



**External Investigation and Review following the serious
incident at All Saints Catholic High School on 3 February 2025**

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Executive summary

The murder of Harvey Willgoose was a shocking, horrific event. Mohammed Umar Khan bears the full responsibility for his death.

Leaders of safeguarding and behaviour in all schools, especially large secondary schools, make many judgements and decisions every day. They receive, absorb and weigh-up a high volume of information about many children. Often, the information is communicated through a range of channels, and its significance is not always immediately obvious. They have to make decisions in real-time. Their capacity is stretched. It is challenging, relentless work. This investigation acknowledges that this is understood. It is also acknowledged that since the tragedy, leaders have made changes to improve aspects of their provision.

However, the investigation shows that there were several points at which, in my view, school leaders could, and at times I suggest should, have taken different action.

From the point at which Umar was first considered for a move to the school, to the morning of Harvey's murder, leaders missed several opportunities to take appropriate action. The investigation finds that there were weaknesses in the school's organisational structure and systems which contributed to a series of leadership oversights, assumptions and misjudgements.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1 – local and national

Leaders should ensure that full safeguarding and behaviour records are shared between schools from the beginning of any consideration of an off-site direction or a managed move; and that this is formalised as a written requirement as part of the Compass protocol.

Recommendation 2 - school

Leaders should:

- clarify who holds the responsibility for reviewing pupil safeguarding and behaviour records as part of the off-site direction/managed move and in-year transfer process;
- introduce a formal 'sign-off' by an identified senior leader to confirm that safeguarding and behaviour records have been reviewed prior to the pupil commencing a placement/move to the school;
- ensure that a named member of the safeguarding or behaviour team (taking a 'key worker' role) has responsibility for monitoring all reports regarding the pupil, so that events are not seen in isolation;
- ensure that pertinent safeguarding and behaviour information about pupils joining the school on an off-site direction/managed move is shared with relevant staff before the pupil commences at the school, particularly pastoral teams and form tutors;
- ensure that the appropriate and intended pupil behaviour modification programme is implemented at the start of the placement/move.

Recommendation 3 – Trust

The Trust should carry out a review of school leadership structures to:

- clarify the roles, responsibilities and accountabilities of all posts at all levels in the behaviour and safeguarding structures, so that it is clear who holds responsibility for taking action. This should include responsibility for monitoring any emerging pattern of more serious incidents;
- explore the extent to which line-management arrangements potentially, or actually, affect safeguarding decision-making;
- explore the organisation and responsibilities of the deputy DSL team, including when the DSL is absent;
- clarify leadership responsibilities following a serious school incident, such as lockdown.

Recommendation 4 - school

Leaders should ensure that their safeguarding and behaviour systems are set-up to better record knife-related events, so that relevant staff are sighted on the events.

This should include:

- all instances of reports of weapons being categorised as such, not as general 'behaviour' incidents;
- routine and regular monitoring of weapons incidents by the relevant senior leader;
- clarity about who has responsibility for taking action and sharing information
- training for all staff in what to record, where, and when.

Recommendation 5 – school

Leaders should ensure that relevant staff are trained in the government’s guidance for searching, screening and confiscation. This should include training on:

- how to carry out a search, including what can be searched;
- thorough recording of the search;
- the necessary notifications following a search;
- how to follow-up a search, even when no prohibited items are found.

Recommendation 6 – school and Trust

The Trust should develop a policy for how the school should respond to an instance, or report, of a knife-related event, including for off-site reports. This should include:

- a requirement to always investigate;
- to always isolate the pupil during the investigation, other than by exception;
- to always involve the DSL in assessing the appropriate action to take;
- an assumption that whenever there is a credible report of a pupil possessing a weapon, leaders should implement a risk assessment and safety plan, unless there is a compelling reason not to do so. When a weapon is found, including when it is off-site, a risk assessment and safety plan must be put in place, and shared with all staff;
- a pathway to securing appropriate external support for the pupil.

Recommendation 7 – school

Leaders should ensure that reintegration meetings following suspension, especially for pupils on off-site directions and managed moves, are held in accordance with government guidance. In particular, leaders should ensure that:

- all available pupil information is within the purview of such meetings, not just the incident which led to the suspension;
- the identified key worker checks to make sure that agreed actions have been completed within agreed timescales, and to take action when not;
- a team of appropriate staff is trained in specific anger management intervention strategies and resources.

Recommendation 8 – school

Safeguarding leaders should ensure that they follow-up on all referrals to children’s social care to satisfy themselves that appropriate action is being taken, and to challenge inaction where necessary.

Recommendation 9 – Trust

The Trust should commission an external safeguarding audit of the school’s safeguarding leadership, systems and culture.

Recommendation 10 – local and national

Sheffield City Council should work with schools to establish a pathway of support to identify partnerships and services which can intervene to support pupils involved in, or at risk of, knife crime.

The Department for Education should provide further policy guidance on how schools should respond to pupils’ possession of knives, or reports of possession, including when the report is about an off-site event.

1. Chronology and circumstances of events

1.1 Off-site direction and managed move for Umar

- 1.1.1 In June 2024, All Saints Catholic High School (All Saints) was member of the voluntary ‘Compass Education’ (Compass) network of several secondary schools in Sheffield. Among other things, Compass enables partnerships between schools to support pupils to improve their behaviour. This can include a temporary ‘off-site direction’¹, where the pupil completes a fixed-term placement at another school, and a ‘managed move’², where the pupil permanently transfers to the roll of the other school.
- 1.1.2 In June 2024, under Compass there were limited agreements, policies or protocols in place for arranging off-site direction. All Saints was solely operating under a general set of Compass expectations titled ‘School Commitments to be part of the network’. As part of this, there was no agreement or expectation that pupil records, including safeguarding records, would be shared between schools as part of the consideration of whether to take a pupil on an off-site direction placement. There was an unwritten agreement and understanding between schools that they would only refer pupils who needed support with their behaviour, and that they would not refer pupils where there were safeguarding concerns.
- 1.1.3 Through the Compass referral process, Silverdale School (Silverdale) put Umar forward for an off-site direction placement. All Saints responded to the referral. A leader at All Saints had a telephone conversation with the respective leader at Silverdale on 24 June 2024 to discuss the possibility of Umar commencing an off-site direction placement at All Saints, under the Compass six-week ‘ReFRESH’ (Refresh) programme.
- 1.1.4 The All Saints notes of this call, and the leader’s recollection, record that Silverdale shared information that: Umar had been made fun of and been bullied by pupils relating to a personal matter; that there had been a fight between Umar and another pupil leading to Umar having to attend hospital; and that following this, Umar’s behaviour in school had become increasingly disruptive. All Saints made the decision to accept Umar on an off-site direction as part of the Refresh programme on the basis of this information.

