff will seek to reduce immediate risk, safeguard pupils and staff, establish the facts and then determine the appropriate behavioural, safeguarding and disciplinary response.

2. Purpose of the Policy

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that Southlands School has a clear and consistent approach to:

- preventing weapons from being brought onto the school site;
- recognising and responding to immediate risk;
- searching for and confiscating prohibited items lawfully and respectfully;
- responding to incidents involving weapons or objects capable of causing harm;
- considering safeguarding and contextual factors;
- working with parents, carers and external agencies;
- recording and reviewing incidents; and

- learning from incidents to reduce future risk.

3. Definition of a Weapon

The purpose of this policy, a weapon is any object, substance or item that is designed, adapted or intended to cause injury, threaten another person or be used violently.

Some items may have legitimate purposes but can become weapons depending on how they are used or why they are brought onto the school site. Staff should therefore consider both the nature of an item and the circumstances in which it is found.

Examples may include:

- firearms and realistic replicas;
- knives and other bladed or pointed objects;
- fireworks;
- aerosol sprays where they are intended or capable of being used to cause harm;
- lighters or matches where their possession or intended use creates a risk;
- corrosive substances;
- laser pens or other objects capable of being used violently;
- martial arts objects;
- tools such as screwdrivers, hammers or chisels;
- razors or razor blades;
- chains; and
- other objects capable of causing injury or being used to threaten another person.

This list is not exhaustive. An item that is not specifically named in the policy may still be treated as a weapon where the circumstances indicate that it has been used, adapted or intended for harmful purposes.

4. Prevention

Preventing weapons from entering school is part of the school's wider safeguarding and behaviour approach. Staff should promote a culture in which pupils feel safe to report concerns, threats, coercion and fears about carrying weapons.

The school recognises that a child or young person may carry a weapon because they believe that they need to protect themselves. This may be connected to threats, intimidation, exploitation, peer-group pressure or wider contextual safeguarding concerns.

Such circumstances do not make the possession of a weapon acceptable or safe. However, they may indicate that the pupil requires safeguarding support in addition to a disciplinary response.

The school will use curriculum, pastoral work, relationships with pupils, safeguarding processes and appropriate security arrangements to reduce the likelihood of weapons being brought onto the site.

5. Safeguarding and Contextual Factors

Where a pupil is found with a weapon, staff will consider whether there are wider safeguarding concerns. These may include exploitation, coercion, threats from peers or adults, criminal exploitation, extra-familial harm or a belief that carrying a weapon is necessary for personal protection.

The school will seek to understand the circumstances without making assumptions about the pupil's motivation. Information may need to be gathered from the pupil, parents or carers and other agencies.

Where safeguarding concerns are identified, the Designated Safeguarding Lead will ensure that the appropriate safeguarding procedures are followed. The school may need to work with the North Tyneside Safeguarding Children Partnership, police, youth justice services, children's social care or other relevant agencies.

6. Reporting Concerns

Pupils and staff should report any concern about a weapon or potential weapon immediately to a member of staff.

Staff should not attempt to investigate a potentially dangerous situation themselves if doing so would increase risk. The immediate priority is to secure safety and obtain appropriate support.

Information about a suspected weapon should be passed promptly to the appropriate member of the Senior Leadership Team or safeguarding team.

7. Immediate Response

When a weapon or suspected weapon is identified, staff should prioritise the safety of pupils and adults in the area.

The immediate response will depend on the circumstances and may include moving pupils away from the area, obtaining assistance from senior staff, securing the item where this can be done safely, contacting emergency services where necessary and implementing relevant school emergency procedures.

Staff should not place themselves or others at unnecessary risk by attempting to take an item from a pupil where this would increase the likelihood of injury.

Where there is an immediate threat to life or serious injury, emergency services should be contacted without delay.

8. Searching

Searches will be conducted in accordance with current statutory guidance and the school's established procedures.

Searches must be lawful, proportionate and carried out with due regard for the pupil's dignity, age, SEND, vulnerabilities and individual circumstances. Staff should seek cooperation wherever possible, unless doing so would create an unacceptable risk.

Only the Headteacher or staff authorised by the Headteacher may carry out searches within the school's arrangements. Southlands School authorise appropriate members of the Senior Leadership Team and pastoral staff to conduct searches where the relevant conditions are met.

