



Bristol  
**Violence  
Reduction  
Partnership**



## Offensive Weapons in Educational Settings Guidance for Education Settings.

The Weapons in School Pathway

Updated August 2025

### What is the Weapon in School Pathway?

The Weapon in School Pathway is a diversionary initiative lead by the Avon and Somerset Violence Reduction Partnership and Safer Connections team. It provides multi-agency support for children found in possession of a weapon on school premises. Its aim is to keep children safe, prevent further offending, and ensure the most appropriate outcome is agreed through joint decision-making.

Police guidance allows for non-criminal outcomes in cases of simple possession, where the weapon has not been used or threatened, and the child has no previous history of violence or weapon-related offences. For children under 16, diversionary interventions may be offered, which, if completed, can result in No Further Action (Outcome 22). For those aged 16–17, a criminal charge is more likely, though exceptional circumstances may allow for a Youth Conditional Caution.

Incidents may be suitable for a diversionary intervention via the Weapons in Schools pathway if:

- There is a **low** degree of risk of serious harm to others
- The weapon has **not** been used, brandished or used to threaten
- There is **no** evidence of pre-meditation or hostility
- There is **no** history of previous violence, knife or weapon offending

A multi-agency assessment will determine whether a diversionary response is appropriate and what support should be offered. If the incident is not suitable for diversion—due to risk, threat, or prior offending—or if the child does not engage with the intervention, the police will lead the response, which may result in a formal criminal outcome.

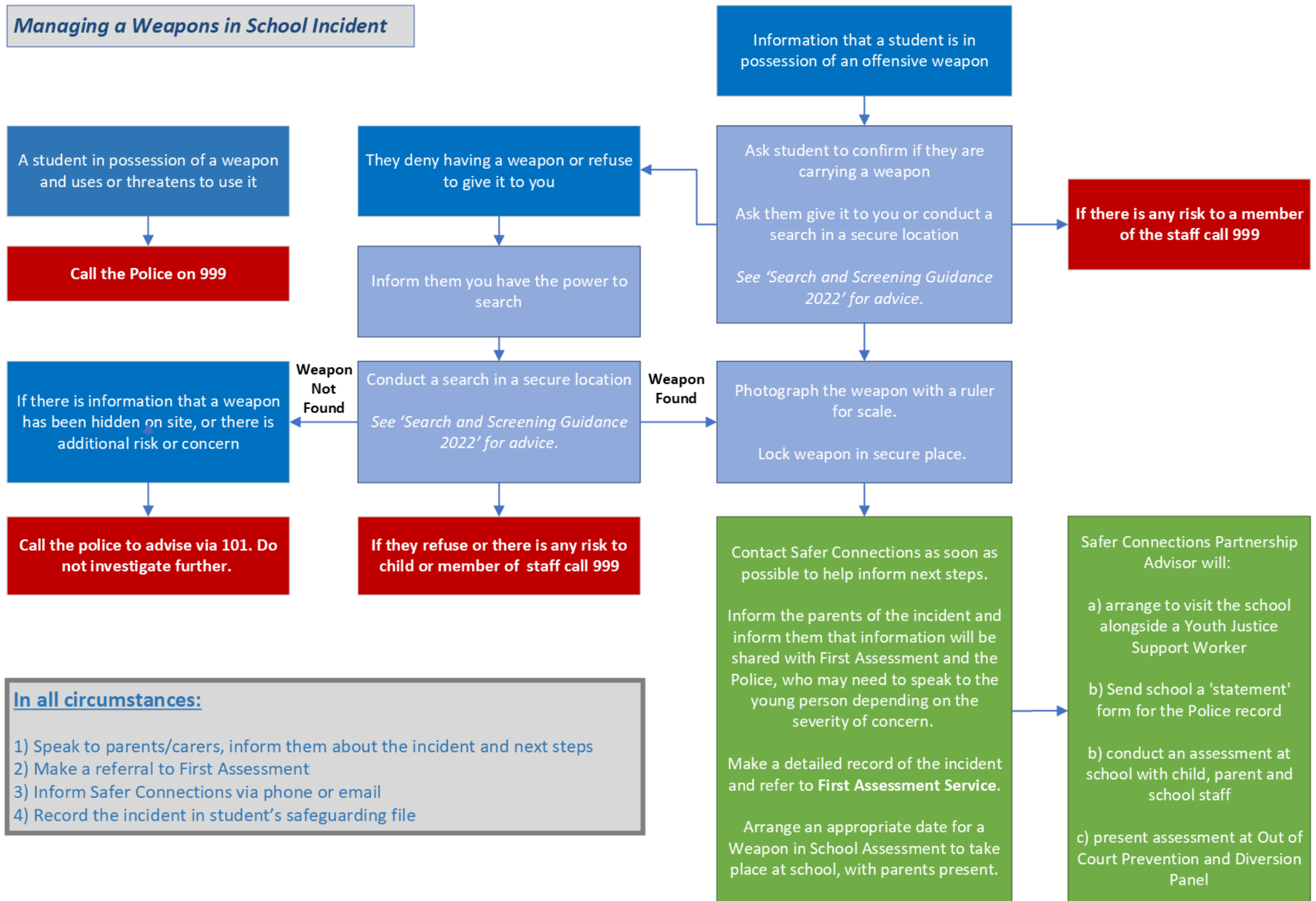
### What should you do if an incident occurs at your setting?

