Dear Parents/Carers,

Police and schools in the city are committed to working together to protect our young people from becoming victims of knife and weapons crime.

We use a range of tactics including educational inputs and in-school searches to ensure that students are well-informed about the consequences of carrying weapons, and identify those that continue to do so.

It is important that the police, schools and families work together to protect young people. To do this, parents 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 crucially, 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 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. Their reasons are often misguided loyalty or love, but it is still a crime if they are caught carrying a knife or other weapon.

**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 Have they become withdrawn from the family and/or school?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, tool box or garage?
10. Have you found a weapon hidden amongst their possessions?
WHAT TO DO IF YOU’RE CONCERNED
Speak to them calmly and explain the risks and consequences. Further advice on talking to your child is available at:
www.noknivesbetterlives.com/parents/having-the-conversation

You may wish to contact Mr Connor-Hemming (Deputy Headteacher/DSL) at school if you feel your child isn’t listening or is at risk. We can talk through your concerns and plan a way forward together.

If you or your child are aware that other young people in school or the community are carrying knives or weapons, you should contact the police directly via 101. Alternatively you can contact Crimestoppers anonymously on 0800 555 111 or via www.crimestoppers-uk.org

If a crime is taking place or a life is in danger, call 999 immediately.

SCHOOL POLICY FOR WEAPONS POSSESSION
It is essential that we work together to reduce the chances of children bringing a weapon to school. Ours, like most other schools, will take firm action in relation to any student found to be carrying a knife, both on and off the school premises, and the police will be informed. This may include the use of permanent exclusion as a sanction.

THE POLICE RESPONSE TO WEAPONS POSSESSION
Where young people are involved in crime, the police will try to avoid criminalising them; however, carrying a knife or other weapon is very serious and the most likely result will be a charge and court appearance or a caution delivered by the Youth Offending Service.

If you would like to discuss this issue in more detail, please contact the school.

Yours faithfully,

Ms J A Davies
Headteacher
Hillcrest School & Sixth Form Centre

Danny Long
Chief Superintendent
West Midlands Police

Pete Henrick
Chief Superintendent
West Midlands Police

Schools committed to this joint approach include:

Roger Punton, Principal – Ark Kings Academy

Damian McGarvey, Headteacher – Balaam Wood School

Barry Doherty, Headteacher – Colmers School

Simon Franks, Headteacher – Turves Green Boys’ School

Lucy Monk, Principal – Shenley Academy
Clare Madden, Principal – St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic School

Shamim Akhtar, Head of Provision – Flexible Learning

Julie-Ann Davies, Headteacher – Hillcrest School

Chris Field, Headteacher – Selly Oak Trust School

Anthony Hamilton, Headmaster – George Dixon Academy

Mark Rhatigan, Executive Headteacher – Bournville School

Rebecca Elcocks, Principal – Four Dwellings Academy