JUDICIARY OF
ENGLAND AND WALES

IN THE CROWN COURT AT SHEFFIELD

THE KING

— v—

MOHAMMED UMAR KHAN

SENTENCING REMARKS OF THE HONOURABLE MRS JUSTICE ELLENBOGEN DBE

Umar Khan, you may remain seated for now.

1. On Monday, 3 February 2025, in the central courtyard of the school at which you were both Year 10 pupils, you fatally stabbed Harvey Willgoose in his heart, using a hunting knife which had a 13-centimetre blade, with a serrated edge. Each of you was 15 years old at that time.

2. On 8 August 2025, the jury convicted you of Harvey's murder, rejecting your partial defence of loss of control. Today, I must sentence you for that offence, and for the offence of having a bladed article on school premises, to which you pleaded guilty at your Plea and Trial Preparation Hearing.

Victim impact

3. Your senseless acts have had a devastating effect on Harvey's family. You heard his older sister, Sophie speak movingly on behalf of them all. She told you of the unbearable pain and grief which you have caused and of how you have shattered their world. She and her family struggle to comprehend that the teenage boy whom she describes lovingly as having been warm, cheeky, and humorous has died as a result of your actions. She described the constant reminders of the traumatic events of 3 February — when they see teenage boys; students in uniform; or a police presence. She detailed the effect of your offending on her own mental health, and on that of her family, and its consequences for their professional and personal lives. Harvey's family are haunted by the CCTV footage of the events of that day, and exhausted by the trauma in their lives, in which his absence is felt every day.

4. From the evidence given at trial, it is clear that Harvey was also a popular pupil, whom students and teachers held in affection. Their lives, too, have been blighted by your actions, which have affected them deeply and will continue to do so.

The facts

5. I am now going to summarise the facts of this case. Where I make findings in relation to matters which were in dispute at trial, I do so to the criminal standard, that is on the basis that I am sure of them.

6. Harvey became a pupil of All Saints Catholic High School in Year 7. You moved to All Saints from a different school. Following a trial period during the last few weeks of the Summer term of Year 9, you returned at the start of Year 10, after the Summer holiday. Initially, you and Harvey were friends, but, over the weekend of 1 and 2 February 2025, you became involved in an argument online, relating to an incident at school which had occurred during the previous week, on 29 January. On that day, it had been necessary for staff to intervene in a dispute between two other boys in your year, one of whom was your friend. The other (to whom I shall refer as 'Boy X') had, in the past,

subjected you to racist abuse and directed his friends to 'jump' you and another boy, also threatening that you would be stabbed. Having tried to support your friend by intervening in that dispute, and having informed staff that Boy X had a knife, you had been sent home. The school had been placed in lockdown and the two boys who had been fighting had been suspended. You had not been suspended from school, but had decided not to attend on the following two days. Your aunt had informed a member of staff that you were scared of going to school but that she had told you that there was no need to be scared because the boys who had been involved in the earlier fight had been suspended. Harvey had not been in school on the day of lockdown, or on the following two days.

7. Over the weekend of 1 and 2 February, the incident on 29 January was discussed by members of a Snapchat group which included you and Harvey. It led to the two of you falling out, because you had sided with your friend and he had sided with Boy X. Eventually, another member of the group removed you both from it because of your arguments.

8. Between 05:46 and 07:50 on the Monday morning — the day of Harvey's death — you and he exchanged text messages, beginning with a message which he sent to you. He asked you whether you were in school and you said that you were not. He asked you, *'Is it beef or what?'* You replied, *'Beef with who?'* and his response was '*Me'*. '*Me an u'*, you replied, going on to send him the following messages, *'Nah but, if you want beef we can hav it. But ygm'* [meaning, 'you get me'], and *'U was my first boy in skl.'*

9. CCTV footage of that day, collected from various cameras around the school, captured a number of interactions between you and Harvey. You arrived in school shortly after 08:30, meaning that you had to sign in at the late desk. Albeit that you made some effort on that day to avoid Boy X and his associates, in your coat pocket was the hunting knife. At around 09:15, you were asked by the Assistant Head Teacher, Mr Morgan Davis, to write a statement about the events of 29 January. He discussed with you the rumours that a knife had been brought into school on that day and reassured you that the police officers who had attended had not found one. Mr Davis asked you whether

you had brought anything (meaning a weapon) into school and you lied to him, telling him that you had not.

