

## Searching, Screening and Confiscation Policy

<b>Last reviewed</b>	June 2025
<b>Committee Responsible</b>	Student Behaviour & Safety Committee
<b>Designated member of staff</b>	Daisy Weston
<b>Date of next review:</b>	June 2026

### STATEMENT OF INTENT

Grey Court School appreciates that students have the right to expect a reasonable level of personal privacy and will do its utmost to ensure that, as far as possible, this right is respected. We aim to ensure that members of staff have the confidence to search and screen students, and to confiscate items as necessary, and that this is enacted in a calm, safe and supportive manner.

Nevertheless, the school also takes seriously its obligation under health and safety legislation for searching, screening and confiscation to be managed in a way which does not expose students or staff members to unnecessary risks.

This policy sets out the framework in which the school will meet this obligation by outlining the circumstances in which students can be screened and searched. The policy also outlines the legal powers to seize and confiscate items during a search.

### Legal framework

This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and statutory guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974
- Education Act 1996
- Education and Inspections Act 2006
- The Schools (Specification and Disposal of Articles) Regulations 2012
- European Convention on Human Rights
- DfE (2022) 'Searching, Screening and Confiscation'
- DfE (2013) 'Use of reasonable force'

- DfE (2022) 'Behaviour in Schools'
- DfE (2023) 'Keeping children safe in education 2023'

This policy operates in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Behaviour Policy
- Safeguarding Policy

## **Roles and Responsibilities**

The Governing Board will be responsible for:

- Ensuring this policy is implemented within the school and its effectiveness is monitored.

The Headteacher will be responsible for:

- Authorising members of staff to search students for prohibited items and items banned by the school, according to its policies.
- Ensuring the procedures in this policy are implemented consistently across the school.
- Overseeing the school's practice of searching to ensure that a culture of safe, proportionate and appropriate searching is established and maintained.
- Ensuring a sufficient number of staff are appropriately trained on how to lawfully and safely search a student, including managing students who are not cooperating with the search.
- Ensuring all staff understand their rights and the rights of any students being searched.
- Ensuring the DSL, Assistant Headteacher i/c of behaviour, OR appropriate SLT member is informed of any instances where a staff member had reasonable grounds to suspect that a student was in possession of a prohibited item.
- Advising staff on what to do if they believe a search is necessary but is not required urgently, e.g. keeping the student supervised and away from others.
- Determining whether searches for items banned by the school's policies should be recorded.
- Ensuring parents and students are informed about the use of screening software prior to their use, and the reasons why software needs to be used.
- Ensuring that prohibited items and items banned by the school are outlined in the relevant policies (behaviour policy) and are available for staff, parents and students.
- Reviewing this policy on an annual basis.

The DSL will be responsible for:

- Managing any safeguarding concerns that are raised by staff members who have conducted a search and by students subject to a search, if appropriate and needed.
- Making referrals, in line with the school's safeguarding procedures, where there is evidence from a search that a student is at risk of harm.
- Ensuring procedures are in place, and are being followed, for when a safeguarding incident arises as a result of a search.
- Considering the circumstances of any students who are at risk of harm as a result of the search to assess whether there is a wider safeguarding concern.

The Assistant Headteacher i/c of Behaviour will be responsible for:

- Ensuring procedures are in place for staff to alert them of instances when they had reasonable grounds to suspect a student was in possession of prohibited items and when a prohibited item has been found.
- Advising staff on what to do if they believe a search is necessary but is not required urgently, e.g. keeping the student supervised and away from others.
- Advising staff on any aftercare required by a staff as a result of a search.

Staff members will be responsible for:

- Acting in line with this policy when screening or searching a student or confiscating items.
- Ensuring that the culture of safe, proportionate and appropriate searching is maintained.
- Adhering to the relevant guidance and policies, and familiarising themselves with which items are prohibited and/or banned by the school.
- Ensuring they implement sanctions fairly, proportionately, and in line with the Behaviour Policy.
- Raising safeguarding concerns with the DSL (or the deputy DSL) as soon as reasonably practicable, if needed or appropriate.
- Maintaining their duty of care for any students subject to a search, and protecting their welfare at all times.

### **Authorising members of staff**

Only the Headteacher and authorised members of staff have the authority to search students without their consent. Staff members authorised by the headteacher with these powers are:

- The Senior Leadership Team
- The Pastoral Team

Only the above authorised staff have the authority to search staff. However, in exceptional circumstances, any staff member can conduct a search if the student/ staff member are in immediate danger, or there is an urgent concern.

