



Home Office



#knifefree

Teacher guidance

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PSHE
Association

Teacher guidance notes

#knifefree lesson plans

These lessons for key stage 3 and 4 students have been designed to help reduce knife crime by equipping teachers to challenge the myths and communicate the realities of carrying a knife among young people. The lesson plans use the Home Office's #knifefree campaign as stimulus for discussion. Whilst it is important to raise the issue of knife crime with some communities, it is also important to emphasise that the vast majority of young people in this age range (99% of 10 - 29 year olds) do not carry a knife and this campaign focuses on celebrating those young people who, through their experiences, have chosen to live knife free.

Preparing to teach

These lessons are designed to be used flexibly by schools, either within timetabled PSHE education lessons or other relevant subject areas, such as Citizenship. They will be less effective if delivered as a 'one off', or in the immediate aftermath of a knife attack in your area, as this is likely to raise feelings of anxiety for young people rather than provide reassurance. The messages will be well received when taught within a planned series of lessons developing risk assessment, decision making and personal safety skills.

We want young people to feel able and confident to identify the risks associated with carrying a knife and feel empowered to live knife free. In line with best practice, the lessons and resources have been carefully designed to minimise feelings of fear, shock or guilt while learning about this potentially sensitive topic. It is important to use a reassuring approach throughout and to avoid 'worst case scenario' thinking.

Creating a safe learning environment

It is helpful to ensure that a safe learning environment is established at the beginning of any PSHE education lesson. A safe learning environment helps students feel comfortable with sharing their ideas without attracting negative feedback, and will help teachers to manage discussions on this sensitive issue confidently. It is good practice for teachers to:

- Work with pupils to establish ground rules for PSHE lessons, such as;
 - Everyone has the right to be heard and respected
 - We will use language that won't offend, stereotype or upset anyone
 - We will use the correct terms, and if we don't know them, we'll ask the teacher
 - We will comment on what was said, not the person who said it
 - We won't share our own, or our friends', personal experiences, but will instead use hypothetical or fictitious examples to discuss key ideas
 - We won't put anyone on the spot and we have the right to pass
 - We won't judge or make assumptions about anyone
- Avoid any attempt to induce shock, fear or guilt, as this is counterproductive in PSHE education. Whilst young people will often say that they like 'hard-hitting' material and that it engages them more effectively, in fact when experienced in a safe setting (in this case a classroom), shocking images become exciting (in a similar way to watching a horror film or riding a rollercoaster) and this excitement response can block the desired learning. Equally, for anyone who has previously been affected by something similar, it can re-traumatise them or they can block the message as it is too close for comfort, which again prevents the intended learning. It also presents a scenario which is more likely to make young people think 'that won't ever happen to me' than the desired 'that could be me' response.

- Distance and de-personalise the learning from the students to discourage personal disclosures in the classroom to keep the learning environment safe. The **#knifefree** video clips used in these lessons (Aliyah, Ben, Dean, Cameron, Sean and Meghan) support this approach by presenting real life stories played by actors, allowing students to consider the context of carrying a knife objectively without asking them to imagine they were in this situation themselves, which should be avoided.
- Make boxes/envelopes available in which students can place anonymous questions or concerns, to avoid having to voice them in front of the class. This anonymous question box should be accessible both in and after the lesson. To ensure that young people do not feel self-conscious about being seen to be writing a question, you can ask all students to write something: either a question or 'no question' if taking anonymous questions during the lesson. You may wish to set aside some time in future lessons to respond to the questions raised.
- Make students aware of sources of support and reporting mechanisms, both inside and outside school.

Signposting support

It is crucial that if the lesson has raised concerns for students, they are directed towards support services, both inside and outside school, such as:

- Form tutors, head of year, school counsellor, designated safeguarding lead, or any trusted adult in school
- www.knifefree.co.uk – to find out more about the campaign and for more information on how to live knife free
- www.childline.org.uk – to find support and advice for young people about a range of issues
- www.fearless.org – advice for young people and a way to anonymously report crime
- www.victimsupport.org.uk – for support for anyone who has been a victim of crime
- In an emergency, call the police using 999
- For a non-emergency phone number, police can be contacted using 101

Using the lesson plan

Both the key stage 3 and key stage 4 lesson plans are based on a 60-minute lesson. The timings given in the lesson plan are the minimum time required to deliver the activities. Whilst it is always important for PSHE education lessons to be pacy, it is equally important to meet the needs of your students and in the case of this particular content, it is inadvisable to rush the lesson delivery. More may be gained from spending longer on an aspect of the lesson that has raised questions or concerns for young people, so long as you are comfortable leading the discussion, and to build in reflection time before sending students to their next lesson. When this is the case, it may be more appropriate for your group to extend the lesson plan across two lessons, for example focusing in the first session on challenging the misconceptions young people have about knife carrying, and spending the second session exploring the consequences of decision making.