If a student is found in possession of a weapon on site, follow these steps:

- 1) If there is evidence of threat, harm, or violence, **call the police immediately via 999**.
- 2) If it is safe to do so, **place the weapon in a secure location** to await the police's removal of the item.
- 3) **Gather relevant information** about the incident and the child involved. Call First Response on **0117 903 6444** to make a safeguarding referral. (*Consent should be sought before making the referral, unless doing so may place the child at further risk or is otherwise inappropriate*).
- 4) **Contact the Safer Connections Team** at [saferconnections@bristol.gov.uk](mailto:saferconnections@bristol.gov.uk) or by phone (see p.4). *This will prompt contact from a Partnership Advisor who will arrange a multi-agency assessment to determine the most appropriate response and support.*

Consult the flow chart below for detailed steps to follow when a student is found or suspected to be in possession of a weapon on site.

## Managing a Weapons in School Incident

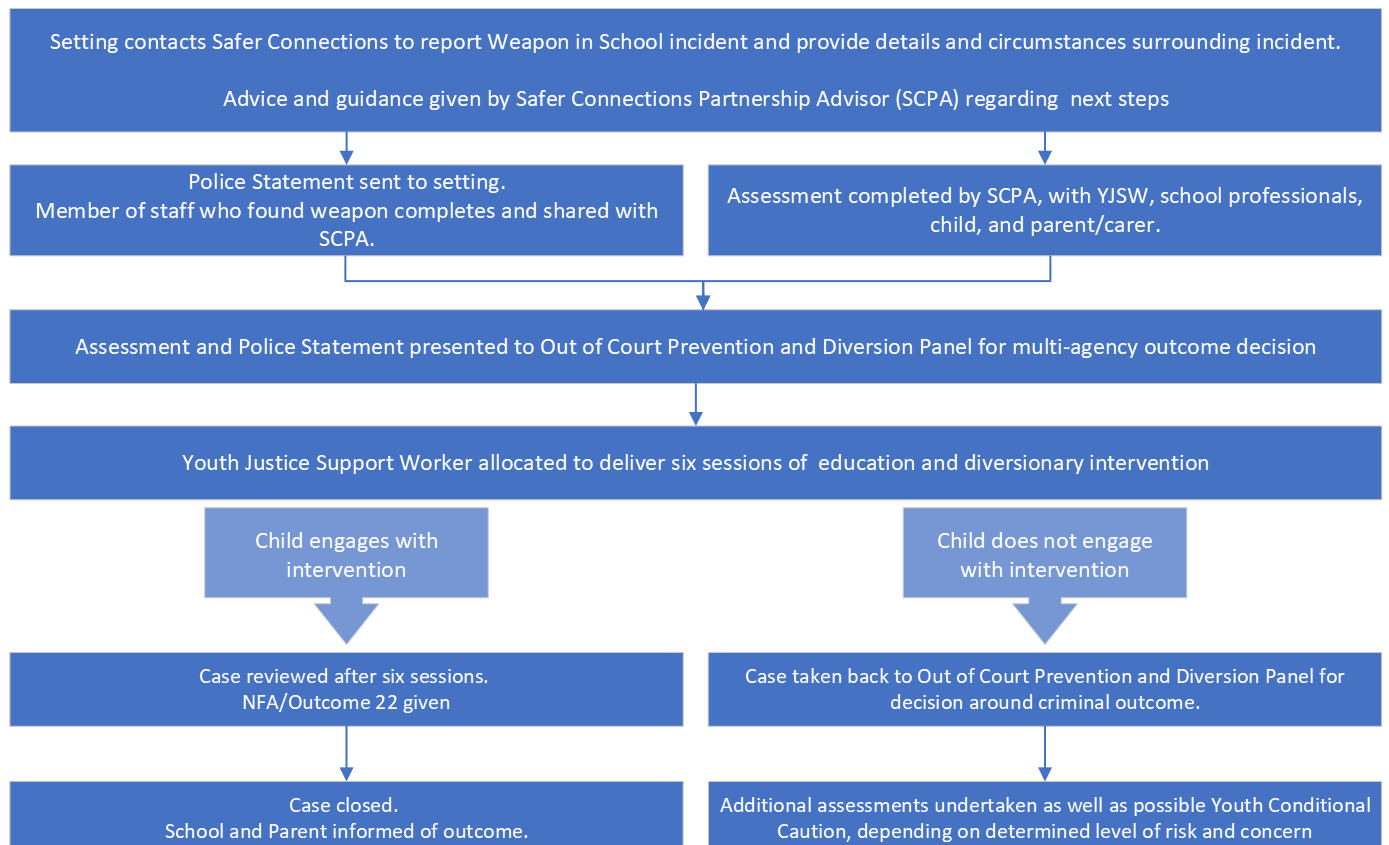


## What happens after a weapon-related incident?

If a child is found in possession of a weapon on school premises and the incident is suitable for a diversionary response, the following steps will take place:

- **The Partnership Advisor** works closely with Avon & Somerset Police and the Youth Justice Service to assess the severity of the incident and determine whether a **non-criminal outcome** is appropriate. If so, they will coordinate a **diversionary and educational support package** for the child.
- The school will receive a **police statement template** from the Partnership Advisor. This must be completed by the staff member who found or was handed the weapon and emailed directly to a designated police officer. The officer will record the incident on the police system.