¹ Suspension and permanent exclusion from maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units in England, including pupil movement: Guidance for maintained schools, academies, and pupil referral units in England (Department for Education, August 2024), par 36. (At June 2024, the version of the guidance was dated May 2023)

² Behaviour in Schools Advice for headteachers and school staff (Department for Education, February 2024), p25

- 1.1.5 Umar commenced his off-site direction placement at All Saints on 1 July 2024, with an anticipated end date of 20 September 2024. Six reviews took place during this period, on a weekly basis, and in line with government guidance³. Each review assessed the placement as ‘successful’ on the basis of Umar’s good attendance and behaviour. In the review of 12 July 2024, it was stated that All Saints hoped that Umar would continue his good start, and that he would transfer to the roll of All Saints at the end of the off-site direction. A number of detentions for relatively low-level infringements were noted (uniform, punctuality, equipment). At the Week Six review on 24 September 2024, it was decided to extend the off-site direction by a further six weeks, with a view to this becoming a managed move. The record of this review indicates that Umar, his mother and Silverdale were in agreement with this decision. There are no records of any further reviews until an undated ‘Final Review (12 weeks)’, which states that Umar was placed on roll at All Saints after a successful off-site direction.
- 1.1.6 The Refresh programme consists of a six-week ‘guided intervention’, to support pupils in reflecting on, and ‘re-setting’, their behaviours. Although the Week One review stated that Umar would commence this programme at All Saints after the summer break, he was not placed on the intervention.
- 1.1.7 Umar transferred to the All Saints admissions roll on a managed move on 18 November 2024 at the end of the off-site direction placement. Silverdale transferred Umar’s records to All Saints. These records were in the form of the Child Protection Online Management System (CPOMS).
- 1.1.8 Umar’s CPOMS records from Silverdale span the period 29 March 2019 to 26 September 2024. In total, there are over 130 entries. Most are about Umar specifically. Some are where he is ‘linked’ to an event concerning other pupils. Most entries are about repeated instances of disruption. A number of entries refer to incidents concerning violence, gangs, weapons, and anger.
- 1.1.9 Specifically, these entries describe: a search for possession of a knife (nothing found); searches for possession of vapes (none found); making a comment about ‘stabbing you up’ while handling a craft knife; making gang signs and using gang slang; comments with another pupil about knifing; making gun signs; reciting ‘drill’ lyrics about stabbings and shootings; talking

³ Suspension and permanent exclusion from maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units in England, including pupil movement: Guidance for maintained schools, academies, and pupil referral units in England (Department for Education, August 2024), par 42 (May 2023 version, par 42).

with staff about a local ‘gangster’; asking a member of staff if they had ever handled a gun; saying ‘Kill the Jews’ to a member of staff; two suspensions for assaulting other pupils; a threat to beat up another pupil; initiating a revenge attack by others on the pupil who fought Umar (necessitating Umar’s hospital visit); the possibility that Umar stabbed another pupil in the leg with a pencil;

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] reports of pupils feeling intimidated, threatened or targeted by Umar; reports of Umar responding angrily to different events by kicking a chair, a ‘wet floor’ cone and flipping a table ; kicking younger boys during social times; being prevented by staff from attacking another pupil following a game of football; chasing and pushing another pupil; [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]; punching a wall in the seclusion room; the placing of Umar on a safety plan; and reports of Umar’s worsening anger, and a member of staff’s fear that he will hurt someone.

Findings on the off-site direction and managed move process

- 1.1.10 If the All Saints record of what information was shared by Silverdale is accurate and complete (see 1.1.4), then on that basis, and under the Compass protocol in place at the time, the decision to accommodate Umar on an off-site direction, in and of itself, was rational. However, see below.
- 1.1.11 Umar was not placed on the Refresh guided intervention programme (as intended before the summer break) to help him improve his behaviours, because leaders considered that Umar’s positive conduct at that point did not require it. There was also a belief that for the placement to be truly a ‘fresh start’, then Umar deserved the chance to be treated like every other pupil. In other words, that there would be no additional or augmented provision. The motivation behind such a ‘clean’ fresh start is laudable and is reflective of an inclusive culture at All Saints. However, in disregarding the Refresh programme, leaders did not follow government guidance for off-site provision, which states that one of the focus areas must be the addressing of the inappropriate behaviours which necessitated the off-site direction⁴. This was a missed opportunity to work with Umar on the causes of his behaviours at Silverdale and to support him in managing his future behaviours at All Saints.

⁴ Suspension and permanent exclusion from maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units in England, including pupil movement: Guidance for maintained schools, academies, and pupil referral units in England (Department for Education, August 2024), par 46 (May 2023 version, par 46).

- 1.1.12 All Saints was acting under the unwritten Compass agreement and understanding that where there were safeguarding concerns, a pupil would not be put forward for an off-site direction. As for all schools considering an off-site direction or managed move under such unwritten agreements, this is to delegate responsibility to, and place trust in, a third party to be the arbiter of what constitutes a ‘safeguarding’ concern, and what is ‘relevant’ information.
- 1.1.13 It is important to acknowledge that hindsight inevitably imbues the incidents set out in 1.1.9 with heightened significance and weight. It should also be recognised that when extracted from the full record and organised into a list, as above, it presents a magnified and partial picture of Umar’s record. It should also be acknowledged that some comments are likely to have been made out of bravado. That said, without hindsight and even when seen among the rest of the record, the number and nature of these incidents should be, in my view, enough to cause anyone experienced in safeguarding to have reason to pause and reflect after reviewing the record.
- 1.1.14 Due to the primacy with which All Saints viewed the unwritten Compass rule and the trust-based nature of the off-site direction process, behaviour and safeguarding leaders did not request to see Umar’s Silverdale records prior to agreeing the off-site direction.
- 1.1.15 In not requesting the record, leaders did not act on the requirements for information sharing as set out in the government’s two⁵ statutory frameworks for safeguarding children, or the guidance for arranging managed moves⁶, which place a duty on safeguarding leaders to ensure the timely sharing of information between organisations; to ensure that there are arrangements in place for the processes and principles of information sharing between organisations; and to be proactive in the early identification of risks and concerns. There is nothing in statutory guidance to prevent All Saints from asking for Umar’s full record prior to the off-site direction being agreed. In my view, leaders should have done so.

⁵ Keeping children safe in education (Department for Education, annually revised). 2023: par 116 and p169. 2024: par 115 and p176. 2025: par 115 and p177.

Working together to safeguard children (HM Government, December 2023), par 29.

⁶ Suspension and permanent exclusion from maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units in England, including pupil movement: Guidance for maintained schools, academies, and pupil referral units in England (Department for Education, August 2024), par 51 (May 2023 version, par 51).

- 1.1.16 Consequently, the opportunity to fully identify, assess and mitigate the potential risk posed by Umar was missed before he started the off-site direction at All Saints. Had leaders reviewed the record, it is possible that All Saints might have decided that it could not meet Umar's needs and declined the off-site direction request. In any case, leaders did not consider or implement a support plan and safety plan when Umar started at All Saints on 1 July. On the basis of Umar's record at Silverdale, my view is that had leaders reviewed his record, plans could have been put in place to support him and to safeguard pupils and staff.
- 1.1.17 When Silverdale transferred Umar's CPOMS record to All Saints, leaders did not read it, because there was a lack of clarity between members of the behaviour and safeguarding teams about whose responsibility it was to review a pupil's records on transfer to the school roll. This was another missed opportunity to understand the fuller context of Umar's behaviours, attitudes and needs, and to plan accordingly.
- 1.1.18 In addition to the lack of clarity about whose responsibility it was to request and then review the CPOMS records, the organisational structure of the safeguarding and behaviour teams also affected safeguarding decision-making. Specifically, the behaviour and intervention leader, who is also one of the school's deputy safeguarding leaders, is also the safeguarding leader's line-manager. The safeguarding leader feels that this relationship has an inherent tension because it means that a safeguarding deputy has seniority over the safeguarding leader in the school's leadership structure, making it difficult to challenge decisions and actions. The headteacher is aware of the safeguarding leader's perspective, but his view is that it was well-understood that the safeguarding leader has the necessary authority to take the lead responsibility for safeguarding matters in school. It is reasonable for the headteacher to assume that the leader of safeguarding is taking the lead responsibility for safeguarding decisions. If the safeguarding leader was not satisfied that other relevant leaders had reviewed the CPOMS record, the safeguarding leader could have reviewed the record, since the statutory guidance⁷ about safeguarding leaders' authority and responsibilities is unequivocal. The safeguarding leader could have consulted the headteacher about any concerns regarding the extent to which Umar's CPOMS records had been reviewed.

⁷ Keeping children safe in education. 2023: Annex C p163. 2024: Annex C p170. 2025: Annex C, p 171.

1.1.19 The Year 10 pastoral team, which deals with safeguarding and behaviour matters, was not aware of Umar's record from Silverdale. In part, this was because not all members of the team had access to CPOMS. As a result of leaders' collective failure to review the CPOMS record, they did not put themselves in a position to identify, assess and respond to risks or concerns⁸ about Umar, or to share important information (see 1.1.9) with staff.

