



EL/td/091120

Dear Parents and Carers of Year 7,

I know how disappointed you will be that we have had to take the decision to ask all of Year 7 to self-isolate following a confirmed case last week. I hope you will understand that the decision was not taken lightly and was based on a robust assessment of risk, supported by colleagues from Public Health.

This particular case and the circumstances of the decision to isolate the entire year group have really focused my attention on how we can further tighten the measures in place for students to reduce their contacts in school so that we can avoid full year bubble isolations. Unfortunately, in terms of this particular case, there were circumstances preventing that from being possible. The decision taken has put the safety of students, families and staff first, as we have always set out to do through the measures in place.

#### **Education Continuity for Students Self-Isolating**

Remote learning for Year 7 students will be provided through Class Charts, where your child can find all of the work set by their class teachers. If you have any issues accessing the work, or your child gets stuck and needs help, please encourage them to email their class teacher in the first instance. Class teachers will always endeavour to respond on the same day although there may be delays at times when staff are teaching other classes.

If your child wants to either catch up on or extend their knowledge of specific topics, the Oak National Academy has a range of fantastic resources your child can access at any time. These can be found here: <https://www.thenational.academy/>.

If your child does not have access to ICT (either a device or wi-fi) to study at home, please contact us on 0121 453 1778 and we will endeavour to support. This is also the number to call if you have any difficulty accessing Class Charts.

#### **Staying Connected**

I have spoken with several parents and carers who have understandably been extremely upset that year7 are facing a further interruption to their time in school. In every case, the concern goes beyond the loss of time learning in the classroom : the loss of social contact and the interruption to what are really very newly formed relationships and friendships is a big worry. We know just how important this social contact is for our students and especially so for Year 7 at this early stage in their Colmers journey.

For the duration of this period of self-isolation, we will be running a number of events to help students stay connected with each other and with Colmers. Mr Bennett is finalising details of these – please watch out for social media and text messages to parents and carers. Please also remind your child to check their school email accounts as they will find invitations to events on Zoom or Microsoft Teams, as well as details of some fun activities based around our theme of Belonging Together.



### Free School Meals

Please look out for a text message regarding Free School Meals so that you can access food parcels during the time your child is self-isolating.

If your circumstances have changed and you think you may now be entitled to Free School Meals, please contact Main Reception on 0121 453 1778 or alternatively, you can check your eligibility via our website using this link:  
<http://www.colmers.bham.sch.uk/free-school-meals/>

If you or your child have any specific issues or concerns this week, please contact your child's Form Tutor in the first instance, alternatively Mr Bennett, Head of Year can also be contacted via email or you can ring Main Reception to request assistance and someone will get back to you at the earliest opportunity.

Yours sincerely,

Emma Leaman  
Headteacher



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 weapon related 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 critically the risk to 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. However, 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](http://www.noknivesbetterlives.com/parents/having-the-conversation)

You may wish to contact a member of the Pastoral Team 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.

For the latest guidance and signposting opportunities please visit: [www.policeandschools.org.uk](http://www.policeandschools.org.uk)



It is essential that we work together to reduce the chances of children bringing a weapon into school. Ours, like most other schools, will take very 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 will almost inevitably lead to the loss of your child's school place, by way of a permanent exclusion or managed-move, 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 outcome will be a charge and court appearance or a caution, delivered by the Youth Offending Service.

Update: West Midlands Police can use **Section 60** powers to stop and search young people.

*"Section 60 of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 gives senior police officers powers to authorise use of stop and search without reasonable grounds, where there is a risk of violence or it is believed that weapons are being carried".*

If a young person has been stopped by police using **Section 60** powers, it does not necessarily mean they are doing anything wrong, but officers have been given extensive search powers where they can search to prevent violence without needing suspicion that they may be carrying a weapon. This tool is being used to end violence and keep young people safe. West Midlands Police realise that it may be upsetting for some innocent young people, but with fear of weapons growing, we cannot take chances.

If you are aware that a fight or trouble is brewing, or if you hear someone has a knife, please report this to the police. If a young person is scared of someone, the answer is not to carry a knife or weapon.

If you know of an individual, or a group of young people, that are potentially carrying weapons, always contact the Police - via Live Chat: <https://west-midlands.police.uk/contact-us/live-chat> or by calling 101.

Alternatively you can call Crimestoppers anonymously on: 0800 555 111 | <https://crimestoppers-uk.org>

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

Yours faithfully,

**Emma Leaman**  
Headteacher/Principal  
Colmers School & Sixth Form College

**Stephen Graham**  
Chief Superintendent  
West Midlands Police