10. As you were writing your statement outside Mr Davis' office, Harvey walked past you and the two of you chatted for several minutes. There was some physical interaction which I am satisfied was good-natured. A few minutes later, there was some further interaction between you which Mr Davis observed, seeing nothing of concern. At around 10:35 that morning, you and Harvey separately entered the same form room. There is no evidence to suggest that there was any particular issue between you at that time. During the morning break which followed, the CCTV footage shows you chatting to each other in the corridor and there was some pushing. Another pupil who was present, and friendly with both of you, later described that behaviour as 'banter' and 'joking around'.

11. At 11:10, you and Harvey were due to attend the same Science class. You each arrived late, Harvey having arrived three minutes before you did. At or about the time of your arrival, Harvey asked the teacher for time out. The evidence is that you squared up to each other in the classroom. One of you — it is not clear which one — said something along the lines of, *'Let's take this outside.'* It would seem that further words were exchanged between you, and the teacher physically intervened. Harvey then left the classroom and went to see the Assistant Head of Year 10, Ms Staniforth. On the way, a teacher overheard him telling another pupil that something was about to happen. Harvey told Ms Staniforth that he was upset that you had rubbed your fists up and down his chest. He asked if he could go, and he did go, to the school isolation room, known as the Damascus Room. Harvey told Ms Kidder, the teacher who supervised that room, that you had pretended to take something out of your trousers, later telling another pupil that you had been acting as though you had had a knife. On your behalf, Mr Hussain KC suggested that it was at least as likely that any such action by you was a form of pretence, to ward off any prospective attack upon you. Having regard to the fact that you had brought a knife into school that morning, I am satisfied that that theory should be rejected.

12. At 11:52, whilst Harvey was in the Damascus Room, you left the Science classroom. Ms Staniforth then asked you about the incident with Harvey. You simply shrugged. She told you to go to lunch and to avoid him. Ms Staniforth spoke to Harvey again, by telephone, at 12:05, when he was still in the Damascus Room. He appeared to her to be in good spirits.

13. At 12:10, the lunch break began. You made your way to the dining area which ran alongside the central courtyard. At around the same time, Harvey was making his way along the external footpath from the Damacus Room to that courtyard. In the dining area, you spoke to another boy who later described the conversation which he had had with you at that time. He said that you had both been talking about Harvey, because you had been mad at him, and that you had then suddenly started to talk about a knife. His evidence was that he had told you to give the knife to him before you did something stupid, but that you had not listened to him.

14. Together with that friend, you walked from the dining area out into the courtyard. I cannot be sure that you had seen and made a beeline for Harvey, bearing in mind the number of people present in both the dining area and the courtyard at that time. Once in the courtyard, however, you saw Harvey walking towards you. The CCTV footage records your interaction with him. His back was to the camera. You were facing it. It appears that Harvey placed his hand on your right arm and that he said something to you. On the evidence of another pupil, which I accept, a few minutes earlier Harvey had informed him that, if you were to try anything, he (Harvey) would *'smash* [you] *all over'*.

15. You took the knife which you had brought to school that day out of your left pocket, passed it to your right hand, and stabbed Harvey in the chest, twice. At trial, Dr Lumb, the pathologist, explained that the force which you had used had been severe, as indicated by the fact that your knife had cut through the full thickness of one of Harvey's ribs. As Harvey backed away, you advanced towards him, across the courtyard, before returning to your original position, gesturing at him and appearing to shout something. Harvey ran towards you and you were seen to have advanced

again, dancing on your feet and waving the knife. Harvey again backed away. Forty-nine seconds after you had stabbed him, he collapsed on the ground.

16. Meanwhile, still holding the knife, you went back into the dining area, causing other pupils to run in fear and panic. You were approached by two members of staff who told you to put the knife down, but you did not do so. Having been alerted to the incident by a group of older boys, Mr Davis ran to the scene, passing Harvey in the courtyard, who, by then, was being treated by other members of staff. When he reached the dining area, he encountered you, still holding the knife, and saying, *'You know I can't control it.'* In an act of considerable bravery, Mr Davis held out his hand and took the knife from you. At the same time, the Head Teacher, Mr Sean Pender, placed his arm around your shoulder and took you to his office. Whilst awaiting the arrival of the Police, you told him, *'I'm not right in the head. My mum doesn't look after me right. I've stabbed him'*, saying that you had stabbed Harvey once, or twice. You also told Mr Pender that you had argued with Harvey during the lesson before the lunch break, and that he had grabbed you whilst laughing at you. You said that you had been carrying a knife for protection, and because of the lockdown incident, and that you had been followed over the weekend and were scared of being jumped outside school. You also told him that you had been threatened by an associate of Boy X.