1.1.20 This means that front-line safeguarding and behaviour staff, including the pastoral team for Umar's year group – the year leader, assistant year leader and form tutor - and the Damascus Room leader, did not know the detail about Umar's conduct at Silverdale as set out in 1.1.9. As a result, at different points, they only had a partial picture of Umar's behaviour.

1.1.21 In my view, there was sufficient information in Umar's CPOMS record to alert leaders to some concerning matters which should have been considered and acted on prior to his joining the school. In failing to review the record, leaders missed an opportunity to take appropriate action at an early stage.

1.2 Report from pupils of Umar's possession of a knife; and having a BB gun on a geography visit.

1.2.1 On 14 October 2024, a member of staff reported that he had overheard pupils talking about knives in his lesson. He took the pupils aside and asked them what they had been discussing. They told him that Umar 'had been known to carry a knife and has "showed off" knives to other students in the past'. They also reported that Umar had a 'BB gun' in his bag on a geography field trip. The trip had taken place on 4 October 2024.

1.2.2 The behaviour and intervention leader went to locate Umar on 14 October and carried out a search. Records of the search vary. One states that the search was of Umar's bag and coat. Another states that Umar was also asked to empty his pockets. Nothing was found.

1.2.3 The behaviour and intervention leader states that they contacted Umar's parents to notify them of the search, but did not log this on CPOMS. There is evidence to suggest that Umar's mother was not made aware of the search.

1.2.4 No further activity was undertaken in respect of the report, and no further action was taken.

⁸ Ibid: 2023 par 117; 2024 par 116; 2025 par 116.

- 1.2.5 The school's 'Behaviour and Relationships policy' in place at the time does not specifically make reference to what action leaders should take in response to a report of knives or weapons. Section 6 of the policy, 'On call and call in', states that the On Call staff 'will investigate and assess the situation to decide upon the most appropriate course of action'. As is typical in schools, the policy includes a link to related policies, including the 'Exclusion and Suspensions policy', which lists 'Carrying an offensive weapon' as a possible reason for suspension.
- 1.2.6 School records indicate that this search for knives and/or weapons was the second to have taken place at All Saints. The school uses the government's advice and guidance document⁹ as its policy for carrying out searches.
- 1.2.7 The school's 'Child protection and safeguarding policy' states that all staff should be aware 'of indicators of [pupils] being at risk from or involved with serious violent crime' and be particularly alert to any pupil who 'Is showing signs of being drawn in to anti-social or criminal behaviour'. The policy states that the DSL will 'Contribute to the assessment of children' and, where appropriate, engage with other agencies and professionals.

Findings on the report from pupils of Umar's possession of a knife; and having a BB gun on a geography visit.

- 1.2.8 The school's behaviour policy does not include explicit guidance as to the expected response should leaders receive a report such as the one being considered here. However, it would be reasonable to expect leaders to apply the school's expected 'On Call' response to the situation concerning the report of Umar's possession of weapons. Therefore, leaders should have carried out a thorough investigation into the reports of Umar's possession of a knife and BB gun. An investigation would have enabled leaders to ascertain the facts of the matter, as far as was possible. It would have provided the opportunity to interview pupils about the allegations, and to potentially learn important information about Umar's interest in, and relationship with, knives and weapons. Such information could have been used to assist leaders in responding appropriately, such as risk assessing Umar and putting a safety plan in place for him. This would have been a reasonable course of action in the circumstances. The fact that leaders didn't carry out an investigation was a missed opportunity to take early, preventative action.

⁹ Searching, Screening and Confiscation: Advice for schools (Department for Education, July 2022)

- 1.2.9 There was a lack of clarity about who was responsible for the implementation of the policy for searching, screening and confiscating. The headteacher and other senior leaders all have a different view of who was responsible for the policy. Which staff were trained in searching is unclear. Behaviour leaders, and safeguarding staff in the pastoral team, were either not trained, or cannot recall if they were trained or not.
- 1.2.10 There was a lack of communication between behaviour and safeguarding leaders and pastoral staff when responding to the report of weapons. Behaviour and safeguarding leaders either did not see the need for further action, or assumed that others had taken action in line with the guidance outlined above. Considering the highly uncommon nature of the incident and its potential seriousness, I would have expected leaders of behaviour and safeguarding to take steps to gain assurance that appropriate action was taken. However, this was made more difficult by the matters set out in 1.1.18.
- 1.2.11 The safeguarding leader is not confident that searches were always recorded on CPOMS. I could not locate the record of the 14 October 2024 search on CPOMS, although it is referenced by the safeguarding leader in an entry on 20 December 2024. As such, the government's guidance¹⁰ for recording searches and informing parents was not well implemented and lacked the precision and detail expected in the guidance.
- 1.2.12 At the time of the events being considered here, CPOMS was not set up to categorise instances of 'knives' and 'weapons'. Rather, any instances were categorised as general 'behaviour' events. This was because searches for weapons were virtually unheard of, and so were not seen as an issue for the school. The incidence of searches generally was low (for context, according to school records, three searches in total were carried out between 1 January 2024 and 28 January 2025, for items other than weapons). As the numbers were so low, 'searches' was not one of the behaviour categories which were being monitored by senior leaders to track, and identify, any emerging patterns of behaviour in the school. The numbers were so low that no statistical significance could be drawn from any such whole-school analysis. This was reasonable at the time.
- 1.2.13 At an individual pupil level, however, following the search, leaders did not act in accordance with government guidance (see footnote 8) for searching,

¹⁰ Searching, Screening and Confiscation: Advice for schools (Department for Education, July 2022), pars 44, 45, 47.

screening and confiscation. This states¹¹ that whether or not prohibited items are found during the search, leaders ‘should consider whether the reasons for the search, the search itself, or the outcome of the search give cause to suspect that the pupil is suffering, or is likely to suffer harm, and/or whether any specific support is needed’. While it is recognised that searching for weapons was a highly infrequent event in the school, and so there was some unfamiliarity with the specific nature of the search carried out on Umar on 14 October 2024, leaders were familiar with carrying out searches for other items, such as vapes. As such, leaders should have been familiar with the government’s guidance. That they were not, means that the opportunity to consider whether any specific support was necessary for Umar was not taken.

1.2.14 Leaders did not follow government guidance¹² in respect of the report of Umar’s possession of weapons. They were incurious as to whether Umar may have posed a risk to others, or been at risk himself. They did not follow their own child protection and safeguarding policy, because neither leaders for behaviour nor safeguarding carried out any assessment of Umar. Consequently, they did not consider whether a referral to an external agency to carry out an assessment for early help¹³ might be necessary. Had such a referral been made, it is possible that a multi-agency approach might have been put in place at an early stage.

1.2.15 The earlier failure to review Umar’s CPOMS record means that leaders did not know that this was actually the second time Umar had been searched for weapons, and that he had made numerous references to weapons when at Silverdale. Had they known this, then in my view, they could have realised that the 14 October 2024 report of weapons was not a unique event, but was a continuation of an established pattern of behaviour stretching back over time. The report of 14 October should have been understood as a potentially serious matter in its own right, and as part of a wider picture. In not recognising it as such, this was a missed opportunity to take appropriate action.

1.3 Suspension for damage to school property

1.3.1 On 26 November 2024, Umar smashed a computer monitor screen in a lesson, and left the classroom. The member of staff reports that he scared

¹¹ Searching, Screening and Confiscation: Advice for schools (Department for Education, July 2022), par 42

¹² Keeping children safe in education. 2023 pars 51-56; 2024 pars 49-54; 2025 pars 49-54.

¹³ Working together to safeguard children (HM Government, December 2023), Section 1: Early Help, pars 118-121

the class in doing so. The teacher states that she felt threatened by Umar and did not wish to be alone with him when he returned, so she left the room with the rest of the class at the end of the lesson.