### **List of prohibited and banned items**

The school has the statutory authority to search students for prohibited items or for any item the school suspects might be used to commit a crime, or to cause injury to themselves or others, or damage property. Prohibited items may include (but is not exhaustive of):

#### **Prohibited items include:**

- Knives or weapons
- Alcohol
- Illegal drugs
- Stolen items
- Vapes, tobacco and cigarette papers
- Dangerous items such as fireworks
- Pornographic images
- Any item that could be used to cause harm or damage.

#### **Banned items**

Banned items include:

- Legal highs
- Aerosol cans
- Paint thinners
- Non-prescribed hypodermic needles
- Any item/ substance which could be used to cause harm or damage.
- Students' mobile phones during the school day (8.30am-3pm) - please see behaviour policy for more information on mobile phone procedures.

### **Searching with consent**

Appropriate staff will have the authority to search students for any item, if the student consents. Formal written consent will not be required for this sort of search and informed verbal consent will suffice. All staff members will ensure that any student subject to a search with consent understands the reason for the search and how it will be conducted.

Searches with consent will be undertaken on the basis that a student is, or is suspected to be, in possession of a prohibited or banned item as identified in this policy and the Behaviour Policy.

Searches with consent will be implemented consistently, proportionately, fairly, and in line with this policy at all times.

The school will ensure that banned items are made clear in communications with parents.

If a member of staff suspects a student is in possession of a banned item, the student will be instructed to turn out their pockets and bag etc (including coats).

When exercising their authority to search with consent, staff members will assess and consider the age and needs of the student being searched. Where required, reasonable adjustments will be put in place where a student has additional needs or a disability.

### Searching without consent

The Headteacher and authorised staff have the statutory power to search students or their possessions, without consent, where they have reasonable grounds for suspecting that the student may be in possession of a prohibited or banned item (see above). The staff member will decide what constitutes reasonable grounds for suspicion on a case-by-case basis.

Authorised members of staff will assess whether a search without consent is needed urgently and consider the risk to staff and other students if a search is not conducted.

Before a search without consent is conducted, the authorised member of staff will explain to the student why they are being searched and how the search will take place. They will also provide the student an opportunity to ask any questions.

Where possible, the authorised member of staff will seek the cooperation of the student prior to the commencement of the search without consent. The student will be sanctioned in line with the Behaviour Policy if they refuse to cooperate.

If a student refuses to consent to a search, parents/ carers will be informed. The police may also be informed, based on a case by case basis.

### Privacy

Students will be searched by at least one staff member who is the same sex as them, wherever possible. All searches will be carried out by two members of staff, one of whom will be an SLT member.

A search will only be conducted by a person who is not the same sex as the student being searched, or without a witness, where:

- The staff member reasonably believes that there is a risk of serious harm if the search is not conducted immediately **and**;
- It is not reasonably practicable to summon another member of staff.

Under the exceptional circumstances outlined above, the member of staff conducting the search will consider that a student's expectation of privacy increases as they get older.

When a member of staff conducts a search without a witness, they will report the search immediately to another member of staff and ensure there is a record kept of the search. This should only happen in exceptional circumstances.

The school may consider the use of CCTV footage in order to decide whether to conduct the search for an item.

Authorised staff members will ensure that an appropriate location on the school premises is used for searching. Where possible, this location will be away from other students. Searches will only be undertaken off school premises where the authorised staff member has lawful control of the student, e.g. on a school trip, including trips overseas.

### **During the search**

Definitions:

- **“Outer clothing”** – clothing that is not worn next to the skin or immediately over a garment that is being worn as underwear, e.g. hats, shoes, gloves. Socks can be removed if necessary.
- **“Possessions”** – any goods over which the student has or appears to have control, including lockers and bags.

A student’s possessions, their locker or bag will only be searched in the presence of the student and the appropriate members of staff already outlined, when it is deemed necessary, i.e. in case of a prohibited or banned item, or where harm could potentially be caused..

Staff will always remain aware that the power to search without consent **only** enables a personal search involving the removal of outer clothing (including socks if necessary) and the searching of pockets, lockers, etc. Staff will never conduct an intimate search, and remain aware that only a person with more extensive powers, i.e. a police officer, can conduct an intimate search.

If a student does not consent to a search or withdraws their consent, then they will be subject to a search without consent.

### **Physical intervention**

Members of staff will only be permitted to use physical intervention when conducting a search for prohibited items, but will not use force to search for items banned only under school rules. This will only be used in exceptional circumstances.

Physical intervention will be used on a case-by-case basis only.

Searches that require physical intervention will be conducted in line with the Behaviour Policy.

