



February 2025

Dear Parents/Carers,

Re: Safety Initiative at Brentside High School

As we approach the new half term, I write to share information about an important safety initiative taking place over the coming weeks. As part of the Ealing Safer Schools' initiative, and in partnership with the local police, Brentside will be supporting the operation of a 'knife arch' on school premises over a number of separate days this half term. A knife arch is sometimes known as a walkthrough metal detector and usually used alongside metal-detecting 'wands'. As students pass through, they are scanned, and their blazers and bags are searched. Students will not be informed of the knife arch day(s) in advance.

These operations are also happening in other local secondary schools as part of ongoing efforts in the capital and across Ealing to tackle knife crime and to ensure our schools remain safe environments for our students and staff.

A report to the House of Commons in January 2025 states that, in London, *"Following the pandemic, knife crime has risen in each year and 15,000 incidents were recorded in 2023/24"*. Comparing 2023 and 2024 statistics, Ealing has reportedly seen a 14% increase in knife crime. Whilst it remains true to say that knife crime is rare, we know that it has become too regularly a feature of the regional and national news and tackling knife crime requires a proactive approach from all of us. We are committed to taking every step possible to keep our school community safe.

Whilst students at Brentside cover knife crime and safety awareness at different points in their curriculum, we are exploring this important issue with all of our students this half term through knife awareness assemblies and linked workshops, in addition to the knife arches.

Any student at Brentside High School found to be carrying a knife faces exclusion from the school. They also break the law and increase the chance of becoming a victim of knife crime. This is life changing.

Whilst the police knife arch is primarily intended to detect weapons, the arch and searching of bags and blazers may pick up other banned items. Should a student be found with any other banned item, such as a vape, it will be confiscated in line with school policy and parents/carers will be notified accordingly.

We encourage all parents/carers always to ensure their child does not bring any prohibited items into school. A list of these can be found in your child's school planner. It is also important that parents/carers routinely check their child's bags and carry out supportive equipment checks as we work together to maintain a focused and safe learning environment for everyone.

I am confident we will have your support with this important safety initiative, and I will follow up with a further message to parents/carers to keep you informed. In the meantime, please feel free to contact your child's Year Leader or any of the Senior Leadership Team if you have any questions or concerns. Email addresses are on the 'Contact Us' section of the school's website.

Additional Information and Support

It is crucial that schools, the police, and families work in partnership to ensure the safety of our young people. Parents/carers play a vital role by remaining aware of warning signs and having open conversations with their children about the dangers of carrying weapons. Some young people may believe that carrying a weapon offers protection or increases their standing among peers. However, the unfortunate reality is that they become far more likely to become victims of serious violence.

Parents/carers should also be mindful that girls may be asked to carry or store weapons for their male friends. Being found in possession of a knife or weapon is a crime, regardless of such circumstances.

The following section is from the document produced by the Home Office for parents/carers. It provides useful guidance to help manage conversations with children
https://www.knifecrimes.org/000904_KNIFE_A5_LEAFLET.pdf

What you can do – KNOW

Find out about the law. Before talking to your child about knives, you might want to consider the following points:

- It is illegal to carry any knife if there is intent to use it, even defensively, as a weapon. Even if the knife belongs to someone else, such as a friend or a boyfriend.
- Police can and will search someone if they believe they are carrying a knife. Police and school staff can also search young people for weapons at school.
- Carrying a knife could mean being arrested, going to court and ending up with a criminal record or even a prison sentence. This can affect the rest of someone's life. Having a criminal record can prevent that person getting a job, going to university or college or even travelling abroad to some countries.

What you can do – LOOK OUT

Most kids decide they need to start carrying a knife because they feel threatened. Signs to look out for that may suggest your child is feeling this way are:

- school's not going well/they don't want to go in to school at all;
- they've been a recent victim of theft/bullying/mugging;
- a different network of friends who may be older than your child.

Remind your child that they should always walk away if confronted with the threat of violence.

The document also gives links to a range of other helpful organisations. If you do have concerns about your child, do reach out to your child's Year Leader or our safeguarding team on safeguarding@brentsidehigh.ealing.sch.uk.

Thank you for your continued support and partnership.

Yours sincerely,



Ms Hames
Headteacher