- 1.3.2 As a result of the damage to school property, the headteacher suspended Umar for one day. The school's behaviour policy includes specific behaviours which were to be regarded as beyond management through the school's 'Behaviour for Learning' process, and which would require a more serious response than a 'consequences' sanction. Suspension is stated as one of the potential responses. Such behaviours include damage to school property. As noted above, the school's behaviour policy includes a link to government guidance on the use of suspension¹⁴.
- 1.3.3 The member of staff's account of the incident was logged on CPOMS on 26 November 2024. Leaders logged the suspension on CPOMS on 12 February 2025.
- 1.3.4 Umar returned to school the day after the suspension, on 27 November 2024.
- 1.3.5 Records show that on 29 November, Umar completed a 'Student Behaviour Reflection sheet'; that there was a discussion of anger management strategies; and a discussion about 'making the right choices'.
- 1.3.6 A re-integration meeting following the suspension was held on 2 December 2024, attended by the behaviour and intervention leader, the year leader for Year 10, Umar's mother, and Umar. In the meeting, Umar said that he gets angry and finds it difficult to control. His suspensions at Silverdale were noted. It was agreed that the year leader would organise some anger management to be delivered by the assistant year leader for Year 10, provide a temporary 'time-out' card, make a timetable adjustment, and monitor his behaviour. It was expected that the anger management intervention would be a one-off session.
- 1.3.7 The school's behaviour policy states that year leaders and assistant year leaders will monitor behaviour as required, for a period of up to six weeks, and if the desired improvement is not achieved, place the pupil on a 'behaviour intervention plan' (BIP).

¹⁴ Suspension and permanent exclusion from maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units in England, including pupil movement Guidance for maintained schools, academies, and pupil referral units in England, (DfE, August 2024)

- 1.3.8 As far as can be established, pastoral team staff were not trained in specific ‘anger management’ techniques or approaches, or expected to use any particular supporting resources other than the school’s own recording sheet.

Findings on the suspension for damage to school property

- 1.3.9 The headteacher’s decision to suspend Umar in response to his actions was consistent with both the school’s behaviour policy, and government guidance¹⁵. As such, it was rational.
- 1.3.10 It was poor record-keeping to log the suspension on CPOMS months after the event. Such incompleteness makes it difficult for anyone to see the full picture of a pupil’s conduct and potential needs.
- 1.3.11 The reintegration meeting was consistent with government guidance¹⁶, in that it sought to offer a fresh start; to help Umar understand the consequences of his actions and the school’s high expectations; to re-engage him with learning; and that there was a planned pastoral strategy to enable successful reintegration.
- 1.3.12 The prescription of an anger management intervention was appropriate. It is typical in schools, as here, that this would be led by a member of the school’s pastoral team. It is likely that such members of staff are dealing with numerous such interventions at any given time. In mainstream secondary schools, it would not be unusual to find pastoral staff who are untrained in any specific methodology for delivering a one-off anger management intervention.
- 1.3.13 I could not find any evidence that any anger management intervention took place following the reintegration meeting. It is possible that the ‘Student Behaviour Reflection sheet’, completed by Umar on 29 November, was regarded as the intended one-off anger management intervention session, and as such, had been completed prior to the reintegration meeting.
- 1.3.14 I could not find any evidence in the record of the reintegration meeting that Umar’s behaviour other than the specific suspension incident had been

¹⁵ Suspension and permanent exclusion from maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units in England, including pupil movement Guidance for maintained schools, academies, and pupil referral units in England, (DfE, August 2024) Part 3 par 1, p11

¹⁶ Ibid, pars 27-31

considered in the meeting. Umar's behaviour record for 'Consequences', (where C1 is the least serious and C4 the most serious, prior to the need for 'On Call'), shows that Umar had received two 'consequences' in September (C3); five in October (C3), and 11 as at the date of the reintegration meeting on 29 November (including four C4). On balance, leaders did not look for, or see, the fuller picture of Umar's behaviour in addition to the computer screen incident: a steady and then sharp escalation in the frequency and seriousness of 'consequences' behaviour incidents. Leaders should have considered this information as part of the reintegration meeting.

1.3.15 If this incident had been a one-off event for Umar, then the single anger management session together with a time-out card and a timetable adjustment could be seen as an appropriate response. However, notwithstanding the points above regarding leaders' lack of awareness of Umar's CPOMS record from Silverdale, it was known to them that he had been suspended twice at Silverdale, including for violence. Furthermore, he had been accepted on the off-site managed move under the auspices of the Refresh programme, to address his behaviours. As such, on balance, leaders should have viewed the incident with the computer screen as a continuation of previous behaviours, not as a one-off; and as part of a wider picture of growing misbehaviour. Had they done so, they might have prescribed additional measures¹⁷ to support Umar on his return from suspension, such as daily contact with a member of the pastoral team, perhaps through the use of a BIP, a daily report card, and mentoring. That they did not do so was a missed opportunity to intervene.

1.4 Discovery of an axe in Umar's gym bag

1.4.1 On 19 December 2024, the school received an email from the manager of Sheffield City Council's Progressions Team, stating that Umar's mother had contacted a boxing gym used by Umar because she had found a 'sword' in his bag. The manager of the gym had contacted the Progressions Team to pass this on. The gym is one of the alternative provision (AP) providers on Sheffield City Council's list of approved AP providers. Umar visited the gym as a private individual, not as part of any school-organised provision.

1.4.2 In response to the notification, on 20 December 2024, the safeguarding leader asked the assistant year leader for Year 10 to contact Umar's mother,

¹⁷ Suspension and permanent exclusion from maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units in England, including pupil movement Guidance for maintained schools, academies, and pupil referral units in England (DfE, August 2024), par 31

the local authority's Safeguarding Hub (the Hub), and the police. The safeguarding leader directed that Umar should be searched when he came into school.

- 1.4.3 The safeguarding leader included the behaviour and intervention leader in this communication, noting that the behaviour and intervention leader had dealt with the search of Umar on 14 October 2024 (see above). The safeguarding leader advised that it 'might be an idea' to review Umar's CPOMS record from Silverdale to check if there were any similar concerns.
- 1.4.4 A member of the Year 10 pastoral team contacted the police and secured an incident number, and sent them a picture of the weapon (a 'Ninja'-style axe). It isn't clear from school records how school came to have a picture of the axe, but it is likely that it was provided by Umar's mother. The pastoral team member informed the Hub of the discovery of the axe. Records state that the police carried out a home visit.
- 1.4.5 20 December 2024 was the final day of term, and Umar was absent. Therefore, there was no search. He was not searched on his return to school after the Christmas break on 7 January 2025.
- 1.4.6 The headteacher was made aware of the incident. The year leader was told about the report of the axe by the assistant year leader. Umar's form tutor was not made aware of the discovery.
- 1.4.7 Umar was not sanctioned for possession of the axe.
- 1.4.8 Leaders did not carry out a risk assessment or put a safety plan in place following the discovery of the axe.

Findings on the discovery of the axe in Umar's gym bag

- 1.4.9 Leaders acted correctly in notifying the police and the Hub. They followed government guidance^{18 19} in recognising the seriousness of the incident and the need to inform external agencies. They followed the appropriate procedure in the school's child protection and safeguarding policy.

¹⁸ Working Together to Safeguard Children, par 124 bullet 5

¹⁹ Keeping children safe in education, 2024 pars 50-52

1.4.10 The headteacher considered suspending Umar for the possession of the axe. Government guidance permits headteachers to suspend pupils for incidents which happen outside school²⁰. Headteachers are directed to apply the civil standard of proof, ‘On the balance of probabilities’. There is no definitive list of reasons to suspend, but it can include the threat of use, of an offensive weapon or prohibited item that has been prohibited by a school’s behaviour policy²¹. The school’s behaviour policy states that suspension may be used for any behaviour outside school which works against the ethos and/or reputation of the school. The headteacher’s view was that the referral to the police, and the fact that the incident did not bring the school into disrepute, were sufficient reasons not to suspend Umar. The decision to suspend is a matter of ‘on balance’ judgement, and as such, different headteachers may make different decisions in any given situation. Given that the headteacher considered a suspension on the basis of the school’s behaviour policy, and that he exercised the headteacher’s powers as set out in government guidance, his decision not to suspend Umar was, in my view, rational.

