



King's High School

King's High School Forced Marriage Policy	
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Author and Reviewer	Senior Deputy Head Pastoral
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Forced Marriage Policy

1. Objective

- 1.1. King's High School regards the coercion involved in forced marriage to be abusive and is opposed to all practices of a coercive and abusive nature. We believe in promoting the rights of children and young people to participate in decisions that affect them. All pupils are entitled to receive effective protection regardless of their cultural and ethnic origins.
- 1.2. This policy conforms to the Multi-agency statutory guidance for dealing with forced marriage: The Right to Choose, produced by HM Government (June 2014) and Keeping Children Safe in Education (September 2024) and the procedures outlined within each will be followed.

2. Children's rights

- 2.1. The practice and threat of forced marriage, and the severe emotional pressure and the physical violence which often accompanies it, infringes a number of children's rights as set out in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989).

3. Defining forced marriage

- 3.1. It is important to distinguish between a forced marriage and an arranged marriage.
- 3.2. A forced marriage is where one or both people do not (or cannot) consent to the marriage, and pressure or abuse is used to force them into the marriage. It is also when anything is done to make someone marry before the age of 18, even if there is no pressure or abuse. Forced marriage is illegal in the UK: it is a form of domestic abuse and a serious abuse of human rights.
- 3.3. By contrast, in an arranged marriage, families often take a leading role in arranging marriages for their children, but the prospective spouses have the right to say 'no' at any point. Consent¹ should be freely given and cannot be regarded as freely given in this country unless the person is aged 16 or above. The tradition of arranged marriages should be respected on this basis.
- 3.4. A common misconception is that forced marriage has a religious basis. Forced marriage is not a religious phenomenon: all major world religions require the freely given consent of both parties to a marriage.
- 3.5. King's High accepts that forced marriage is a practice that exists within the UK, and that crosses national borders and that it can be part of "honor-based violence" to protect or defend the honour of the family and or the community. Targets can be male or female and come from a variety of cultural backgrounds.

4. Potential warning signs or indicators

- 4.1. Individuals facing forced marriage may appear anxious, depressed and emotionally withdrawn with low self-esteem. In an educational setting, indicators include absence and persistent absence; request for extended leave or failure to return from visits to country of origin; fear about forthcoming school holidays; surveillance by siblings or cousins; decline in behaviour, performance or punctuality; poor exam performance; withdrawal from school by parents or guardians; not allowed to attend extra-curricular activities; sudden announcement of engagement; prevention from going on to further/higher education.
- 4.2. King's High aims to create an 'open environment' where pupils feel safe and confident that they can come and discuss any problems they are facing. Pupils are informed in year group meetings, assemblies and PSHEE lessons that they can always tell someone and they will be listened to and their concerns taken seriously. Protective behaviours teaching in Year 7 delivers these messages clearly and the importance of freely entering into marriage is taught as part of the PSHEE programme in Key Stage 3

5. The response to incidents of forced marriage

¹ **Capacity to consent to marriage:** If a person does not consent or lacks capacity to consent to a marriage, that marriage must be viewed as a forced marriage whatever the reason for the marriage taking place. Capacity to consent can be assessed and tested but is time and decision-specific Mental Capacity act 2005.

- 5.1. King's High School accepts that forced marriage places pupils at risk in several ways and can have a number of serious harmful consequences. Any concerns raised by a pupil to a member of staff must be passed immediately to the **Designated Safeguarding Lead** (DSL).
- 5.2. Where a member of staff is concerned about a pupil because they are exhibiting concerning behaviour (potential warning signs or indicators) then the member of staff should discuss it with the DSL.
- 5.3. When the DSL is made aware they will immediately make contact with Warwickshire (or if more appropriate, other county) Safeguarding to seek advice and assistance.² In accordance with the guidelines, front-line staff dealing with cases of forced marriage will consult with the practice guidelines issued by the Forced Marriage Unit, 'Multi-agency Practice guidelines: Handling Cases of Forced Marriage'.
- 5.4. The family or any members of the community will not be contacted until agreed by the Warwickshire (or other) Safeguarding.
- 5.5. A member of staff can, of course, make a referral themselves to Warwickshire (or other) Safeguarding.

6. The Forced Marriage (Civil Protection) Act 2007

- 6.1. The Forced Marriage (Civil Protection) Act 2007 contains civil measures to enable a person who is being forced into marriage or has been forced into marriage or a relevant third party to apply to the court for a Forced Marriage Protection Order.
- 6.2. Criminal prosecution can be brought under a variety of offences including false imprisonment, assault, battery, kidnapping, child cruelty offences where the victim is under 16, child sexual offences, threats to kill, and other abusive or threatening behaviour causing a child to fear for their personal safety.

7. The Children Act 1989

- 7.1. The Children Act 1989 provides for care and protection orders to be made by the courts for a child under the age of 18 to be placed in the care of a local authority. Local authorities have duties and powers to provide accommodation for young people where it is necessary to safeguard their welfare.

8. Contacts for advice:

Forced Marriage Unit
G/58 Old Admiralty Building
Tel: 020 7008 0151
Efm@fco.gov.uk

Or the
Global Response Centre:
020 7008 1500 Additional information can be found at www.forcedmarriage.net

² KHS staff know that it is not their role to investigate allegations of abuse of a student, to collect evidence or data to support the claim of forced marriage but just to pass what information has been raised to them to designated DSL, who then follows Child Protection procedures