



IN THE CROWN COURT AT BIRMINGHAM

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SENTENCING REMARKS

Mrs Justice Lambert DBE

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1. You are now aged 15 years old. In October 2025, when you were 14, you were tried for two offences. The jury found you not guilty of the attempted murder of another schoolgirl but guilty of the alternative offence of her unlawful wounding with the intention of causing her really serious harm. The purpose of today's hearing is for me to sentence you for that offence.

The Facts

2. I start by setting out the facts. On 18 March 2025, when you were aged 13, you took a knife to school. The knife had a blade of around 3 cms and the end was triangular with a very sharp point. You had found the knife at home where it was used for opening cardboard boxes. You found out where the other schoolgirl, who was also aged 13, was having lessons and then waited for her, following her to the reception area of the school. Closed circuit TV footage of the area shows you taking the knife from your pocket and then trying to strike the girl's neck on a number of occasions.

The attack lasted around half a minute. The girl told the jury that, as you were attacking her, you were shouting “die, die.” One of your friends tried unsuccessfully to pull you away and the girl kicked out in self-defence. Eventually a friend managed to get between you both and keep you apart. A teacher then came and took you away to another room. Later that day, when you were asked why you had brought the knife into school, you said that it was because you had wanted to kill the girl. After the attack you were caught on CCTV footage quickly slipping the knife into a waste bin in one of the corridors, obviously trying to hide the knife from the teachers and the police.

3. After the attack, the police took your mobile phone for examination. The other schoolgirl’s number was stored on your phone under the label “fat ugly hippo.” There were various chats and social media posts in which you referred to her. You expressed your hatred for her and how you wanted to get a knife to cut her neck. On one occasion you said that you were going to go for the neck five times. When one of your group asked you what she had done to you, you said that it was because she was alive. On 15 March, you messaged friends about getting a knife, telling them that it needed to be sharp. You told one of them that you were going to use it on Tuesday (which was the day of the attack). A diary was found in your bedroom. It contained disturbing images and comments about your family, in particular your father, who you said you wanted to kill. Your diary also included a section written after your attack in which you said that the blade had not been sharp enough and that the girl was still alive sadly. You wrote that all that you wanted was to get your phone back.
4. Fortunately, the physical injuries which the schoolgirl sustained were very minor. She suffered a cut behind her ear and scratches to her face. She has not provided an up to date personal statement for the court, although this was requested. This means that I do not have any evidence of her having suffered any enduring or significant psychological injury as a result of the attack, however obviously frightening and upsetting it must have been for her.
5. You were 13 years old when you committed this offence. You were 14 when you were convicted and you are now 15 years old. Following the offence you were remanded by the Court to Clayfields Secure Unit in Nottingham. You have been there for a total

of 405 days. This was in two blocks. Having been released on bail to local authority accommodation on 24 July 2025 you were involved in an incident involving another child and as a result you were remanded back to Clayfields on 4 September 2025. You were charged with a criminal offence arising from that incident but the charges were not proceeded with.

Reports

6. A number of expert reports have been provided. I have read three reports from Dr Nina Champaneri a consultant child and adolescent psychiatrist. Her first report is dated 10 September 2025. She prepared the report having spoken to your parents and to you. She sets out your family history and explains why it was necessary for social care to become involved with your family. Your mother told her, as she told the Court during your trial, that you had appeared to be normal and healthy until year 8. In year 8 you started to refuse to go to school. You told your mother that you were being bullied and that children at school were calling you names. Dr Champaneri also spoke with the social care team at Clayfields. Although the main focus of that report was upon whether you were able to give instructions to your lawyers and understand the court procedures she recorded that members of the social care team believed that you were showing signs of autism. Dr Champaneri recommended that there be a formal assessment of you.
7. This formal assessment took place on 7 October 2025 and led to you being diagnosed with an Autism Spectrum Disorder (“ASD”). This diagnosis was made on the basis of an assessment of your behaviour, your communication and your relationships with others. Your condition made it difficult for you to concentrate for long periods and various measures had to be put in place to make your trial last October easier for you. However, Dr Champaneri does not suggest that your offending was in any way related to your autism or that your responsibility for your attack on the schoolgirl is reduced because of your autism. Ms Scott Jones on your behalf has also confirmed that this is the position.
8. A third report from Dr Champaneri was sent to me on 5 June, last Friday. In that report she focusses upon the future and explains that it will be important for the

Community Child and Adolescent Mental Health Forensic Service to be involved in your care when you leave Clayfields.

