

8 January 2024

Dear PCS Families

Please take the time to speak to your child about the contents in this letter and if you have any concerns regarding your child, please do not hesitate to contact the school and ask to speak to a member of the Safeguarding Team (DSLs).

Ensuring Peacehaven Community School is a Safe Community – Knife Arch

As you are already aware, all our local schools are working closely with the police within East Sussex to educate, inform and protect our young people from becoming victims of knife and weapon related crime. We have been running workshops with students from all year groups led by the police to tackle the recent worrying trend of young people carrying knives, as well as explaining to students the dangers of carrying knives. On Thursday 22 February students will be asked to walk through a 'knife arch' based at the school gates from 8.15am. Students could be subjected to a bag search if the arch detects a potentially dangerous item; if that occurs then parents/carers will be informed of the search taking place.

It is really important to note that there is not a knife crime issue at Peacehaven Community School. However, recent news headlines across the country make this an especially important event and we want to thank East Sussex police and also thank parents and carers for their support in helping to educate all our young people to stay safe.

Further information and support

It is important that the police, schools and families work together to protect young people. To do this, parents/carers must be aware of the warning signs and talk to children about carrying weapons. The consequences of being found in possession of a knife are serious and long lasting, affecting education, employment and travel opportunities, but most critically the risk to life.

Some young people carry weapons because they feel it will provide protection or increase the respect they are given by their friends, but the sad fact is that they are more likely to become victims of serious violence.

Parents/carers should also be aware that girls sometimes carry or store weapons for their boyfriends or other male friends because they believe they are less likely to be stopped by the police. However, it is still a crime if they are caught carrying a knife or other weapon.

The Law

It is an offence to carry a knife in a public place (such as a road or in a school) or to carry any article which has a blade or is sharply pointed.

It is also an offence to carry an offensive weapon in a public place. This includes any article made, adapted or intended for causing injury eg: knuckle duster or bayonets, broken bottles.

Carrying a knife includes: in your hand, a pocket, in the boot of your car or if someone else is carrying a knife for you.

Exceptions include if you are carrying the knife as part of your job, such as a tool for a trade. However, forgetfulness, ignorance to the law or general self-defence are not reasonable excuses if you are caught carrying a knife.

It is an offence to use any knife in a threatening way (even a legal knife).

It is also an offence to sell a knife to anyone under 18. If you are concerned that your child has been sold a knife, you can contact the Citizens Advice Bureau to report the trader to Trading Standards.

Warning signs

These signs don't always mean the worst is happening and could just be normal teenage behaviour:

1. Have they become withdrawn from the family and/or school?
2. Is their school or college reporting worrying changes in behaviour, academic achievement or attendance?
3. Have they lost interest in positive activities such as sports clubs?
4. Do they stay out unusually late without giving a reason and are vague about their whereabouts?
5. Have they stopped seeing old friends and started hanging out with a new group?
6. Are they secretive about the contents of their bag?
7. Are they defensive if you ask what is in their possession or if they are hiding anything?
8. Has their attitude changed about carrying knives/weapons? For example, justifying it by saying people carry them for self-defence?
9. Have any items gone missing from the kitchen, toolbox or garage?
10. Have you found a weapon hidden amongst their possessions?

How to support your child if you are worried

For information from the Home Office about how to support your child if you have concerns regarding your child and knife crime, please go to:

http://www.knifecrimes.org/000904_KNIFE_A5_LEAFLET.pdf

Alternatively, please go to the following website:

<https://noknivesbetterlives.com/parents/having-the-conversation/>

At Peacehaven Community School, we will continue to educate our school community to be wise in the choices we make for a safe community.



Peacehaven Community School

Aspire • Believe • Contribute • Achieve

Yours sincerely

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