

Search, Screening and Confiscation Policy

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Introduction

This policy outlines the procedures and powers related to the screening, searching, and confiscation of items in school to ensure a safe and supportive learning environment in line with the most recent Department for Education's statutory guidance on [Searching, Screening, and Confiscation \(2022\)](#)

The policy balances the rights of individual students with the need to maintain a secure school environment. The purpose of this policy is to provide clear guidance to school staff on how to effectively carry out searches while respecting students' rights and ensuring the safety of all. It also aims to inform parents and students about the procedures involved. It is also underpinned by a safeguarding-first approach. All decisions to screen, search or confiscate items are made in line with the school's duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children, in accordance with Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026. The school will ensure that all actions taken are lawful, necessary, proportionate, and conducted with respect for the dignity, privacy and rights of the individual.

Definitions

Prohibited Items: Items banned by school rules, including but not limited to weapons, alcohol, illegal drugs, stolen items, tobacco products, fireworks, and pornographic images.

Reasonable Grounds: Circumstances that provide a reasonable basis for suspicion, such as observed behaviour, reports from other students, or a positive drug test.

A full classification of prohibited items, including their categorisation and corresponding sanctions in line with the Student Behaviour Policy, is set out in Appendix 3.

Screening

Purpose

To ensure the safety and security of all students and staff.

Procedure

- All students may be required to undergo screening using metal detectors or other approved methods without consent.
- Screening must be conducted by an authorised staff member without physical contact.

Consent

Screening can be conducted without the consent of the student. Screening will be conducted in a consistent manner and in accordance with the Equality Act 2010.

Searching

Who Can Search

Searches can be conducted by the Headteacher, or any staff member authorised by the Headteacher.

When to Search

Searches can be conducted if there are reasonable grounds to suspect that a student possesses prohibited items.

Prohibited Items

Includes weapons, alcohol, illegal drugs, stolen items, tobacco products, fireworks, pornographic images, and any item that could be used to commit an offense or cause harm.

Consent

- **With Consent:** Staff can search students for any item banned by school rules with the student's consent. This consent does not need to be in writing; verbal agreement is sufficient.
- **Without Consent:** Searches can be conducted without the student's consent when reasonable grounds exist.

Extent of Search

Searches should be conducted respectfully, limiting the extent to outer clothing, pockets, bags, and lockers. Intimate searches are strictly prohibited.

Establishing Grounds for a Search

Staff must establish reasonable grounds for suspicion based on:

- Observations of behaviour
- Reports from other students or staff
- Specific intelligence, such as a positive drugs test
- Indicators of safeguarding risk, including exploitation, coercion or abuse.

Once grounds are established, approval must be sought from the Headteacher before proceeding.

Searching Procedures

Searching with Consent

1. Ensure a minimum of two authorised staff members are present during the search.
2. Inform the student of the reason for the search and what items are being sought.
3. Conduct the search in a private area, away from other students.
4. Search is to be carried out by a staff member of the same sex as the student, with a second staff member present as a witness.
5. Document the search, including the reason, items found, and witnesses present.
6. E-mail parents regarding the search that took place.

Searching without Consent

1. Seek permission from the Headteacher or an authorised senior staff member.

2. Ensure a minimum of two authorised staff members are present during the search.
3. Conduct the search in a private area, maintaining the dignity and privacy of the student.
4. Search is to be carried out by a staff member of the same sex as the student, with a second staff member present as a witness.
5. Record details of the search for accountability.
6. E-mail parents regarding the search that took place.

Searching a Room

- Students' rooms may be searched if there are reasonable grounds for suspicion.
 - This will be conducted discreetly with another staff member present.
- The school reserves the right to carry out proportionate and risk-led room searches, including random checks where necessary to maintain safety and safeguard students.
- Failure to comply with reasonable requests may result in disciplinary action.
- E-mail parents regarding the search that took place.

