

North East Futures UTC



Weapons Policy

North East Futures UTC has been established to support growth in IT and Healthcare Science sectors in the North East and contribute to overall regional growth.


It provides the opportunity for young people from all the communities in this region from which students can travel on public transport within in one hour, to benefit from its specialist provision.

The Board of Trustees and all the North East Futures staff are committed to a policy of equality and aim to ensure that all students, employees, job applicants, other member of the school community and visitors are treated fairly and with respect.

We aim to give equal access to the high quality educational opportunities we provide and to ensure that everyone feels that they are a valued member of the school community. We seek to create a safe and happy environment where all our students can flourish and where social and cultural diversity are celebrated.

Reviewed by:	LGB
Frequency of policy review:	Three years
Lead Sub Committee for discussion:	LGB
Last Reviewed:	8/3/2023
Review by	Daniel Sydes
Signature	
Ratified by Board of Trustees on:	15/3/2023
Name or Trustee:	Derek Marshall

Commented [GC1]: Is the review every 2 or 3 years? The last sentence of the policy states review every 2 years.

Signature:	
Next Review Date:	March 2026

Introduction

The purpose of this policy is to state clearly that the **deliberate** and **intentional** bringing in and use of weapons on our school site 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 students and adults alike.

Purpose and aim

The purpose of this policy is to set out clearly the preventative actions against the use of any weapons on our site. This policy will also show the direct actions the UTC will take around the use of weapons on site taking into account the full context around each and every incident.

At NE Futures UTC we are committed to the safety and well-being of all of our students, staff, parents and visitors and will always take immediate action to reduce the risk of harm to any individual on our school site.

What is a weapon

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

- a firearm of any description, including starting pistols, air guns and any type of replica or toy gun, pellet guns or BB guns;
- knives, including all variations of bladed objects ie: pocket knives, craft knives, scissors etc;
- 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 ie: the purpose of keeping or carrying the object is for use, or threat of use, as a weapon.
- Screwdrivers, hammers, chisels, bradawls and any tool that could be offensively used.
- Razor, razor blades or chains.
- Any item which is used as though it were a weapon, with the intention of wounding another person

Preventative Strategies Recognition

It is important for schools 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.

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. 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.

Creating a safeguarding culture

In order for students and staff to feel safe it is necessary that everyone agrees to and works within the UTC's ethos and culture of vigilance and positively contributes to the sharing of information where there may be risk. By creating a strong culture of safeguarding within the UTC all individuals accessing the site should feel safe to raise concerns, seek support and for a seamless and consistent response to incidents to be followed. In order to create this environment the whole workforce and students should receive appropriate learning and training around the expectations upon them in the event that a weapon may be brought onto site. This includes, how to raise the alarm, procedures for lockdown, use of social media and critical incident response. Staff and students should feel able to contribute to this learning/training to understand what to do in a number of potentially different circumstances.

Effective use of the curriculum

NE Futures UTC has an effective curriculum in place via Personal Development to support students to understand the risks around the use of weapons, the legal implications of carrying weapons and the UTC's response to such incidents. A curriculum that allows strong discussion around the use of weapons may act preventatively to allow students to think twice about the consequences of carrying a weapon and equally may create opportunities for students to share useful intelligence around peer-on-peer abuse, gang related behaviours and contextual issues in the local area that may impact on the increased use of weapons. Any such intelligence shared will need to be passed on to the appropriate front door services, police and social care.

Working with parents/carers

Parents/carers will be made aware of the UTC's stringent policy around weapons via it being placed on the website and support the decision made by senior leaders in the event of an incident. Parents/carers should always be vigilant of the behaviours of their own children and seek support and intervention when necessary. If parents/carers believe that their child may be carrying a weapon they should inform the **UTC 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. By continuing good communication between home and the UTC a positive safety plan could be created to manage the safety and the well-being of any child who may need it.

Working with partnership agencies/signposting services

Multi agency working can consolidate in house procedures in the UTC. 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. If the UTC continues 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 students in the event that they don't feel confident raising an issue to staff or a peer. In school resources will be provided 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 will be brought in to talk to young people about specific issues in support of the prevention of peer on peer abuse.

Searching and Confiscation

Searching

2 experienced school staff should search a student for any item and seek consent.

The Principal and staff authorised by them have a statutory power to search students or their possessions, without consent, where they have reasonable grounds for suspecting that the student may have a prohibited item.

Confiscating

School staff can seize any prohibited item found as a result of a search. They can also seize any item, they consider harmful or detrimental to UTC discipline.

Searching with consent

School staff can search students with their consent for any item.

Schools are not required to have formal written consent from the student for this sort of search – it is enough for the teacher to ask the student to turn out his or her pockets or if the teacher can look in the student's bag or locker and for the student to agree.

