



Incidents with Weapons Policy V2 September 2024

This document relates to Article 28 (*Every Child has the Right to an Education*) of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

This organisation is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people.



Orbis Group includes Orbis Education and Care Ltd, Pembrokeshire Resource Centre Ltd, Priority Childcare Ltd and Gower Lodge (Swansea) Ltd. Our policies and procedures have been standardised across the Group and all references to Orbis within this document include the entities referred to above.

1. This policy should be read in conjunction with the following policies:

- Safeguarding Policy
- Complaints and concerns policy
- Exclusion policy
- Positive behaviour support policy

2. Aim

- 2.1 The purpose of this policy is to state clearly that the deliberate and intentional bringing in and or use of weapons in Orbis Group (Orbis) schools will not be tolerated. The use of such weapons on site would create unacceptable risks of bullying, injury and death and is extremely intimidating and frightening for pupils and adults alike. If a pupil deliberately and intentionally brings a weapon onto the school site, the pupil will be placed on a fixed term exclusion and a disciplinary hearing will be carried out.
- 2.2 This policy sets out clearly the preventative actions in place to prevent the use of any weapons in our schools. This policy will also show the direct actions a school will take around the use of weapons on site taking into account the full context around each and every incident.
- 2.3 At Orbis we are committed to the safety and well-being of all of our pupils, staff and parents and will always take immediate action to reduce the risk of harm to any individual on our school sites.

3. What is a weapon

3.1 For the purpose of this Policy a “weapon” is:

- Any fixture, fitting or item taken from the environment, where the perceived intention of the child is to use the item to inflict injury to another person or cause significant damage to another’s property.
- knives, including all variations of bladed objects i.e., pocketknives, craft knives, scissors etc.
- a firearm of any description, including starting pistols, air guns and any type of replica or toy gun,
- pellet guns or BB guns.
- explosives, including fireworks, aerosol sprays, lighters, matches.
- laser pens or other objects, even if manufactured for a non-violent purpose but has a potentially violent use i.e., the purpose of keeping or carrying the object is for use, or threat of use, as a weapon.
- Num chukkas, death stars and other martial arts objects.
- Screwdrivers, hammers, chisels, and any tool that could be offensively used.
- Razor, razor blades or chains.

4. Prevention

- 4.1 It is important to develop appropriate strategies in order to prevent the issue of weapon misuse or any contextual issues around the misuse of weapons such as children having them to ‘feel safe’ from peers or gangs.
- 4.2 Firstly, and most importantly for schools is recognition that incidents where children bring weapons onto site may happen intentionally as well as unintentionally even with the most stringent of policies.
- 4.3 In these cases, the immediate actions taken by staff must be prompt and consistent and therefore ALL staff must know and understand this policy and the expectations of keeping children safe. In any circumstance where this occurs it is important that senior leaders take forward any learning from such incidents to improve policy, revise training and improve practice.

- 4.4 The safety and wellbeing of pupils, staff and people who visit our schools is of paramount importance. Orbis exercises a zero-tolerance approach to the possession of a weapon or knife in school to help ensure, as far as possible, that pupils, staff, and visitors are kept safe from harm.
- 4.5 Within the curriculum, we will continue to adopt a clear preventative strategy across all schools to raise awareness of and educate all pupils on the risks of the carrying a weapon, of knife crime and the life changing consequences this could have for them and others.
- 4.6 In addition, all schools will keep under review the communication channels that young people use in their schools to express their views and concerns about their school and personal life.

5. Working with parents and carers

- 5.1 Parents need to be aware of the school's stringent policy around weapons and support the decision made by senior leaders in the event of an incident.
- 5.2 Parents and carers should always be vigilant of the behaviours of their own children and seek support and intervention when necessary.
- 5.3 If parents/carers believe that their child may be carrying a weapon they should inform the school immediately and the police in order to protect not only their child but other children and adults. By sharing the information immediate intervention can be offered and a plan of support and services could be put in place without an incident occurring.
- 5.4 By continuing good communication between home and school a positive safety plan could be created to manage the safety and the well-being of any child who may need it.
- 5.5 Multi agency working can consolidate in house procedures, by accessing advice, support and guidance when required, effective decisions can be made in collaboration to improve outcomes for children who may be at risk of harm. Seeking advice and guidance can act as a preventative measure so that the right course of action is taken at the earliest opportunity.
- 5.6 If schools continue to promote positive working relationships with front door services such as the police and social care, effective responses and partnership working can achieve positive outcomes for children. It is important that signposting is also available to pupils in the event that they don't feel confident raising an issue to staff or a peer.
- 5.7 It is useful to have a resource board with support services on a wide range of issues so young people can seek their own solutions should they wish to. In the same way external services or support programmes could be brought in to talk to young people about specific issues in support of the prevention of peer-on-peer abuse.