Where a search is undertaken, the reasons for the search and the outcome should be recorded appropriately. Parents or carers will be informed in accordance with the school's procedures.

Where reasonable adjustments are required because of disability or SEND, these should be considered as part of the search process.

9. Screening and Detection

Southlands School may use appropriate screening or detection arrangements where necessary to support the safety of the school community. Any such arrangements will be implemented in accordance with statutory guidance and school procedures.

Screening is a preventative measure and does not replace professional judgement, safeguarding practice or appropriate searches where lawful grounds exist.

10. Confiscation

Where a prohibited or dangerous item is identified, it will be confiscated where it is lawful and safe to do so.

Where an item may be evidence of a suspected criminal offence, or where police involvement is required, the item and relevant evidence will be passed to the police as soon as possible in accordance with current guidance and local procedures.

Staff should not unnecessarily handle or investigate an item, where doing so could compromise safety or evidence.

11. Knives and Bladed Articles

The possession of a knife or bladed article on school premises is a serious matter and may constitute a criminal offence, subject to the relevant legal provisions and exceptions.

Where a knife or bladed article is found, the school will consider the immediate safety risk, the circumstances in which it came into school, the pupil's explanation, any evidence of coercion or exploitation and any wider safeguarding concerns.

Where required, the police will be contacted and the item passed to them in accordance with current guidance.

The school will also consider whether the pupil requires safeguarding support, particularly where there is evidence that the pupil has been threatened, exploited or feels that carrying a weapon is necessary for protection.

12. Establishing Facts and Understanding Context

Once immediate safety has been secured, the school will establish the facts as far as possible.

The response will consider the pupil's age and developmental stage, intent, understanding, previous concerns, the circumstances surrounding the incident and any relevant vulnerabilities.

For example, circumstances may differ where an item has been deliberately brought into school for the purpose of threatening or harming another person, where a pupil has been coerced or exploited into carrying an item, or where an item has been brought into school accidentally.

Understanding context does not remove the seriousness of the incident. It allows the school to determine the most appropriate combination of safeguarding, behavioural, disciplinary and support responses.

13. Disciplinary Response

Where a pupil deliberately and intentionally brings a weapon onto the school site, the established Southlands School response is that the pupil will be subject to suspension and a disciplinary hearing, in accordance with the school's Suspension and Exclusion Policy.

The school will consider the full circumstances of the incident alongside this established disciplinary position. This includes consideration of age, intent, vulnerabilities, coercion, exploitation and other relevant contextual factors.

Where the circumstances differ from deliberate and intentional possession, the school will determine an appropriate response based on the evidence and the individual situation.

Consequences will be accompanied by appropriate support where this is necessary to reduce future risk and address underlying needs.

14. Safeguarding Response

A weapon incident may indicate a wider safeguarding concern. Staff should therefore consider whether the pupil is at risk from others, whether they are being pressured or exploited, and whether there are concerns outside the school environment.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead will determine whether a safeguarding referral or consultation with another agency is required.

The school will share information appropriately, where doing so is necessary to protect a child or young person from harm. Safeguarding concerns should not be left unresolved because a disciplinary response has already been taken.

15. Safety Planning

Where a pupil has been involved in a weapons incident, the school may develop a safety plan with the pupil, parents or carers and relevant professionals.

The plan may consider the circumstances that led to the incident, people or places that may present a risk, safe adults, reporting routes, strategies for managing threats or conflict and steps to reduce the likelihood of the pupil carrying a weapon in future.

Where appropriate, the plan will also consider the pupil's regulation, communication and support needs.

16. Restrictive Intervention

Where an incident presents an immediate risk of harm, staff may need to use restrictive intervention in accordance with Southlands School Behaviour Policy, PRICE training and the school's arrangements for restrictive intervention.

Restrictive intervention is not a routine response to weapons incidents. It must be necessary, proportionate and lawful in the circumstances.

The detailed procedures governing restrictive physical intervention, reasonable force and any associated recording requirements are contained within the school's Behaviour Policy and relevant PRICE guidance.