17. When paramedics arrived — less than ten minutes after you had stabbed him — Harvey was not breathing and had no pulse. A large volume of blood was found in his chest. Notwithstanding the valiant efforts of the paramedics and air ambulance crew over the next hour, it was not possible to save his life.

18. By the time of the tragic events which I have described, you had had a longstanding interest in weapons. Found on your telephone by the Police were photographs of you posing with a variety of them, including other hunting-style knives; a machete; and a hammer, the earliest of which dating back to April 2024. Your Internet search history revealed that, since at least September 2024, you had been using search terms such as 'zombie killer knife'; 'dagger'; 'pocket-knife'; and 'machete'. In December 2024, your mother had contacted the school, having found an axe in your bag. When a police

officer visited you at home, on 27 December, you told him, untruthfully, that you knew nothing about it. He advised you about the dangers of carrying weapons, advice which you ignored. Prior to 3 February 2025, there had been at least one other occasion on which you had been in possession of a weapon — a knife on school premises, captured in a video-clip and in photographs. Notwithstanding all of this, throughout your trial you sought to minimise the extent of your interest and gave explanations for the way in which photographs of weapons had come to be on your phone which were, put simply, not believable. Over the period spanning November 2024 and January 2025, there had been three separate incidents in which you had become angry and aggressive towards a person and/or property at school, including on the day of lockdown. Other records indicate your longstanding inability to manage your anger.

Sentence

19. I am now going to explain the sentences which you will receive for your crimes. In doing so, I have to set out the information and material which I have considered and the legal principles which I must apply. I shall try to make that explanation as straightforward as I can. Shortly after this hearing, you will have the opportunity to speak to your barristers, who will help you to understand anything about which you are unclear. You will also be able to read my sentencing remarks in your own time.

20. I have given very careful consideration to the pre-sentence report which has been prepared by the Youth Justice Team; to the separate statement which that team has provided; to the helpful and detailed written notes on sentence and oral submissions received from the Prosecution and the Defence; and to the material to which they have referred.

Murder

21. The sentence for murder is fixed by law. The Law treats children and young people differently from adults. You were under the age of 18 at the time of your offending. Under section 259 of the Sentencing Act 2020 (to which I shall refer as 'the 2020 Act'), I must sentence you to what is known as 'detention during His Majesty's pleasure'.

That means a life sentence, in a secure place, imposed on a person who commits the offence of murder when himself a child. Section 322 of the 2020 Act requires me to decide the minimum term which you must spend in detention before you can be considered by the Parole Board for release on licence. It is the Parole Board which decides whether a person who is in custody is safe to be released.

22. It is important that you and the public understand that a minimum term means just that. It is the shortest period which you must spend in custody before you can be considered for release. But there is no guarantee that you will in fact be released at the end of that period, or at any later time. It is only if and when the Parole Board decides that you are fit to be released, that you will be released, and you will then remain subject to licence for the rest of your life. A licence requires you to comply with certain conditions, or rules. If you offend again, or fail to comply in any other way with the conditions or rules of your licence, you may be re-called to continue your life sentence. It is in that way that a life sentence protects the public for the future.

23. In order to decide the appropriate minimum term, I must take into account the seriousness of your offence and the period which you have already spent on remand in custody. When considering the seriousness of your offence, I must have regard to the general principles set out in Schedule 21 to the 2020 Act, and to any Sentencing Council guidelines which are relevant to your case and are not incompatible with those principles. In this case, I must have regard to the Sentencing Council's guideline on Sentencing Children and Young People, and, in particular, to sections 1 and 4 of that guideline. I must also bear in mind the factors to be considered when assessing the culpability of a young offender (that is the responsibility which he bears for his offence), as set out in paragraph 17 of section 14 of the Judicial College publication entitled '*Child Defendants in the Crown Court'*, published in June 2025.

24. You accept that you took the knife into school and intended to have it available to use as a weapon (albeit, you said, for protection, having experienced earlier threats and acts of violence). You then used that knife to commit Harvey's murder. That means that paragraph 5A of Schedule 21 to the 2020 Act applies in this case. That paragraph

sets out the appropriate starting point for the minimum term for a person aged 15, which, as Counsel agree, is 17 years.

