

WEAPONS IN SCHOOLS

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INTENT

The philosophy underpinning Catholic Education is one that promotes peace and safety in our school environments. Therefore, the possession, use or carrying of weapons at schools is strictly prohibited.

SCOPE

This guideline applies to the Townsville Catholic Education Office and all systemic Catholic Schools and Colleges under the guidance of the Townsville Catholic Education Office.

INTRODUCTION

The *Queensland Weapons Act 1990* imposes strict conditions on the use, possession or carrying of certain weapons. Section 51 of the *Weapons Act 1990* is explicit in relation to possession of a knife at school: “A person must not physically possess a knife in a public place or a school, unless the person has a reasonable excuse.”

GUIDELINES

Under NO circumstances are weapons, of any kind, to be brought to school by students, staff or other persons, including but not limited to firearms (including air guns), knives, replica weapons, swords, slingshots, martial arts weapons, sharp tools, carton cutters or the like. Should any curriculum activity require the use of particular equipment that may be a knife or otherwise used as a weapon (e.g. a cutting tool in an art class) then it is to be provided by the school. ***If other students/staff are at risk the school must implement school Lockdown Procedures.***

If staff or a student is aware of a weapon at school

- Notify the Principal or teacher immediately.
- Tell the Principal or teacher the name of the person who is suspected of bringing or is carrying the weapon at school, where the weapon is located, if the suspect has threatened anyone or any other details that may prevent the suspect from hurting themselves or someone else.
- If a teacher suspects that a weapon is in the classroom, the teacher should confidentially notify a neighbouring teacher. The teacher should not leave the classroom.

Principal's response

- Call police if a weapon is reasonably suspected of being in the school.
- Ask another Leadership Team member to be present when questioning the suspected student or staff member, if that does not threaten the safety of the Principal, the Leadership Team member or any other person.
- If practicable, accompany the suspected student/staff member/person with the weapon to a private office to wait for police.

- If the situation warrants, follow processes for 'Removal of/ Searching Student Property' contained in the Managing Incidents Relating to Illicit Drugs & Unsanctioned Substances Guidelines.
- If the situation warrants, isolate the area or the person carrying the weapon until police arrive.
- Assign a person to keep detailed notes of all events.
- Notify parents/guardians/carers if the suspect is a student and explain why the search was conducted and results of the search.
- Avoid confrontation and do not try to disarm suspect: back away with your arms up and remain calm.

Follow-on response

- Record, in writing, factual information about the situation as soon as practicable.
- Contact the TCEO Education Consultant.
- Arrange counselling or debriefing as required.

Searches

The guidelines below apply to searches of a student's property.

- A Principal or staff member does not have the authority to open, examine or otherwise deal with the property without the consent of the student or a parent of the student. For example, a Principal or staff member who removes a mobile phone from a student is not authorised to unlock the phone or to read, copy or delete messages stored on the phone.
- Under normal circumstances, a Principal or staff member is not permitted to search student property (for example, a student's school bag) unless the staff member has the student's consent or the consent of the student's parents/guardians/carers. There may, however, be emergency circumstances where it is necessary to search a student's property. Emergency circumstances may include where the life or welfare of a student or students is at immediate risk.
- A Principal or staff member does not require the student's consent to search school property such as lockers or desks belonging to the school and being used by the student.
- If reasonably practicable, any permitted search of a student's property should occur in private and in the presence of at least two staff members one of whom should be the Principal or a member of the school leadership team. The student may be asked to turn out the student's pockets or hold open the student's bag and, if necessary, move the contents in the bag or open internal compartments for clear viewing of the contents.
- During a search, a staff member should not touch the student's clothing or body to avoid the risk of allegations of assault or reportable conduct.
- If the student does not consent to search of the student's property, then the police may be called and police may decide to search the student's property.
- Prior to calling police, the school should call or attempt to call the student's parents/guardians/carers.
- If the student does not wait for police to conduct a search, then that behaviour should be managed in accordance with the school's discipline procedure.

REFERENCES

If you have questions or require additional information about the guideline, please contact TCE Education Consultants.

- [DEC Student Behaviour Policy](#)
- [TCE Behaviour Management in Catholic Schools Guidelines](#)
- [TCE Suspension and Enrolment Termination Guidelines](#)