Department for Education

Guidance

Responding to violent incidents

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Applies to England

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Take immediate safety actions

If you have a concern about a pupil's welfare, including in incidents involving weapons, Keeping children safe in education (KCSIE) makes clear that staff should act without delay and follow their school's safeguarding procedures.

You should:

- act immediately and, if necessary:
  - call emergency services
  - instigate protective security procedures such as locking down the site, moving pupils or students indoors and away from danger, or evacuating where necessary
- speak to your designated safeguarding lead (DSL)
- follow your school or college's child protection policy and safeguarding procedures, including any escalation and referral processes, where appropriate

Your DSL should:

- follow Department for Education (DfE) guidance on searching and confiscation
- follow DfE guidance on using reasonable force
- assess the incident or concern and, where appropriate, make referrals to children's social care and/or the police in accordance with KCSIE

Be aware of incidents occurring outside school

Incidents may occur:

- outside school grounds
- on journeys to and from school
- in local community spaces
- at evenings, weekends and school holidays

KCSIE sets out safeguarding actions to take where a pupil is at risk.

You should:

- treat all reports of offsite harm seriously and, if necessary, instigate protective security procedures such as putting the school in lockdown or keeping pupils and staff safely inside a secure room or area until it is safe to leave
- check on the immediate welfare of the pupils involved

- follow the same safeguarding pathways as for onsite incidents
- consider whether there are wider contextual risks linked to locations, peers or online activity
- share information proportionately with parents, police or safeguarding partners, if appropriate

This helps you address risk beyond the school gates and support pupils wherever harm occurs.

Online harm

Social media-related violence and online activity can form part of safeguarding concerns as abuse may take place both online and offline. Online activity may also facilitate, threaten or encourage physical abuse, sexual violence or other forms of harm. Where staff have concerns about a child, they should act without delay, follow the school or college's safeguarding procedures and report their concerns by speaking to the DSL or a deputy.

Search, screen for and confiscate harmful items

If you suspect a pupil may have a weapon or another prohibited item, you must follow the law described in the searching, screening and confiscation in schools guidance.

You should:

- understand when a search can occur, with or without consent
- never conduct a strip search - these are police-led only
- follow the law when deciding whether and how to confiscate and handle prohibited items
- record what happened clearly and promptly to the DSL

Use reasonable force to prevent harm

The Use of reasonable force in schools guidance covers the lawful use of reasonable force.

You may need to use reasonable force to prevent immediate harm.

Any action should be:

- necessary
- proportionate
- in line with Use of reasonable force in schools guidance and the setting's safeguarding and behaviour policies

You should make sure that:

- force is only used to prevent a pupil from:
  - causing injury to themselves or others
  - committing a criminal offence
  - damaging property
  - causing disorder among pupils
- any use of force is proportionate, necessary and short-term
- force is never used as punishment, or to compel compliance
- you take additional care when supporting pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)
- you prioritise your own safety and do not expose yourself to unnecessary risk
- all significant incidents are recorded promptly and shared with the DSL

This supports safe decision-making and protects both pupils and staff.

Protect staff from violence

Where an incident involves violence, threats or abuse towards staff, leaders should respond promptly to:

- manage immediate risk
- support the staff member involved
- record the incident
- consider whether police involvement or other action is required

School employers have legal duties relating to protecting the health, safety and welfare of staff. Preventing and tackling bullying and harassment of school staff contains further information.

Contact the police, if necessary

You should follow your safeguarding procedures and consider contacting the police if you believe:

- a child is at immediate risk of harm
- a crime has been committed
- you have concerns that a pupil may be carrying, or using, a weapon

This reflects the expectations in KCSIE, which state that, where a child is suffering or is likely to suffer harm, it is important to make an immediate referral to local authority children's social care and, if appropriate, the police.

NPCC's when to call the police guidance provides advice for schools on when to involve the police in incidents that may amount to a crime, including those involving weapons.

Record incidents

Clear, timely and accurate recording is an important part of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.

Staff should:

- record safeguarding concerns, discussions and decisions, including the reasons for decisions, in writing, with a clear and comprehensive summary of the concern

and any action taken or outcome

- discuss safeguarding concerns with the DSL or a deputy and share relevant information with them
- consider the wider context of the concern, including whether harm may be occurring in contexts outside the home
- keep safeguarding information confidential and stored securely, and share information appropriately to help identify, assess and respond to risks or concerns

DSLs should:

- ensure safeguarding concerns, discussions, decisions and the reasons for those decisions are appropriately recorded
- consider relevant information when assessing risks to the child and, where relevant, to others
- support appropriate and timely information sharing with local authorities, children's social care, safeguarding partners and other relevant agencies
- keep cases under review and consider further action where a child's situation does not improve or gets worse
- ensure referrals to local authority children's social care are made in accordance with local referral processes where appropriate

High-quality recording:

- supports effective multi-agency working
- helps schools build a joined-up picture of risk
- enables concerns to be monitored, reviewed and responded to where patterns or escalation emerge over time.
- helps schools meet their information sharing duty

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