9. I have read the pre-sentence report dated 11 May 2026 from Sharleen Ecclestone. Ms Ecclestone has attended court today and has helped me by answering a number of questions about you, your progress whilst in Clayfields and future plans. Ms Ecclestone makes the following observations:
 - a. in your discussions with her, you presented as “forward thinking.” You did not express remorse for what you had done but you said that you wanted to move on from what had happened and to focus upon more positive choices. You showed genuine self-reflection, appearing to recognise the importance of avoiding situations that might place you at risk. You said that you wanted to make better choices for the future and expressed no ongoing negative feelings towards the schoolgirl. Ms Ecclestone was satisfied that you had made sufficient progress in custody such that you are now better equipped to cope with adversity without adopting similar aggressive and violent behaviour.
 - b. She noted that you had been assessed at Clayfields as being a high risk of serious harm. There had been further incidents at Clayfields when you had used violence and aggression towards others and there had been some challenging interactions with both staff and other children. Ms. Ecclestone noted that these incidents show that you have used violence when unable to control your anger and regulate your emotions during arguments. However Ms Ecclestone reported that you had made considerable progress whilst at Clayfields and there had been a marked reduction in concerning behaviour. Staff have observed you to have developed a much better understanding of your diagnosis of ASD and you have been able to implement strategies during situations which may have otherwise escalated to conflict in the past.
 - c. She remarks that there is a high likelihood of you reoffending unless you are able to demonstrate a sustained improvement in managing your emotions during disagreements. In the past there have been both premediated and impulsive acts of violence. She says that whilst there has been considerable improvement you have not yet been tested in the community.

Approach to Sentencing

10. The Sentencing Council Guidelines for Sentencing Children and Young People state that the principal aim of the youth justice system is to prevent offending by children and young people and to promote the welfare of the child or young person. However, the seriousness of the offence is the starting point for sentencing. The court's approach must be individualistic and focussed upon you and upon rehabilitation where possible. The court must consider the effect of sentencing on you and take into account any underlying factors contributing to your offending behaviour. A custodial sentence should be a measure of last resort and custody or detention should only be ordered if the offence is so serious that no other sanction is appropriate.

11. I start therefore by making an assessment of the seriousness of this offence. I must assess your culpability (or blameworthiness) and the harm which was caused, intended to be caused or could foreseeably have been caused. I make it clear now that I consider that your offending was very serious. This attack was not spur of the moment. It is clear from your chats on social media that you had thought about harming the schoolgirl for some days before your attack. Before the attack you had messaged a friend about getting a knife. In another message you sent an image of a folding knife and told your friend to get you one like that. You refer to your intention to go for the neck, to wanting to find out where the schoolgirl was going to be for the first lesson and you talked about your deep hatred towards her. Although you asked your friend to get a knife for you, they did not do so. Instead you took a box cutter (similar to a Stanley knife) from home and took it to school with you and used it to attack the schoolgirl. Other children were present or close by. After the attack, when you had been caught and were being escorted down the school corridor, you attempted to hide the knife by putting it into a waste bin. The jury found you not guilty of attempted murder and I accept that your references to wishing to kill your victim before, during and after the attack were bravado. But you were found guilty of intending to cause her really serious injury and having viewed the CCTV, she was fortunate not to have been badly hurt. You tried to stab her neck with the knife on several occasions and you had to be pulled apart. All of these features increase the serious nature of what you did.

12. In considering the seriousness of your offence I take into account the diagnosis of ASD which has recently been made. Although the diagnosis is recent, you had been showing the signs of the condition well before then and well before this offence. However, although the diagnosis is important, particularly as it affects your future, there has been no suggestion by Dr Champaneri that it is relevant to your decision to try to harm the schoolgirl and no suggestion that it reduces your blameworthiness for this offence. Although I know that you have reported to many people that you were bullied and that you had been called names by the schoolgirl, I do not find that this in any way reduces your blameworthiness for this offence.