All searches must be considered within the broader safeguarding context. If a search raises concerns about a student's welfare, behaviour, or vulnerability, staff must immediately refer the matter to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) if not present. Searches may indicate underlying safeguarding issues, including exploitation, substance misuse, or mental health concerns.

Electronic Devices

- Staff authorised by the Headteacher can search electronic devices if there is a good reason to do so with a clear safeguarding rationale.
- Consult with the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) prior to examining data on a student's device.
- Filtering and Monitoring systems may be used and reviewed as part of the process
- If inappropriate material is found, staff will decide whether to delete, retain, or report it based on the nature of the material.
- Where material indicates a risk of harm, the device content must be retained and referred to the Designated Safeguarding Lead, and where appropriate, external agencies
- E-mail parents regarding the search that took place.

Searches involving electronic devices will be conducted in line with the DfE Mobile Phones in Schools Guidance [Mobile phones in schools - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/mobile-phones-in-schools) and the school's Online Safety Policy. Staff must consult the DSL before accessing or reviewing any digital content. Any material found that may indicate a safeguarding risk, such as bullying, grooming, or exposure to harmful content, must be reported and handled in accordance with safeguarding procedures.

Confiscation

Items Found

Any prohibited items (or items used for prohibited purposes) found during a search may be confiscated and handled according to school procedures, which may include returning the item to a parent, disposal, or handover to the police.

Electronic Devices

In line with Department for Education guidance, the lower school operates as a mobile phone-free environment during the school day. Students must not use mobile phones at any time during the school day, including lessons, transitions, breaktimes and lunchtime.

A differentiated approach is in place for Sixth Form students, recognising their age and increasing independence. Sixth Form students may use mobile phones in designated areas and at designated times, as set out in the Student Behaviour Policy and Mobile Phone Policy

Mobile phones may be confiscated as a disciplinary sanction where they are used or seen in breach of the school's mobile phone policy.

Recording and Reporting

- All searches and confiscations must be documented, including reasons for the search, outcomes, and actions taken.
- Parents will be informed of any search and its outcome, especially if prohibited items are found.
- Complaints about the search and confiscation process will be addressed through the school's standard complaints procedure.

After the Search

- Staff have the discretion to confiscate, retain, or dispose of a student's property as a disciplinary penalty.
- Items believed to be weapons must be reported to the police.
- Clear guidelines will be followed for the handling of any inappropriate material found on devices.
- Where a search identifies a safeguarding concern, this must result in an immediate disclosure to the Designated Safeguarding Lead in line with safeguarding procedures.
- E-mail parents regarding the search that took place.

Items Found as a Result of a Search

- Any item believed to be prohibited may be seized.
- Alcohol will be disposed of appropriately; controlled drugs must be delivered to the police unless there is a justified reason not to do so. Sealed in a secure container, details must be documented and handed over to the police or disposed of following legal guidance.

Use of Force

Reasonable force may be used by the person conducting the search only in exceptional circumstances and with the Headteacher's authorisation and in line with the Use of Reasonable Force Policy.

Reasonable force may be used where necessary to prevent harm, damage, or the concealment or disposal of prohibited items, in accordance with statutory guidance. Any use of force must be proportionate and recorded

Staff Training and Student Awareness

- Staff will receive training on the procedures for screening, searching, and confiscation, including identifying safeguarding concerns.
- Students will be informed about this policy through the student handbook and induction programme, with periodic reminders through assemblies and bulletins.

Safeguarding considerations

Searches may indicate underlying safeguarding concerns. Staff must remain vigilant to:

- Child-on-child abuse
- Sexual harassment or exploitation
- Substance misuse
- Mental health needs
- Coercion, grooming or criminal exploitation.

Any concern must be recorded and reported to the Designated Safeguarding Lead in line with school procedures.