25. Deciding the appropriate starting point is the beginning of the process. That starting point is not to be applied in a rigid way, without thought; it is to be applied flexibly, in order to achieve a just result in the particular case. Having identified it, I must consider whether it is appropriate to adjust it — upwards or downwards. I must take account of all relevant aggravating and mitigating factors (meaning all those things which make your offending worse, and all those things which count in your favour) in order to reach a sentence which is appropriate in all the circumstances of this case. That sentence will impose the shortest possible minimum term which reflects the seriousness of your offence. When assessing your culpability, I must reflect on, and make all appropriate allowances for, your developmental age (which may be the same as, or higher or lower than, your actual age) and the level of your maturity. Those principles have been summarised in a number of cases, most recently in a case known as *R v BGI and CMB* [2024] EWCA Crim 1591, and I shall now explain how they apply to you, on the facts of this case.

26. A non-exhaustive list of aggravating and mitigating factors is set out at paragraphs 9 and 10 of Schedule 21 to the 2020 Act. I shall take account of all relevant factors, so far as I have not already done so when determining the correct starting point.

27. I first set out all of the aggravating factors in your case. I do not consider that your offence involved a significant degree of planning or premeditation. The Prosecution does not suggest that you came to school that morning intending to kill, or cause serious injury to, Harvey, but that is not to say that you acted on the spur of the moment when you were in the courtyard. On the evidence given by a number of witnesses, which I have already summarised, I am sure that, by the time of the Science lesson on 3 February, you had decided that, should the need (as you saw it) arise, you would use your knife on Harvey — a knife which, in your words, you had bought because it was ‘scary’. Your history of carrying weapons, including on school grounds;

the fact that your offence took place on school premises; and the fact that numerous pupils and teachers were present at the time, are all aggravating factors in this case.

28. Turning to mitigating factors, the Prosecution case is not that you intended to kill Harvey, but, it says, the severe force which you used (as explained by Dr Lumb), and the fact that you stabbed him twice, in his chest, indicates the high degree of bodily harm which you intended to cause him. Having regard to all of that evidence, and to the CCTV footage, I am sure that that is the correct analysis. Whilst your premeditation was not longstanding, it cannot be said that it was lacking altogether. Having come to school with a knife, your behaviour and comments to others, from the time of your Science class onwards, indicate some premeditation at that point. Having considered that evidence and the CCTV footage with care, in the context of your earlier acts of aggression and the available psychiatric evidence, I am also sure that you did not act to any extent in self-defence, or in fear of violence. Accepting that he might have made some provocative comment towards you, or behaved in a hostile way, it was not, I am satisfied, at a level which indicated to you that Harvey posed any real threat at that time, or which provides any mitigation for what followed. I am also satisfied that, by the point at which you came to stab him, you were the aggressor and that you acted in hurt and anger at what you considered to be his betrayal of your friendship.

29. I bear in mind your young age at the time of your offence, already reflected in the starting point which I have selected. I must also take account of everything which is known about your mental and emotional development which might have lowered your culpability. The psychiatric evidence received at trial referred to evidence of physical and emotional abuse and of neglect in your home life, including a lack of food, and, in the psychiatrists' words, excessive physical punishment. Both psychiatrists considered there to be a picture of oppositional behaviour and defiance (more obvious in school), and that, if you had had a typical level of parenting, with appropriate boundaries and discipline, you would have had better emotional regulation; been less likely to have had attachment difficulties; and had improved emotional resilience and self-esteem. The incidents of aggression in the weeks and months prior to your offending of which

the jury also heard evidence were said to be examples of your difficulties in controlling your emotions, including your anger.

30. The Consultant Clinical Psychologists agreed that your intellectual abilities fell within the very low average range, with particular weaknesses in understanding language and the speed at which you process it. That is thought likely to have resulted from negative early experiences. Nevertheless, Dr Forster's view was that you did not have any communication issues. He noted that, whilst your verbal comprehension and processing speeds were outside normal limits, that was not to an extent which would significantly impair your ability to communicate or comprehend under normal conditions, though, in high pressure situations, your ability to understand and communicate might be more limited.

31. I have also borne in mind the report and observations of the intermediary who helped you throughout your trial, and does so again today. Having watched you give evidence over a lengthy period at trial and acknowledging that you had the benefit of her assistance, I do not consider that your ability to communicate or understand is reduced to any significant extent. I have had regard to your very difficult family circumstances and upbringing; to your kidney condition and its late diagnosis, the way in which it is managed, and the bullying which you have encountered as a result; and to the separate racist bullying which you have endured.