1.4.11 However, it is concerning that, other than notifying the police and the Hub, leaders did nothing else in response to the discovery of the axe. There was no follow-up action in school whatsoever. There is no evidence that anyone actually spoke to Umar about the matter. In fact, the incident disappeared from view entirely. No-one took any responsibility for taking further action because, either: no-one recognised the need to take further action; or, it was assumed that others would take action. This is typified by the failure to search Umar on his return to school after the Christmas break. This was a failure in safeguarding.

1.4.12 The behaviour and intervention leader did not take any action, taking the view that, as the incident was ‘an external event’, there was no requirement to do so. The assistant headteacher on the school’s senior leadership team, with overall responsibility for behaviour, had no involvement in the school’s response to the discovery of the axe, regarding it as a safeguarding matter. The safeguarding leader assumed that the behaviour and intervention leader would take any necessary follow-up action, but for the reasons set out in 1.1.19, did not check.

1.4.13 As a result of the combination of leaders’ lack of understanding and assumptions about others’ roles, no risk assessment was undertaken into

²⁰ Suspension and permanent exclusion from maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units in England, including pupil movement Guidance for maintained schools, academies, and pupil referral units in England, pars 2-3

²¹ Ibid, par 16

Umar. In my view, this was a self-evident action to take. That they didn't was a safeguarding failing. Government guidance²² requires schools to ensure that pupils are safe in school. Health and safety law²³ requires the school to assess risks and put in place proportionate control measures. The failure to carry out a risk assessment following the discovery of the axe means that another opportunity was missed to put plans in place to support Umar and protect the school community. It also means that events during lockdown and on 3 February 2025 (see below) were not properly understood by some of the staff involved.

1.4.14 Furthermore, the failure to risk assess Umar went against statutory safeguarding guidance^{24 25}, which places a responsibility on leaders to assess pupils' safeguarding needs. While the referrals to the police and the Hub were necessary and appropriate, leaders should have taken steps in school to assess what the discovery of the axe might mean for Umar, and for the wider school community, and take appropriate action.

1.4.15 Additionally, leaders did not do anything to chase-up the police and the Hub to find out what action they were taking, and what role the school might play in any multi-agency safeguarding response to the discovery of the axe, such as an assessment for Early Help²⁶. In my view, they were too ready to consider that they had discharged their responsibilities once they had notified the police and the Hub. They did not consider it to be their responsibility to re-assess the situation, or to challenge the Hub for any inaction²⁷. It is for the police and Sheffield City Council's children's social care service to account for their decision-making in this case. Nevertheless, school leaders should have taken action to challenge external agencies about initiating a co-ordinated response.

1.4.16 Leaders did not recognise that the discovery of the axe represented the emergence of a pattern at All Saints, following the report of Umar's possession of a knife in October 2024 (and, had they reviewed his CPOMS record from Silverdale, a pattern stretching further back). The discovery of a weapon as an isolated incident is self-evidently serious, even if it happened off-site. In my view, as a second weapons-related incident, along with a suspension for violence and a rising number of behaviour incidents, the

²² Health and safety: responsibilities and duties for schools -Updated 5 April 2022

²³ Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974

²⁴ Keeping children safe in education, 2024 par 54

²⁵ Working Together to Safeguard Children, bullet point 1, p7

²⁶ Keeping children safe in education, 2024 par 112

²⁷ Ibid, par 68

discovery of the axe was a clear, serious matter and requiring of attention. This was another missed opportunity to take appropriate action.

1.5 Notification from the safeguarding Hub of an anonymous report raising concerns about Umar [REDACTED]

1.5.1 On 7 January 2025, school received a notification from the Hub stating that they had received an anonymous report about Umar [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

1.5.2 The notification from the Hub is recorded on CPOMS. There are no records of any school response to the notification.

Findings on the safeguarding hub notification

1.5.3 Leaders took no action in response to the notification. This was because behaviour and safeguarding leaders at different levels assumed that others would take appropriate action. Umar's form tutor was not informed of the Hub's notification. As a result of these assumptions and lack of organisational clarity about responsibilities, the opportunity to take appropriate action in response to the notification fell through the cracks.

1.5.4 The same points as made above in 1.4.15 apply here. Leaders should have taken proactive steps to liaise with the Hub. They ought to have considered the notification as part of a broader picture of Umar's circumstances, and taken action in school irrespective of what the Hub was, or wasn't, doing. In my view, the report from the Hub presented another opportunity to identify and assess Umar's safeguarding context; but, again, the opportunity was missed.

1.6 Suspension for damage to the wall in the Damascus Room

1.6.1 On 16 January 2025, Umar received a C4 'consequence' from PE and was sent to the Damascus Room. This room is generally used for accommodating pupils who have received a C4 and been sent out of their lesson. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] Umar punched the wall three or four times, leaving a hole and a dent in the wall.

- 1.6.2 Umar was suspended for one day for damage to school property.
- 1.6.3 The suspension was logged on CPOMS on 13 February 2025.
- 1.6.4 Umar returned to school on 20 January 2025.
- 1.6.5 Umar completed a 'Student Behaviour Reflection sheet' on 20 January 2025. He described his feeling at the time of the incident as 'Full anger', and that he would try to 'control anger and ignore people' in future.
- 1.6.6 Also on 20 January, Umar completed an 'Anger Scale' sheet. This is a five-point scale, from '1 – feeling calm' (colour coded green), to '5-lost control' (colour coded red). Pupils are invited to complete three boxes for each point on the scale: 'What makes me feel this way', 'How can I tell', and 'Strategies I can try'. Umar's response covers all five points on the scale. For 'Lost control', he stated that 'people getting me upset' is what made him feel a loss of control; that he could tell when he had lost control when he 'starts using my fists'. The 'strategies I can try' box is empty. The school's record of this provision states that Umar 'Worked well on 5-point anger scale but struggled to identify a strategy for when he is really angry and lost control'.
- 1.6.7 A reintegration meeting was held on 24 January 2025, attended by the behaviour and intervention leader, the year leader for Year 10, and Umar's mother. It isn't clear from the record whether Umar was present or not. The agreed action was for Umar to engage in anger management sessions with the assistant year leader for Year 10 when she returned to work following absence. Umar's mother informed the meeting that the police had visited the home and removed the axe. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED].
- 1.6.8 No anger management intervention took place following the reintegration meeting. As with the previous suspension, it is possible that leaders considered the completion of the activities described in 1.6.5 and 1.6.6 to be the anger management strategies determined at the reintegration meeting.

Findings on the suspension for damage to the wall in the Damascus Room

- 1.6.9 The headteacher's decision to suspend Umar was consistent with school policy and government guidance, and as such was rational.
- 1.6.10 The points made in 1.3.11 – 1.3.12 are equally relevant here.
- 1.6.11 The failure to record the suspension on CPOMS in a timely way is another instance of poor record keeping and communication (see 1.3.10).
- 1.6.12 As with the reintegration meeting following the suspension of 26 November 2024, I could find no evidence that Umar's wider behaviour record had been considered in the reintegration meeting. In December 2024, he had received 16 'consequences' (up from 11 in November). Not all instances are categorised as a specific 'C': there are eight C3s and four C4s specified. At the point of the reintegration meeting, there were 11 'consequences' for January 2025, including three C4s. By the end of January, Umar had received 17 'consequences'. The same point as is made in 1.3.14 applies here: that on balance, I do not think that Umar's wider, and worsening, behavioural picture was considered in the meeting.
- 1.6.13 It is acknowledged that in large and busy schools, it can be a challenge for pastoral teams to have the capacity to complete such intended provision, and to keep track of what was planned and what has been delivered. However, it is regrettable that the fact that Umar acknowledged that he could lose control, but no strategies were forthcoming to help him manage such a situation, was not followed up. Again, the school did not consider or implement any other strategies which would have been appropriate (see 1.3.15) to support and challenge Umar in his behaviour.
- 1.6.14 At the time, leaders did not regard Umar's behaviour as especially problematic as such, or requiring a prioritised response, because he was not presenting difficulties on a daily basis. Other pupils were more regularly challenging. Provision for these pupils was discussed and agreed at the weekly 'inclusion team' meeting. Umar did not meet the threshold for discussion at this meeting. This made the effective implementation of the anger management intervention especially important, because in the absence of the earlier Refresh programme, this was the sole source of planned support to help Umar with his anger.