Teachers may wish to adapt these lessons to most appropriately suit their students. For example, some of the extension activities provided in the lesson could be used to promote home learning, or could be used in the classroom for the whole group if extending over more lessons. In particular, the key stage 3 activity 'Personal reflection – my ambitions' might be more suitable for a class of young people who are less vulnerable to the risks of carrying knives.

To accompany the lesson plans and resources, there is a PowerPoint which can be adapted to suit the needs of your students. The #knifefree campaign posters are available to download at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/knifefree-campaign-graphics-and-posters>

These lessons have been designed in line with safe and effective principles for universal delivery in PSHE education in all contexts across the country. Safe practice can only be assured when the lesson activities are followed as written. However, depending on the individual context, teachers may wish to place a greater focus on local support networks a young person can turn to, or on the legal consequences of knife crime, or on the skills needed to resist pressure to carry a knife. In order to explore these aspects further with students a wider range of young people's stories can be accessed at www.knifefree.co.uk/real-stories.

Language use

When teaching PSHE education lessons, it is important to prioritise the appropriate use of language, which will improve communication but can also challenge assumptions. Particularly in the case of knife crime, students may use slang terms which either promote misconceptions and stereotypes, or may serve to mask attitudes from adults.

Below are some slang terms which it may be useful for you to be familiar with, in order to listen out for and challenge in lessons. However, please be aware that the terms young people use are constantly evolving and may be specific to different locations, so it may be necessary to research slang terms young people may use in your area.

Term	Slang equivalent
Knife	Blade, borra, burner, cutter, nank, shank, tool
Carrying a knife	Armed, carrying, packing, tooled up
Stabbed	Duppied, shanked, sheffed
Gang	Crew, hood, mandem, posse, squad
Gang member	Blud/blood, roadman, rude boy, squaddie
Police	5-0, feds, jakes, pigs, po-po

Curriculum references

When taught as part of a planned developmental programme, these lessons contribute towards meeting the curriculum for PSHE education, as set out in the [PSHE Association Programme of Study for PSHE education](#).

Signposted by the Department for Education, the PSHE Association's Programme of Study outlines learning opportunities in three core themes: Health & wellbeing, Relationships and Living in the wider world.

The learning opportunities most relevant to the #knifefree lessons state that students should be taught:

Core theme	Learning opportunity in key stage 3
Health and wellbeing	H2: to recognise that the way in which personal qualities, attitudes, skills and achievements are evaluated by others, affects confidence and self-esteem
	H20: ways of recognising and reducing risk, minimising harm and strategies for getting help in an emergency and risky situations
Relationships	R4: to explore the range of positive qualities people bring to relationships
	R30: to recognise peer pressure and have strategies to manage it; to recognise 'group think' (where the cohesion of the group becomes more important than the choices or actions of the group) and to develop strategies for managing it
	R33: laws relating to the carrying of offensive weapons (including what might motivate someone to carry one and the range of consequences); strategies for managing pressure to carry a weapon

Core theme	Learning opportunity in key stage 3
Living in the wider world	L1: to recognise, clarify and if necessary challenge their own core values and how their values influence their choices
Core theme	Learning opportunity in key stage 4
Health and wellbeing	<p>H1: to evaluate the extent to which their self-confidence and self-esteem are affected by the judgments of others and ways of managing this</p> <p>H14: about personal safety and protection, how to reduce risk and minimise harm in different settings (including social settings, the workplace, the street, on roads and during travel)</p>
Relationships	R29: the role peers can play in supporting one another (including helping vulnerable friends to access reliable, accurate and appropriate support)
Living in the wider world	L1: to evaluate their own personal strengths and areas for development and to use this to inform goal setting

We welcome your feedback on the #knifefree lesson plans and encourage you to complete the Home Office feedback survey [here](#) to help us to further develop and build on these resources. Campaign posters are available to download [here](#).