32. In assessing your culpability, I have taken account of all of those matters and of the way in which you came across at trial. I acknowledge the inherent vulnerability of a person of your age. I acknowledge that adverse childhood experiences and educational difficulties or disruption can affect, negatively, the development of adult thought processes. As for the offence itself, the incident was short-lived and, until a relatively short time beforehand, unplanned. Nevertheless, you stabbed Harvey forcefully, twice in his heart. You were, at that time, aware of, and had been recently advised about, the dangers of carrying a knife. I am satisfied that you understood them. Taking full account of everything which I have observed and read, I am also

satisfied that your emotional maturity and development at the time of your offence were those of a typical boy of 14, that is of someone below your actual age.

33. In addition to your developmental age and maturity, I bear in mind the evidence of a degree of provocation by Harvey, in the context of your knowledge and experience of earlier violent conduct and threats made by certain of his friends; the absence of any prior convictions; the informal role as a carer for your younger siblings, one of whom particularly vulnerable, which you have undertaken from a young age, in the context of your mother's poor mental health and your father's frequent absence from the home; and a degree of remorse. I also bear in mind the mature and positive approach which you have adopted, whilst on remand. The Youth Justice Team reports that you are known as being 'well-mannered and well-liked'. You have been commended for your good behaviour and twice awarded the title 'Unit Champion'. You enjoy enhanced Incentives and Earned Privileges status, having received 52 positive comments for your engagement; your encouragement of peers to follow instruction; your assistance to staff; and your mature attitude to conflict. You are working in a trusted position which is said to highlight your character and proactive approach, and have indicated a desire to work towards gaining GCSEs, and, ultimately, a professional qualification. I commend you for all of that and I hope that you will continue to build on the efforts which you have clearly been making towards rehabilitation.

34. Taking account of all of the aggravating and mitigating factors to which I have referred, and the need to impose the shortest minimum term which is consistent with your welfare and necessary rehabilitation, I consider that the appropriate minimum term in your case is one of 16 years, from which the time which you have already spent on remand will be deducted, as I shall explain shortly.

Having an article with a blade on school premises

35. Your offence of murder was committed with the knife to the possession of which, on school premises, you pleaded guilty. That latter offence formed part of the same sequence of events. In those circumstances, and having regard to the sentence which

I have passed for murder and to your offending as a whole, I consider that it would not be just or proportionate to impose any separate penalty for the lesser offence and I do not do so. That means that your conviction for that offence will not extend the minimum term which I have imposed for murder.

Parenting order

36. For an offender who was 15 at the time of his conviction, section 366 of the 2020 Act requires the Court to make a parenting order in respect of that offender's parent or guardian, if it is satisfied that the order would be desirable in the interests of preventing the offender from committing any further offence. No such order is recommended by the Youth Justice Team, and, having regard to the length of the minimum term which I have imposed for murder and your family circumstances, I am not satisfied that such an order is desirable in the interests of preventing your commission of any further offence.

Stand up, please, Umar.

37. I shall now summarise the sentence which you will receive and what it means for you.

38. For the murder of Harvey Willgoose, I pass the only sentence which the Law allows me to pass for someone of your age — that is detention during His Majesty's pleasure. You will remain in secure custody until the Parole Board decides that you are suitable to be considered for release. The shortest period of time during which you must remain in custody is 16 years, less the number of days which you have spent on remand. I have been told that that period is agreed to be 259 days. **Therefore, the minimum term which I impose in your case is 15 years and 106 days.**

39. I remind you that there is no guarantee that you will in fact be released at the end of that period, or at any later time, and that, if and when you are released, you will remain subject to licence for the rest of your life, and may be recalled to continue your life sentence if you re-offend or fail to comply in any other way with the conditions of your licence.

Manslaughter

40. As you have been convicted by a jury of the offence of murder, no sentence will be passed on the lesser offence of manslaughter, to which you pleaded guilty at an earlier stage. That offence will lie on the file, meaning that it cannot be re-opened without the permission of this court, or of the Court of Appeal.

Possession of a knife on school premises

41. For your possession of a knife on school premises, you will receive no separate penalty.

Ancillary orders

42. There are two related orders to be made:

    a. A victim surcharge will be imposed, in the sum of £41.00, and a collection order made. That surcharge is fixed by law, takes account of your age at the time of your offence, and is used to fund organisations which support victims and witnesses.

    b. I order the forfeiture and destruction of the knife.

Your legal team will come to see you before you begin your sentence. Please go with the dock officer, Umar.

22 October 2025