Sentence

13. I turn now to consider the appropriate sentence which I must impose for this offence. You were 14 at the date of conviction and 13 at the date of the offence. You are not a persistent offender. This was the first time that you had been involved in criminal activity. This affects the range of options available to the Court today.
14. Ms Ecclestone recommends that I impose a Youth Rehabilitation Order or a (“YRO”). Because you are not a persistent offender I am not able to impose a YRO with intense supervision or surveillance or fostering. If a YRO were made by me you would return home to live with your family and be subject to a supervision requirement. The length of that requirement would be a matter for me but a period of 18 months is recommended. It is proposed that you engage in sessions addressing your ability to recognise and manage risky situations and to consider the consequences of offending. You would be referred to the Girls’ Empowerment Team for mentoring support which would address your individual vulnerabilities and needs and focus on building self-esteem, resilience and identity. You would be required to undertake a form of conflict resolution intervention to explore triggers to your anger and how to navigate safely conflict with others. It is proposed that there should be an activity requirement over 15 days (30 hours) by way of reparation; you should undergo a weapons awareness programme and a victim awareness programme and a prohibited activity requirement.
15. I have no doubt that such a structured programme of intervention would be very helpful for you. I take fully into account that you appear to have made real progress

during your time in Clayfields, in particular since your diagnosis of ASD. Ms Ecclestone has told me this morning that you are starting to learn to recognise situations in which you may react badly and you now seek help to avoid those situations or to remove yourself when they arise. Your progress and your good behaviour is very encouraging.

16. I take into account the principal aim of youth justice which is to prevent offending and promote the welfare of the child or young person. But the Guidelines state that my starting point must be the seriousness of your offence. I therefore stand back and ask myself whether a YRO is an appropriate sanction or whether your offence is so serious that only a period of detention (for a “grave” crime under s. 250 Sentencing Act 2020) should be imposed. Having done so I am sure that it is necessary for me to impose a term of detention in respect of this offence. Taking a knife on to school premises, which should be a place of safety, and using it in the presence of other children with the intention of causing really serious injury to another schoolgirl is very serious indeed. Only a term of detention is appropriate. I take into account that such a sentence is one of last resort but I am satisfied that the offence is so serious that no other sanction is appropriate.
17. There is no specific child sentencing guideline for the offence of unlawful wounding with intent. I therefore turn to the relevant adult sentencing guideline. Ms Scott Jones agrees that your offence falls into culpability A. It falls into that category for a number of reasons: because you used a dangerous weapon; because your victim was vulnerable; because of the persistent nature of the attack and because you had obviously thought about what you were going to do and planned it. So far as harm is concerned, I note from the photographs that the schoolgirl’s injuries were slight and there is no evidence before me that she suffered any enduring significant psychological harm. The harm therefore falls into category 3.
18. Using the guidelines, the starting point for a period of custody for an adult would be 5 years with a range of 4 to 7 years. In your case, using the adult guidelines, there are factors which would increase the sentence significantly from the starting point of 5 years. Many high culpability factors were present. This attack took place at school where children expect to be safe and where parents expect their children to be safe.

You tried to hide the weapon after you had been caught. In my judgement, using the adult guidelines, the appropriate sentence for this offence would fall at, or just above, the very top of the range for an offence falling into category A3.

19. I must also take into account mitigating factors which include that you have not been convicted of any other criminal offences. I also take into account your personal mitigation including your ASD. I have read the pre-sentence report and understand that your family background has not been easy (although I know that you have a sensible and supportive sister). These matters together serve to reduce the sentence, but only relatively modestly. The child guideline requires that I take into account your age and your maturity. I am reminded that the emotional and developmental age and maturity of a child is of at least equal importance to chronological age. I take this fully into account and, consistent with the child guideline, I make a very significant downward adjustment to reflect your age and maturity.
20. You will serve 40% of the term of detention which I impose before you are released on licence. Ms Ecclestone has given evidence today about the various conditions which might be imposed during your licence period. She informs me that all of the various conditions which would have formed part of the proposed YRO would apply during the course of the licence period, save for the activity requirement which would be voluntary. If the licence conditions which are imposed are not met then you may be returned to Clayfields. Ms Ecclestone further informs me that the referral to Youth First which was recommended by Dr Champaneri will be made; there has been a referral to the relevant education team in preparation of your returning to a school in the Birmingham area and the family will be supported by the Youth Justice Team and other agencies who will meet together and with the family on a regular basis.
21. In respect of the offence of having an offensive weapon on school premises to which you pleaded guilty on 17 April 2025, there are child specific sentencing guidelines. However, this offence adds nothing to the overall picture which I am reflecting in my sentence today. Nor would I be able lawfully to impose a period of detention in respect of this offence. I impose no separate penalty.

Ancillary Orders

22. I make a deprivation order in respect of the knife (exhibit RD01).
23. I also make a restraining order in the terms proposed by the Crown.
24. The victim surcharge applies.

For the offence of wounding with intent, the sentence I impose is one of 40 months' detention. You will serve 40% of the term before you are released on licence. The number of days (405) which you have already spent at Clayfields will be brought into account, that is, taken off the number days which you must remain there.

8 June 2026