1.6.15 While not exhibiting the pattern of frequent, but lower-level, behaviour challenges of some other pupils, this was the second instance of Umar's angry, violent damage at All Saints. In my view, the circumstances of the suspension sit on the continuum of anger and violence going back to the reason for his off-site direction; the first suspension; the rising number of 'consequences'; the report of knife possession; actual possession of an axe; [REDACTED], adding to Umar's complexity. Although not reaching the threshold for action via the inclusion meeting, here was a complex, vulnerable and angry pupil with a series of significant episodes taking place. There was enough here for leaders to be noticing, and joining, the dots. In my view, the response to the suspension was a missed opportunity to take fuller, appropriate action.

1.7 Umar is searched for a weapon in a pastoral team office

1.7.1 On 22 January 2025, Umar went to a pastoral office where he spoke to a member of staff about a rumour he said was going around school, [REDACTED]. The member of staff asked him if he would be prepared to empty his bag, so that she could assure herself that he was not in possession of a weapon. Umar emptied his bag. The member of staff went to get someone else to act as a witness, then 'padded the bag down'. No weapon was found.

1.7.2 The member of staff made the behaviour and intervention leader aware of the search, who asked her to log it on CPOMS. The incident was logged on 22 January, tagged for the attention of the pastoral team.

1.7.3 The pastoral team members either cannot recall the incident, or they were not aware of it. Umar's form tutor was not aware of the search. The assistant headteacher for behaviour was not aware of the search.

1.7.4 There is no record that school contacted Umar's parents to notify them of the search.

Findings on the search for a weapon in a pastoral office

1.7.5 The member of staff acted correctly in understanding the need for a search, for passing on the information, and for logging it on CPOMS in a timely way. The behaviour and intervention leader acted appropriately in asking her to log it on CPOMS.

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- 1.7.6 In just asking Umar to empty his bag and then padding it down, and not searching his clothing, the search itself was not thorough²⁸.
- 1.7.7 There was no follow-up to the log of this search. Even though Umar brought the matter to staff attention himself, and nothing was found, in his context I believe that more should have been done in response to the incident. Not least, the requirement to reflect on the reasons behind the search and whether further action may be necessary (see footnote 10).
- 1.7.8 It is recognised that pastoral teams are generally stretched to, and at times beyond, capacity. However, primarily, Umar was a pupil who had joined the school on a managed move following an off-site direction for his behaviour at Silverdale, and there had already been several incidents of a serious nature (see above), two of them involving weapons. As such, in my view, he should have been more closely monitored so that any incidents outside of the ‘consequences’ system could be assessed as part of his wider context. Had this been the case, someone might have had a conversation with Umar about the rumour, and about weapons. Someone might have connected this latest incident with the other incidents, and been curious as to what might be going on with Umar. There might have been a conversation between behaviour and safeguarding leaders to reflect on whether another weapons-related incident necessitated an assessment of need.
- 1.7.9 That no-one did any of these things is partly due to the pastoral team’s capacity, and the in-the-moment decisions they have to take, hundreds of times a day, about where to deploy their limited resources. After all, in this case, Umar had presented himself and nothing had been found. On the face of it, nothing to be done except noting it. The lack of response, however, is also related to the fact that it wasn’t clear who would be expected to ‘do’ anything anyway, with several relevant pastoral leaders and staff unaware of the incident at all, no-one having a clear responsibility for acting on it, and a general lack of awareness of the guidance related to after-search action.
- 1.7.10 There is no record of any action being taken in respect of this being the [REDACTED] (see above, the Damascus Room suspension). Managing difficult relationships, and fall-outs, between pupils is a daily bread-and-butter part of pastoral teams’ roles. The shifting and complex nature of pupil relationships, across a large year group, is challenging to manage. Ordinarily, a second incident involving two pupils

²⁸ Searching, Screening and Confiscation: Advice for schools (Department for Education, July 2022), pars 28-29

would not be sufficient to merit further action. But, again, considering Umar's managed move status and the other incidents on his record in a short space of time, in my view this was an opportunity for the school to explore and intervene as appropriate [REDACTED]

1.8 Lockdown and its aftermath

1.8.1 On 29 January 2025, at approximately 1120, an incident occurred [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] Several staff were needed to attempt to control the situation. A number of pupil restraints was necessary. To prevent further escalation and to manage the situation, the headteacher took the decision to place the school in lockdown.

1.8.2 Harvey was absent from school on this day. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED].

1.8.3 [REDACTED].

1.8.4 [REDACTED].

1.8.5 Umar was not suspended, as the headteacher's view was that he was not part of the 'core' group of pupils, and that he had calmed, and complied with staff requests.

1.8.6 At some point – it is unclear from records when, exactly, Umar 'pushed his way through the crowd and began punching his fists in a circular motion'.

1.8.7 The assistant year leader for Year 10 spoke with Umar on the edges of the fracas, and took him to the pastoral office. R [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] Umar then ran out of the pastoral office.

1.8.8 Shortly afterwards, Umar was in the vicinity of the Maths office, [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]. Records show that Umar was 'aggressive and angry', a [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] The year leader's account states that Umar was attempting to overpower him to get

past. The year leader moved Umar away from the scene, supported by the behaviour and intervention leader. They took him to an assistant headteacher's office. Records state that Umar began to calm down, and that [REDACTED] The year leader left the office to respond to another call for assistance in managing the situation. He left Umar under the supervision of a member of the school's administrative team.

- 1.8.9 Umar spoke with the member of staff supervising him about [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] The member of staff held him to prevent him from doing so, but as soon as he released him, Umar ran away. The member of staff caught up with Umar on a corridor, and guided him into the chapel. The member of staff then left. The chaplaincy co-ordinator described Umar as agitated. Shortly afterwards, the assistant year leader for Year 10 arrived in the chapel to speak with Umar. At this point, records indicate that the staff present were the assistant year leader for Year 10, the chaplaincy co-ordinator, and the Year 7 year leader.
- 1.8.10 The assistant year leader for Year 10 asked Umar to repeat what he had said to her earlier (see 1.8.7). He said, 'what you got in your pocket, do you want me to take it off you'. The assistant year leader challenged him as this was different to what he said earlier. Umar said that he 'had only said that to her'. The assistant year leader's account states that she asked him to empty his bag and pockets so that she could check if he had a knife. The assistant year leader for Y7 states that she had left the chapel at this point. The chaplaincy co-ordinator's account is that only Umar's bag was searched, and that Umar himself lifted his coat in the air and 'ruffled' it. No weapon was found.
- 1.8.11 In the period of time immediately following the lockdown, the Year 7 year leader consulted the assistant headteacher for behaviour to check whether Umar could be collected and taken home. It is her understanding that this was so that the school could be made calm and safe without the presence of the lockdown 'principals'. Umar was collected [REDACTED] and taken off-site.
- 1.8.12 The day after lockdown, 30 January 2025, the chaplaincy co-ordinator was speaking about events with a colleague. She described the search of Umar in the chapel. The colleague queried why only Umar's bag had been searched.