Review and Monitoring

This policy will be reviewed annually to ensure compliance with current legislation. The senior leadership team will regularly monitor its implementation and effectiveness. This policy is designed to ensure that screening, searching, and confiscation practices are conducted fairly, respectfully, and in alignment with both legal requirements and school values. For more detailed information, reference can be made to the official guidance documents provided by the Department for Education

Associated Resources and Further Guidance

- [Searching, Screening and Confiscation Advice for School Staff](#)
- [Behaviour and Discipline in Schools – Guidance for Governing Bodies](#)
- [Mobile phones in schools - GOV.UK](#)
- [Keeping children safe in education 2025](#)

Appendices

Appendix 1: Search Procedure

Step-by-Step Procedure for Student Search

1. Preparation and Authorisation:

- Ensure there are clear grounds for suspicion.
- Conduct the search with an authorised staff member and a witness.

2. Grounds for Search:

- Establish reasonable grounds for suspicion.
- Inform the student of the reasons for the search.

3. Conducting the Search:

- Conduct the search in a private area.
- Limit the search to outer clothing, pockets, bags, and lockers.
- Maintain respect and dignity throughout the process.

4. During the Search:

- Keep the student informed.
- Ensure safety for all parties.
- Document the details of the search.

5. Confiscation:

- Confiscate any prohibited items found.
- Handle confiscated items according to policy.

6. After the Search:

- Inform parents of the search and outcome.
- Provide necessary support to the student.

[illegible]

Appendix 3 Prohibited Items Guidance

Any item can become a prohibited item if it is used in a way that threatens safety, wellbeing or school discipline.

This guidance also aligns to the Student Behaviour Policy and Student Behaviour Ladder.

Category	Examples	Staff Response	Sanction Guidance
*** High Risk	- Knives, blades, weapons (including tasers, pepper spray replicas or improvised weapons) - Illegal drugs (possession, use, supply, dealing) - Fireworks, explosives - Pornographic or indecent images (including digital) - Stolen items (especially high-value or organised theft) - Any item intended or used to: - Cause injury - Commit a criminal offence - Damage property	1. Inform SLT + DSL immediately 2. Confiscate immediately (if safe) 3. Isolate student if appropriate 4. Record incident 5. Consider police involvement	Likely Stage 5 (Expulsion) + DSL + Police Consideration: items that are illegal, highly dangerous, or pose immediate safeguarding risk. Consider safeguarding and contextual factors (exploitation, coercion)
** Harmful/Controlled substances	- Tobacco, cigarettes, vapes, e-cigarettes - Vaping/smoking paraphernalia - Misuse of prescription medication - Solvents or “legal highs” - Drug paraphernalia (no substances present) - Alcohol	1. Inform Deputy Head Pastoral/ SLT 2. Confiscate item 3. Assess student/undertake testing (are they	Stage 4 (Final Warning) → Stage 5 if escalated

	Aggravating Factors (move to Stage 5) • Supplying to others • Repeated offences • Significant intoxication • Coercion or safeguarding risk	under the influence?) 4. Record incident 5. Inform parents 6. DSL referral if safeguarding concerns	
*School-banned/situational items	Items that are not inherently illegal, but: • Are banned by school rules, or • Become dangerous or harmful through misuse Everyday items used inappropriately • Scissors, tools or equipment used to threaten • Sports equipment used aggressively • Improvised objects used to intimidate Fire / risk-related items • Lighters, matches • Aerosols used inappropriately • Candles Technology misuse	1. Confiscate where appropriate 2. Address behaviour (restorative conversation) 3. Record if repeated/serious 4. Escalate to Deputy Head Pastoral/SLT if needed	Stage 2–4 depending on use, intent, and impact Move up sanction level if: • Item is used to intimidate / harm • Behaviour is repeated • There is defiance or refusal to comply Significant disruption or distress caused

	• Phones used to film without consent • Sharing inappropriate (non-illegal) images • Bypassing school filters (VPN use) • Misuse of school IT systems School-rule banned items • Laser pens Disruption / harm to others • Items used in pranks causing distress • Offensive materials (non-criminal but harmful) Boarding-specific • Unauthorised electrical items • Devices breaching privacy in boarding • Items taken into another student's room		
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