- A **multi-agency assessment** will be arranged by the Partnership Advisor. They will attend the school with a Youth Justice Support Worker to meet with the child, their parent/carer, and a relevant school staff member. This assessment will explore the circumstances of the incident, assess risk and concern, and identify any aggravating or mitigating factors.
- The child must **accept responsibility** for the offence and be willing to engage with the support offered, including an educational intervention.
- The completed police statement and assessment will be reviewed by the **Youth Justice Service Out of Court Prevention and Diversion Panel**, which will decide the most appropriate outcome.
- If a **diversionary intervention or deferred caution** is agreed, a Youth Justice Support Worker will deliver up to **six sessions** with the child. If completed successfully, the incident will be recorded as **No Further Action (Outcome 22)** on the police system.
- If the child **does not engage** with the intervention, the panel will reconvene to reassess the risks and may recommend a **formal caution or other criminal justice outcome**.

### Flowchart detailing the Weapons in Schools process



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## Additional Guidance Documents

School leaders should be aware of the updated [Searching, Screening and Confiscation, Advice for Headteachers, School Staff and Governing Bodies 2022](#) guidance from the DfE, which explains the powers that a school has regarding searching, screening and confiscation powers. It also includes statutory guidance which school must legally abide by.

The National Police Chiefs Council's [When to Call the Police, Guidance for Schools and Colleges](#) provides guidance to support practitioners around steps to take when responding to an incident in which a student is found in possession of an offensive weapon.

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