6. Response, for all bladed or offensive weapon incidents and allegations

- 6.1 When there is a suspected knife or weapon incident in school, this may be as a result of the following:
- An allegation has been made of a pupil with a bladed or other weapon in school
 - A pupil has been seen with a bladed or other weapon in school
 - A knife or other weapon has been confiscated from a pupil
 - A member of the public is suspected of having a knife or a weapon on site.
- 6.2 Where a member of the public is suspected of having a weapon on site, the Police must be called. The school can make the call to the Police on 101 or 999, where it is felt an urgent response is needed.

6.3 The following flow diagram guides staff through the process of handling the incident and contacting the Police.

There is a known or suspected knife or weapon incident in the school Examples are:

- An allegation has been made of a pupil with a bladed or other weapon in school.
- A pupil has been seen with a bladed or other weapon in school.
- A knife or other weapon has been confiscated from a pupil.
- A member of the public is suspected of having a weapon.
- Has anyone been injured?
- Are Pupils, staff, or members of the public at risk?

ACTIONS

- Seek urgent medical assistance as necessary.
- All incidents must be reported to the Police on 101 Or 999 where the incident is felt to require an urgent response.
- Advise the Police you will be contacting the Parents / Carers of the pupil to advise them of the incident and follow any advice the Police give.
- Inform Parents/Carers of Pupil(s) involved
- For actual or suspected risk, consider what actions can safely be taken to isolate the pupil with the weapon and take necessary actions to keep others safe.
- Staff should not attempt to disarm a pupil armed with a weapon. The pupil should be isolated, other pupils, staff and members of the public moved away from the area and Police called
- If the weapon is in the possession of school staff, keep this secure (locked away) until the Police arrive.
- Report the incident to the Head of Education (HoE) who is to then inform the Director of Education

- Where there are no injuries to deal with and no immediate threat to pupils, staff, or the public, isolate the pupil and seek permission from the pupil to search their bag and request pockets be emptied out. The pupil must be supported by 2 staff at all times.

- Pupil has agreed to be searched, search must be undertaken in presence of another adult for purposes of safety and corroboration. Note, only the Police can carry out a physical search of the pupil

- Where pupil does not agree to a search, isolate pupil, and await Police arrival. Update Police

School Search Carried out

- Weapon found, secure the weapon, and await Police arrival, update Police on 101
- No weapon found, update Police on 101 and follow Police advice.
- Continue to investigate the allegation internally
- Update HoE. They will update the Director

Police Search

- Police arrive, search, and find a weapon and/or take possession of a weapon previously given to staff
- Follow advice of Police
- Update HoE. They will update the Director
- Where Police search fails to find a weapon, follow Police advice, and continue to investigate allegation internally

7 Searching

7.3 Searching without consent What can be searched for? (for the purposes of this policy)

- Knives or weapons.
- Any article that the member of staff reasonably suspects has been, or is likely to be, used to commit an offence, or to cause personal injury, or damage to property.
- Any item banned by the school rules which has been identified in the rules as an item which may be searched for.

7.4 Who can search?

- A headteacher, or a member of school staff authorised by the headteacher.

7.5 Under what circumstances?

- You must be the same sex as the pupil being searched; and there must be a witness (also a staff member) and, if possible, they should be the same sex as the pupil being searched. There is a limited exception to this rule. You can carry out a search of a pupil of the opposite sex to you and / or without a witness present, but only where you reasonably believe that there is a risk that serious harm will be caused to a person if you do not conduct the search immediately and where it is not reasonably practicable to summon another member of staff.

7.6 When a pupil aged 16 or over refuses consent for the school to contact the Parent / Carer this must be respected- however School staff should inform pupil that the Police will be contacting the Parent / Carer as part of their enquiry.

7.7 Where a pupil is suspected of having a weapon, consider what actions can safely be taken to isolate the pupil. Where it is felt safe to do so, the pupil can be asked to come with staff to the Head Teacher's office or another suitable room closer to where the pupil is. The pupil should be accompanied by two adults.

7.8 Where it is not felt safe to move the pupil or the pupil refuses to move, other pupils and staff should remove themselves quietly and without fuss to another location. Once the pupil has been isolated, they must not be left alone. Two adults should remain with the pupil.

7.9 Only where it is felt safe to do so, the Head Teacher (or a senior staff member, when the Head Teacher is not available) can ask the pupil to empty their pockets and can also ask the pupil for permission to look in the pupil's school bag or other bags or coats. There should be two members of staff present when this request is made, and the search takes place. If it is felt this course of action is likely to exacerbate the situation then staff should not make these requests.

7.10 If it is known that a pupil may be carrying a weapon or have one in their bag or coat, when it is felt safe to do so, a pupil should be asked to agree to a search of their property and to give up the weapon.

7.11 Only the Police can carry out a physical body search, so here, pupils are being asked to empty out bags and pockets. Police advise that by taking this approach, where a weapon is actually being carried, the weapon may readily be given up by the pupil, in situations where the pupil is felt to be calm.

7.12 If the pupil agrees to permission for pockets/bag to be searched, the staff member should explain to the pupil what they are going to do and when they are going to do it. The staff member should ask the pupil if they have any questions before they proceed. There should be two members of staff present when this request is made, and the search takes place.