17. Working with Parents and Carers

Parents or carers will normally be informed when a pupil is involved in a weapons incident, subject to any safeguarding or police considerations that affect the timing or nature of communication.

The school will work with parents and carers to understand the circumstances surrounding an incident and identify appropriate support.

Information about other pupils will remain confidential and will only be shared where lawful and appropriate.

18. Police and Multi-Agency Working

The school will involve the police where this is required by law, current guidance, the seriousness of the incident or the immediate risk presented.

Where a weapon may be evidence of an offence, the item and relevant evidence will be passed to the police as soon as possible.

The school may also work with children's social care, youth justice services, health professionals, safeguarding partners and other agencies where this is necessary to protect a pupil or reduce future risk.

19. Serious Violence and Exploitation

Where a weapons incident is linked to serious violence, exploitation, threats or extra-familial harm, the school will consider the wider circumstances rather than treating the incident solely as a disciplinary matter.

Staff should remain alert to signs that a pupil may be being exploited, threatened or pressured by others.

Where appropriate, the school will use safeguarding and contextual safeguarding processes to build a fuller understanding of the risks affecting the pupil.

20. Recording

All weapons incidents and relevant searches will be recorded in accordance with Southlands School procedures.

Records should provide a clear account of what was reported or found, the immediate safety measures taken, the circumstances known at the time, searches or confiscation undertaken, safeguarding considerations, decisions made and actions taken.

Relevant information should be recorded on the school's appropriate systems, including Tracker system and CPOMS where applicable.

Records should be sufficiently detailed to support safeguarding, accountability, follow-up and organisational learning.

21. Return to School and Ongoing Support

Following an incident that results in suspension or other significant intervention, Southlands School will consider what support is required before and after the pupil's return.

Southlands School may review the pupil's risk, support arrangements, relationships, timetable, transitions and safety plan.

Where appropriate, the school will work with the pupil and their family to identify safer ways of managing conflict, threats, fear or pressure.

The purpose of this work is not to minimise the seriousness of the original incident, but to reduce the likelihood of further harm and support the pupil to make safer choices.

22. Learning from Incidents

Southlands School will use weapons incidents to identify opportunities for prevention and improvement.

The school will consider whether there are patterns involving locations, times, peer groups, pupils or contextual factors. One way Southlands School may track these patterns is through

the behaviour Tracking system and/or CPOMs. Where appropriate, this information may inform curriculum work, supervision, safeguarding activity, risk assessment or wider school security arrangements.

The Headteacher and Senior Leadership Team will review significant incidents and relevant records to ensure that lessons are identified and appropriate actions are implemented.

23. School Security

Southlands School will maintain appropriate arrangements to reduce the risk of prohibited or dangerous items being brought onto the school site.

These arrangements may include appropriate access controls, supervision, reporting systems, searches, screening where lawful and necessary, staff awareness and emergency procedures.

Security measures will be reviewed considering identified risks and relevant government guidance.

24. Staff Training

Staff will receive appropriate information and training to support them in responding safely to weapons concerns.

Training and professional learning will include awareness of searching arrangements, safeguarding and contextual risks, emergency responses and the school's expectations regarding restrictive intervention.

Staff must seek advice from senior staff or the Designated Safeguarding Lead where they are unsure how to respond.

25. Confidentiality and Information Sharing

Information about weapons incidents will be shared only with those who need the information to safeguard pupils, manage risk, fulfil professional responsibilities or meet legal requirements.

Confidentiality must not prevent appropriate safeguarding information being shared where a child or young person may be at risk of harm.

26. Linked Policies and Procedures

This policy should be read alongside the schools:

- Behaviour Policy;
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy;
- Suspension and Exclusion Policy;
- Health and Safety Policy;

- Online Safety Policy;
- searching and confiscation procedures; and
- PRICE / restrictive intervention arrangements.

Where there is a difference between this policy and a more specific statutory or procedural requirement, the school will follow the applicable legislation, statutory guidance and current safeguarding arrangements.

27. Review

This policy will be reviewed annually or sooner where there is a significant change in legislation, statutory guidance, local safeguarding arrangements or school practice.

The review will consider incidents during the previous period, safeguarding learning, staff feedback, pupil voice where appropriate and any relevant changes to national or local guidance.