

15th May 2024

Dear Parent/Guardian,

At Watling Academy, we are committed to educating students about the devastating impact knife crime can have on a community and the dangers of carrying knives. To coincide with the work that has taken place during Tutorial and our Wellbeing curriculum, including a visit from “The JJ Effect” for our Year 8 students, we, along with other secondary schools in Milton Keynes, are working in partnership with Thames Valley Police to raise awareness of the dangers of carrying knives.

As such, Thames Valley Police will be setting up a ‘screening arch’ over the coming weeks. On the day, the ‘screening arch’ will be set up in the Sports Hall and Watling and Thames Valley Police Staff will be present to direct students to enter school via this point. Police will ask students to place their belongings in a tray prior to walking through the screening arch. A team of search officers will be on standby to search anyone who activates the arch. This search will be conducted under Section 139B Criminal Justice Act, which relates to educational premises. Police will NOT record this as a stop/search. If prohibited items are located, they will be seized, details taken, and persons spoken to at a later date/time with their parents/guardians present. **Any student found to be carrying anything that would contravene Watling Academy’s behaviour policy, will be dealt with in accordance with this policy.**

Police will also monitor the movements of our students upon their arrival to school site. If anyone is identified as actively avoiding the arch, they will be spoken to by a Police Officer. If there are suitable grounds, they will be subject to a stop/search, where details will be recorded.

With the large number of students that will need to walk under the arch, we will introduce an extended Tutorial on this day, which will also cover further information regarding knife



crime and educating students about the importance of the school using the screening arch as a preventative measure.

Please be assured that we have absolutely no reason to believe that students at Watling Academy are carrying knives, but we feel our participation in this scheme is important if we are to work positively with Thames Valley Police to communicate the vital message regarding the dangers of carrying a knife. There will also be further opportunities for the screening arch to be used in the future, to ensure the message retains its power and relevance within our community.

Thank you in advance for your help and support in this matter. We are sure you would agree this is a prevalent issue in society today and one that is too serious for us to ignore.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs J Harris

Deputy Headteacher