7.13 If possible, a search to be undertaken in a suitable room that feels safe and (with the exception of the two staff members present), is away from onlookers. The intention is by taking this approach to the physical environment, it will help the pupil feel calm and reduce likelihood of a trauma (fight/flight or freeze) response.

- 7.14 Please note that only the Police can make a body search, and staff must not perform any kind of body search.
- 7.15 Each situation needs a dynamic risk assessment to monitor the wellbeing of the pupil and how they are responding. It may be better to wait for the Police to arrive before requesting items to be surrendered.
- 7.16 If a weapon is surrendered school staff must ensure it is stored securely by being locked away until the Police arrive. When handing over the weapon school staff will be asked to sign a 'Production Label' as part of the Police enquiry.
- 7.17 Where staff feel that to do this would be unsafe, the pupil should be kept isolated until a Police search can be carried out.
- Staff should not attempt to disarm a pupil armed with a weapon. The pupil should be isolated, other pupils, staff and members of the public moved away from the area and Police called.
 - Where a search is going to be carried out, staff can only do this with the pupil's consent.
 - The physical body searching of a pupil can only be carried out by Police.
 - Where consent to search is given by the pupil, the Head Teacher or nominee can undertake searches of the pupil's belongings. Another adult must be present for safety and corroboration.
 - Where the pupil does not consent to a search, await Police arrival.
 - Ensure a familiar adult is with the Pupil if the Police are conducting a search
 - Parents / Carers will be informed of searches, in line with advice received from Police. Any weapon found in a pupil's possession will be confiscated and held securely for action by Police

8 Investigation and Follow Up

8.3 Each incident will require an appropriate and proportionate response.

8.4 Gathering the facts

- In all circumstances, staff need to speak to all the pupils involved separately, gain a statement of facts from them and use consistent language and open questions for each account.
- The easiest way to do this is not to have a line of questioning but to ask the pupils to tell you what happened.
- Only interrupt the pupil from this to gain clarity with open questions, 'where, when, why, who'. (What happened? Who observed the incident? What was seen? What was heard? Did anyone intervene?)
- A full and clear record of exactly what the pupil has said in their own language should be made (and no individual interpretation of the facts made which could impact on the disclosure) and stored following Orbis recording protocols .

8.5 Consider intent

- From the information gathered the next step would be to consider intent. Did the pupil intend to bring a weapon onto the school site in order to harm someone in a deliberate act or did the young person bring the weapon on site as a form of defence or for their own safety?
- Both situations are of equal concern, however one shows a deliberate attempt of harm and both circumstances may have different outcomes.

8.6 Deciding on the next course of action

From the outcome of the investigation the school must decide on the level of risk the pupil poses in school.

- If the risk is clear and the intent is obvious then a fixed term exclusion and a disciplinary hearing may follow or the decision to permanently exclude may be made following the necessary protocols.
- However, depending on the intent, the age of the child and also the circumstances surrounding the incident or the contextual issues it may be a fixed term exclusion is given followed by a risk assessment/safety plan put in place following the pupil's return to school.

8.7 Returning to school/safety planning

- Safety planning is a positive way of supporting a child who may benefit from a planned approach to support or intervention following an incident where a weapon has been brought to school. Safety plans support the child by considering the behaviour behind the use of a weapon and plan ways to manage any identified risks/triggers and seek support from adults and peers.
- They are inclusive of parents and staff and are a planned intervention to support young people in feeling secure in the school/setting, helping young people identify behaviours that may leave them feeling anxious or at risk and have strategies that they can apply to keep themselves feeling safe.
- The language of safety planning is more positive than risk assessment and can give security to the child that a joined-up approach is being followed by all in school.

8.8 Where there has been a knife or weapon incident in a school, a period of exclusion will be put in place while the incident is being investigated and risk assessments are being prepared.

8.9 During this period, the safety and circumstances of the pupil being considered for exclusion must also be considered. Once a decision to exclude has been made, the child or young person should not leave the school until their safety, health and wellbeing are assured and appropriate arrangements are in place.

8.10 All exclusions from school must be formally recorded.

8.11 Children and young people must not be sent home on an "informal exclusion" or sent home to "cool off"

9 Training

9.1 All staff during their induction will receive non pain based, training in pro-active strategies and physical intervention techniques as approved by the Board of Directors. Refresher training will be delivered on an annual basis, and this is mandatory for staff to attend this. Staff will be instructed in the techniques that are agreed with the training provider, through an annual organisational training needs analysis.

9.2 Staff are not trained in disarming techniques

10 Equality Impact Statement

All relevant persons are required to comply with this policy and must demonstrate sensitivity and competence in relation to diversity in race, faith, age, gender, disability, and sexual orientation. If you, or any other groups, believe you are disadvantaged by this policy please contact the Regional Manager for the service. Orbis will then actively respond to the enquiry.

Policy Review Date: January 2025

Signature:  **(Director of Education)**

Orbis is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all young persons in our care and expects all staff to share this commitment. This means that we have up to date Safeguarding & associated policies and procedures in place. All staff must ensure that they are aware of these policies and procedures.