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She said that pupils in an English lesson had been speaking recently about Umar's possession of a knife. Staff accounts indicate that this was 'a couple of weeks' previously. There is no record of this report on CPOMS.

- 1.8.13 The chaplaincy co-ordinator reported this conversation to the behaviour and intervention leader, who tasked the year leader for Year 10 to carry out an investigation. She commenced this process, speaking with five pupils up to the point where she had to pause the investigation due to teaching commitments and pre-arranged meetings. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

- 1.8.14 The year leader reported to the headteacher at around lunchtime on 31 January 2025 that she was unable to complete the investigation due to other commitments. It was agreed that the investigation would continue on 3 February 2025. The behaviour and intervention leader was aware that the investigation had been paused until 3 February. The assistant headteacher for behaviour understood the year leader's investigation to be about student involvement in lockdown, and gathering information to inform consideration of possible action, including suspensions.

- 1.8.15 [REDACTED] contacted school on 30 January 2025 to say that Umar was at [REDACTED] house, and was too scared to come into school due to the lockdown events. [REDACTED] also called to say Umar would be absent. The year leader [REDACTED], who said Umar was too scared to attend school. [REDACTED] called again on 31 January to say that Umar was afraid,

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

- 1.8.16 It was not clear who held the responsibility for gathering and reviewing staff accounts of the lockdown events. The safeguarding leader was absent from work at this time. Staff were not asked for their statements until the safeguarding leader returned from absence on 10 February 2025. The headteacher's understanding and expectation was that the behaviour and intervention leader was deputising for the safeguarding leader. The behaviour and intervention leader does not share this understanding. It was his belief that the group of deputy safeguarding leaders, trained in 'advanced safeguarding' by Sheffield LA, were jointly responsible, as a team, for safeguarding in the safeguarding leader's absence.

- 1.8.17 There were subsequent reports from pupils that Harvey and Umar had exchanged messages on 'Snapchat' about the events of lockdown. Leaders state that they did not have knowledge of this. I could find no records of it.

Findings on lockdown and its aftermath

- 1.8.18 Lockdown was loud, highly charged and extremely challenging. Leaders and staff were responding and making decisions in a rapidly escalating and rolling situation. Not only were they dealing with events at the centre of the situation, [REDACTED]; they were also dealing with volatile pupils to the periphery, such as Umar. Staff put themselves in harm's way to protect pupils. They took appropriate action, in the moment, to manage Umar: to keep him safe, and to keep others safe ([REDACTED]).
- 1.8.19 It is outside the scope of this investigation to assess whether the headteacher made the right judgement in calling a lockdown. That said, in my view, it was an appropriate decision.
- 1.8.20 In terms of the relationship between lockdown and Umar, there are several points to make.
- 1.8.21 Firstly, on balance, I do not think it likely that Umar was searched in line with guidance (see footnote 27) in the chapel.
- 1.8.22 It is regrettable that staff accounts of lockdown were not gathered in the immediate aftermath, when memories were fresh and when there was a window to review any important information. It is acknowledged that after such a serious incident, leaders were very busy with restoring calm and routines, as well establishing the facts of what happened. However, that staff accounts were not collected was due to leaders' lack of clarity about who had the responsibility to do so. The fact that the safeguarding leader saw it as a necessary task on returning from absence on 10 February 2025 suggests that it sat with someone on the team of deputy safeguarding leaders, but it fell through the cracks because no-one understood it to be their role.
- 1.8.23 As a result, important information about Umar's lockdown conduct across interactions with several staff members was not centrally known. As described above, staff accounts include details about: his part in whipping-up the situation (punching the air); [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] three restraints/holds; his aggression and anger; [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] and that he was searched again for a weapon. Had this information been collected and reviewed in a timely way, and had the school's structure and system been set up so that someone had the responsibility for making possible connections between serious incidents, then leaders would have been in a position to assess its importance in relation to everything else that was known about Umar. Leaders could have recognised it as the latest, escalating instance of Umar's anger and loss of control and as another weapon-related incident.

- 1.8.24 As noted above, the headteacher's rationale for not suspending Umar for his conduct during lockdown was that he did not regard Umar as part of the 'core' group of pupils, and that he had, eventually, calmed down and complied with staff requests. As discussed above (see 1.3.9, 1.4.10), in and of itself the headteacher's decision was not irrational or inconsistent with school policy and government guidance. However, he did not know the full extent of Umar's conduct. Specifically, he did not know the precise details of why Umar was in such a heightened state, the circumstances of his restraint, and why he had been searched; [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] Had he known this information, he might have made the decision to suspend Umar, [REDACTED] This was another instance of poor information sharing in school, as a direct result of staff accounts not being collected.
- 1.8.25 Leaders' decision to ask Umar's family to collect him from school and take him home after lockdown was an unofficial suspension, and as such was unlawful²⁹.
- 1.8.26 The consequence of the shortcoming in the gathering of staff accounts was that staff who came into contact with Umar on 3 February 2025 did not have the full picture (see below).
- 1.8.27 It is also the case that Umar's evident fear of attending school following lockdown was not fully understood in school. Despite [REDACTED] both telling school that he was afraid to return after lockdown, this was not fully explored when he did return (see below).

²⁹ Suspension and permanent exclusion from maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units in England, including pupil movement: Guidance for maintained schools, academies, and pupil referral units in England (Department for Education, August 2024), par 20.

1.8.28 The report of Umar’s possession of a knife was not recorded on CPOMS. As far as I can establish, the first time any leaders in school knew about it was when the chaplaincy co-ordinator passed the report to the behaviour and intervention leader when she heard it on 30 January 2025. It is possible that staff passed it on verbally, but it should have been logged on CPOMS as well. That staff failed to recognise the report as a potentially serious matter in its own right, and to report it immediately on CPOMS, was poor safeguarding practice. Had the information been reported when it was first known, then the investigation could have started at that point rather than 30 January, and leaders could have considered appropriate action to take in response to another weapons-related incident surrounding Umar. This was another missed opportunity to take action.

1.9 Events leading to Harvey’s murder, 3 February 2025

1.9.1 The year leader spoke with [REDACTED] at the start of the day. [REDACTED] reported that Umar was scared to come in, but she hoped he would. Umar arrived late to school.

1.9.2 At around 0845, Umar was picked up on the corridor as he was passing the office shared by the assistant headteacher for behaviour, and the behaviour and intervention leader. The headteacher had asked the assistant headteacher to carry out a ‘welfare check’ on Umar, to assess that he felt safe to be in school, and to risk-assess whether he was safe to be around other pupils. Umar was asked to write a statement about his involvement in lockdown.

1.9.3 The statement is undated, but it is Umar’s account of lockdown. It is quite short. [REDACTED] s
t [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] d
[REDACTED].

1.9.4 The behaviour and intervention leader was not aware that Umar had been searched during lockdown. He did know about the searches on 14 October 2024 and 22 January 2025, and the discovery of the axe. He knew about the open investigation into the report of Umar’s possession of a knife in school, because he had instigated it.