NE Futures UTC will make it clear in the behaviour for learning policy and in communications to parents and students what items are banned.

If a member of staff suspects a student has a banned item in his/her possession, they can instruct the student to turn out his or her pockets or bag and if the student refuses, the teacher can apply an appropriate punishment as set out in the behaviour for learning policy.

A student refusing to co-operate with such a search raises the same kind of issues as where a student refuses to stay in a detention or refuses to stop any other unacceptable behaviour when instructed by a member of staff – in such circumstances the UTC can apply an appropriate sanction.

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; and

Any item banned by the school rules which has been identified in the rules as an item which may be searched for.

Who can search?

2 experienced school staff with permission from the Principal.

Under what circumstances?

There must be a witness (also a staff member) and, if possible, they should be the same sex as the student being searched.

There is a limited exception to this rule. A member of staff can carry out a search of a student of the opposite sex to them and / or without a witness present, but only where the member of staff reasonably believes that there is a risk that serious harm will be caused to a person if they do not conduct the search immediately and where it is not reasonably practicable to summon another member of staff.

When can you search?

If you have reasonable grounds for suspecting that a student is in possession of a prohibited item.

The law also says what must be done with prohibited items which are seized following a search.

The requirement that the searcher is the same sex as the student and that a witness is present will continue to apply in nearly all searches. Where it is practicable to summon a staff member of the same sex as the student and a witness then the teachers wishing to conduct a search must do so.

Authorising members of staff

The Principal will decide who to authorise to use these powers. There is no requirement to provide authorisation in writing.

Staff, other than security staff, can refuse to undertake a search. The law states that Principals may not require anyone other than a member of the school security staff to undertake a search.

Staff can be authorised to search for some items but not others; for example, a member of staff could be authorised to search for stolen property, but not for weapons or knives.

Establishing grounds for a search

Staff can only undertake a search without consent if they have reasonable grounds for suspecting that a student may have in their possession a prohibited item. The member of staff must decide in each particular case what constitutes reasonable grounds for suspicion. For example, they may have heard other students talking about the item or they might notice a student behaving in a way that causes them to suspect that the student is concealing a prohibited item.

In the exceptional circumstances when it is necessary to conduct a search of a student of the opposite sex or in the absence of a witness, the member of staff conducting the search should bear in mind that a student's expectation of privacy increases, as they get older.

The powers allow school staff to search regardless of whether the student is found after the search to have that item. This includes circumstances where staff suspect a student of having items such as illegal drugs or stolen property which are later found not to be illegal or stolen.

School staff may wish to consider utilising CCTV footage in order to make a decision as to whether to conduct a search for an item. Any viewing of CCTV footage will be recorded.

Any weapons or items which are evidence of an offence must be passed to the police as soon as possible.

Taken from Searching, screening and confiscation: advice for Principals, school staff and governing bodies, January 2018

Taking action in the event of a weapon on site

If it has been identified that a weapon is on site and the appropriate searching and confiscating has occurred, then the UTC will begin a full and thorough investigation into what has occurred. If it can be proven that a weapon was brought on site with intent to harm then immediate action should occur including contacting the police and parents immediately. The student should be isolated from other students immediately.

If the weapon has been identified because it has been used to harm e.g. another student or member of staff, the UTC will instigate its critical incident management protocols immediately inclusive of lock down procedures, secure and isolate the student and weapon if possible and again contact the police immediately.

If the context of the situation is not so easily identified then a full and thorough investigation is required to establish the UTC's next course of action.

Gathering the facts

In all circumstances, staff need to speak to all the students 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 students to tell you what happened. Only interrupt the student 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 student 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 using the CPOMS system.

Consider intent

From the information gathered the next step would be to consider intent. Did the student 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.

Deciding on the next course of action

The course of action will be decided by the Principal with reference to the UTC's Behaviour Policy and Exclusions Policy.

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.

Review of Circumstances

Following any incident of harm, it is important for the school/setting to consider if anything could have been done differently.

This policy /practice guidance has been heavily supported by the following key documents:

Searching, screening and confiscation: advice for Principals, school staff and governing bodies, January 2018
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/674416/Searching_screening_and_confiscation.pdf
Farrer and Co: Peer on Peer Abuse Toolkit 2019.
<https://www.farrer.co.uk/globalassets/news-articles/downloads/peer-on-peer-abuse-toolkit/>
SF Peer on Peer Abuse Policy, 2019

This policy should be read in conjunction with:

DFE: Keeping Children Safe in Education. September 2019
Child Protection Policy inclusive of Peer on Peer Abuse
Behaviour for Learning Policy

This policy will be reviewed earlier if necessary.