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- 1.9.5 The behaviour and intervention leader spoke with Umar about his statement, and asked him if he ‘was OK’. He left Umar with the assistant headteacher for behaviour, as he had to meet a parent at 0900.
- 1.9.6 The assistant headteacher for behaviour did not know about the searches of 14 October 2024 or 22 January 2025. He knew about the discovery of the axe. He knew that Umar had been searched during lockdown. He was aware that Umar had been scared to come to school after lockdown.
- 1.9.7 The assistant headteacher for behaviour discussed Umar’s statement with him. In light of Umar’s family stating that he had been afraid to come into school, the assistant headteacher asked him something along the lines of, ‘Have you ever felt the need to carry something you shouldn’t have?’, followed by ‘You haven’t got anything you shouldn’t have, have you?’ Umar’s response was something like, ‘No, nothing like that, I’m just happy to be back in the school’. The assistant headteacher did not search Umar. He reported to the headteacher to discuss whether Umar could be allowed into the general school population.
- 1.9.8 The headteacher was aware that Umar had been in a heightened state at points during lockdown, that he had been restrained, and that he had been searched. He was aware of the searches of 14 October 2024 and 22 January 2025, and of the discovery of the axe. He was aware that there was an open investigation into another report of Umar having a knife in school. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED].
- 1.9.9 The headteacher did not search Umar and hadn’t expected anyone else to do so. His rationale for not searching Umar was that he had been searched recently (during lockdown) and no weapon was found, and that he was presenting as calm and compliant. The headteacher did not consider that there were grounds to search Umar. His assessment was that Umar did not pose a risk, and he determined that Umar could join the rest of the school.
- 1.9.10 Between 0930-1030, the assistant headteacher took Umar to the Damascus Room, as he did not want to go to his PE lesson. Umar was allowed to go to the toilet ‘once or twice’.
- 1.9.11 The Damascus Room leader didn’t know anything about Umar’s conduct at Silverdale. She was aware of the two suspensions and the axe discovery, and that Umar had been searched during lockdown. She did not know about the

other two searches. Leaders did not provide her with any particular information or instructions about Umar.

1.9.12 Umar told the Damascus Room leader [REDACTED], but then retracted the comment. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] The Damascus Room leader emailed this information to the assistant year leader for Year 10.

1.9.13 At around the start of period 3, 1110, Umar went to the Year 10 pastoral office to say he didn't want to go to science. He was sent to science by the assistant year leader.

1.9.14 The assistant year leader had no awareness of Umar's conduct at Silverdale. She has a slight recollection of the search on 14 October 2024, but not the one on 22 January 2025. She knew of the axe discovery, and his suspensions, but had not attended the reintegration meetings due to absence. It is not clear if she knew about the open investigation into the latest report of Umar's possession of a knife.

1.9.15 Harvey and Umar attended the science lesson. This was the first time the lesson was being taught by a student teacher. The regular science teacher was supporting the lesson. The assistant year leader had emailed to say that Umar would be a little late, and that he was worried about two pupils in the class (not Harvey). When Umar arrived, Harvey asked for the time-out 'pink lanyard'. The science teacher believes this was a reaction to Umar's arrival. As Harvey made to leave, he and Umar met in the space between two rows of tables. They squared up to one another, as if a 'show' initially, toe-to-toe and jostling. The science teacher told them she would send for On Call. At this point, the boys separated, saying something along the lines of 'Let's take this outside'. The science teacher sent Harvey into the corridor with the pink lanyard. There was a continuation of the altercation in the corridor, until Harvey left the area and Umar returned to the classroom. He asked to go to the toilet, and was refusing to remove his coat. He asked to go to see the assistant year leader. The science teacher emailed the assistant year leader, who gave permission for Umar to leave the lesson to go and see her.

1.9.16 After leaving science, Harvey arrived at the pastoral office to see the assistant year leader. He told her that Umar had rubbed his fists on Harvey's chest. He asked to go to the Damascus Room, and the assistant year leader gave him permission. Shortly afterwards, Umar arrived at the pastoral office.

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He told the assistant year leader that Harvey had laughed at him. The assistant year leader sent Umar back to science.

1.9.17 In the Damascus Room, Harvey seemed in an agitated state. He made a phone call to someone about a ‘beef’, but it isn’t clear who this was, or what the ‘beef’ was about. He told the Damascus Room leader that Umar had been pretending to take something out of his trousers. Harvey asked if he could call the assistant year leader, which he did. The assistant year leader said that Harvey could eat his lunch in her office with her if he wished. The Damascus Room leader asked the assistant year leader if Harvey could leave at lunchtime, and she said yes, if Harvey was calm. Harvey left for lunch.

1.9.18 At lunchtime, Umar entered the courtyard where Harvey and other pupils were present. There was a short interaction between them. Umar pulled a knife from a pocket, took it from its sheath, and stabbed Harvey twice in the chest, killing him.

Findings on the events of 3 February 2025

1.9.19 When Umar arrived in school on the morning of 3 February, there was an open investigation underway into a report that he had recently been in possession of a knife in school. This was in addition to what was already known about previous incidents concerning Umar and weapons. The investigation was due to resume on this day. This being the case, in my view, leaders should have agreed a co-ordinated plan to collect Umar on his arrival in school and, once collected, to remove him from circulation; place him under supervision; search him; and interview him. Parents should have been notified. The investigation should then have been continued and completed. At that point, there should have been an assessment of the risk Umar posed, and steps put in place to control and manage the risk. Until all of this was done, understood, and placed in the context of previous, known behaviours, in my view he should not have been allowed into the general school population.

1.9.20 To a degree, leaders’ decision-making was compromised by the fact that the extent of Umar’s conduct during lockdown was not fully known because staff accounts had not been collected and reviewed. However, the three leaders who interacted with Umar at the start of the day knew enough about his context and behaviours to give them reason to take considered and robust action before allowing him into school. That they did not communicate with one another on that morning about what each of them knew about Umar, so

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that an appropriate plan of action was in place, was, in my view, a safeguarding failure.

- 1.9.21 The headteacher took the final decision to allow Umar into school, unsearched, and the investigation incomplete, and as such bears ultimate responsibility for Umar being in lessons and around school at lunchtime.
- 1.9.22 However, the headteacher could reasonably expect other leaders to have liaised with the pastoral team and to have had a plan in place for Umar's arrival. He could reasonably have expected to be reminded, and challenged, that this was the second such report of Umar's knife possession, in addition to the axe discovery and the search on 22 January 2025. He could reasonably have expected to be informed that Umar was, reportedly, afraid to come to school. It was a collective failure of leadership to recognise, understand and act on what was, in my view, a clear, serious, safeguarding matter.
- 1.9.23 In respect of subsequent interactions between staff and Umar, opportunities to act differently were not clear-cut. In the absence of a risk assessment for Umar, which in my view should have been in place since the search of 14 October 2024, on balance, staff did not have sufficient information about him to enable them to recognise the significance of what he, or Harvey, said to them. Staff didn't know that, reportedly, the two boys had fallen out on social media over the weekend: as far as staff knew, Harvey and Umar generally got on with each other. As such, the altercation and words between them was not something which could reasonably be seen as the precursor to what followed. The Damascus Room leader and science teacher didn't know that Umar was under investigation for possession of a knife. In the context of a typically busy day, and in the absence of a risk assessment or verbally communicated information about Umar's lockdown conduct and the investigation, on balance I do not think it would be reasonable to have expected staff to recognise and connect the hindsight-informed significance of the comments and actions of both boys on that morning.

2. Other matters

2.1 The claim made by Umar in the trial that he bought the axe in school

I saw no evidence that this was the case.

2.2 The allegation that there was a report from a parent in October 2024 of Umar carrying a weapon in school

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED], and no weapon found.

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] stating that he would raise the matter of
the latest report with the safeguarding and behaviour teams. An undated
school record states that the behaviour and intervention leader spoke [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
not brought a knife into school.

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]'s
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
The assistant headteacher states that he spoke with the behaviour leader,
who confirmed that he had searched Umar in October 2024, and no weapon
had been found. I think it is likely that [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] relates to the search of 14 October
2024.

2.3 Reports that pupils knew Umar carried a knife or weapon in school

Reports from the trial and in the media suggest that some pupils knew that Umar carried a weapon in school, but did not pass this information to any school staff. (The reports of 14 October 2024 and 30 January 2025 were from staff overhearing pupils' conversations). In the context of the school's safeguarding culture, it is concerning that pupils did not feel able, or see it as necessary, to tell an adult in school about a pupil who carried a weapon. While this might have been a matter of the lack of an anonymous reporting mechanism for pupils to pass on such concerns, it raises a question about the wider safeguarding culture in the school.