## Strip searches

The definition of a “**strip search**” is a search that involves the removal of more than outer clothing (see definition of outer clothing).

Staff members will never conduct a strip search on a student – strip searches will only be conducted by police officers.

During a strip search, members of staff will maintain their duty of care to the student and will advocate for their wellbeing at all times.

Strip searches will wherever possible, be conducted off site and at a police station. If a strip search has to take place on the school site, this will only be in exceptional circumstances and will be conducted in a private area of the school, away from others.

Before requesting the strip search of a student by the police, staff members will balance the risk of negatively affecting the student’s physical and/or mental wellbeing against the risk of not recovering the suspected item.

Strip searches will only be considered where:

- It is absolutely necessary to undertake this type of search, **and**;
- Where other, less invasive approaches cannot be conducted or have already been exhausted, **and**;
- It is deemed necessary by a police officer to recover an item related to a criminal offence and they have reasonable grounds to suspect the student has concealed the item.

Whenever a strip search involves the exposure of intimate body parts, the school will ensure that at least two people are present, other than the student, where one of whom will be an appropriate adult. Where the student’s parent wishes to act as the appropriate adult, the school will facilitate this where possible. These circumstances may not apply if the strip search is urgent or there is a risk of serious harm to the student or others.

Unless in urgent or high-risk cases, strip searches that involve the exposure of intimate body parts will only take place without an appropriate adult where the student explicitly states, in the presence of the appropriate adult, that they do not want the appropriate adult to be present during the search. A record will be made of the student’s decision.

Records of all strip searches will be kept and monitored by the school. The Headteacher will be informed of any need to conduct a strip search of a student.

## After the search

Staff members will use their discretion to confiscate, retain and/or destroy any item found due to a search with the student’s consent, so long as it is reasonable in the circumstances.

Where any item is reasonably suspected to be an offensive weapon, it will be passed to the police.

Staff members will be legally protected from liability in any proceedings brought against them for any loss of, or damage to, any item they have confiscated, provided they acted lawfully.

### **Confiscation, retention and disposal of prohibited items**

Staff members carrying out a search will be permitted to seize any item they have reasonable grounds for suspecting is a prohibited or banned item or is evidence in relation to an offence.

When a staff member conducting a search finds:

- **Alcohol**, they will retain or dispose of the item as they see appropriate; the alcohol will not be returned to the student.
- **Controlled drugs**, they will deliver them to the police as soon as possible; however, they may also be disposed of if the staff member thinks there is a good reason to do so.
- **Other substances** which are not believed to be controlled drugs, will confiscate them if they believe them to be detrimental to behaviour, discipline and safety.
- **Stolen items**, they will deliver these to the police as soon as possible or return them to the owner if they think there is a good reason to do so.
- **Vapes, tobacco or cigarette papers**, they will retain or dispose of them; they will not be returned to the student.
- **Fireworks**, they will be retained or disposed of, but not returned to the student.
- A **pornographic image**, they will dispose of the image unless there are reasonable grounds to suspect that its possession constitutes a specified offence, i.e. the image is extreme or child pornography; in these cases, the staff member will deliver the image to the police as soon as possible. The DSL or DDSL will be consulted before any action is taken.
- An item that has been, or is likely to be, **used to commit an offence or to cause personal injury or damage to property**, they will deliver the item to the police, return the item to the owner if the school deem this appropriate, or retain or dispose of the item.
- **Weapons or items which are evidence of an offence**, they will pass the item to the police as soon as possible.
- **Mobile phones**, as these are a banned item, they will be confiscated in line with the behaviour policy, and the student will be sanctioned accordingly. This will vary depending on the manner of the transgression.

It is at the discretion of authorised staff to decide whether there is a 'good reason' not to deliver stolen items or controlled drugs to the police. In determining what a good reason is, the member of staff will take into account all relevant circumstances and use their professional judgement to determine whether they can safely dispose of the item.

Where the member of staff is unsure of the legal status of a substance and has reason to believe it may be a controlled drug, the item will be treated as such.

In relation to stolen items, the police will not be involved in dealing with low-value items, e.g. pencil cases; however, it may be appropriate for the school to contact the police if high-value items, e.g. laptops, or illegal items, e.g. fireworks, are involved.

### **Aftercare following a strip search**

Students subject to a strip search will be provided with appropriate support, regardless of whether a prohibited item is found. Safeguarding processes will be followed where necessary, giving attention to the student's wellbeing. The DSL will be involved in any safeguarding processes.

Students subject to a strip search will always be given the opportunity to ask questions about the search and express their views following it.

Staff will give particular consideration to the wellbeing and safeguarding of any students and/or groups of students who have been subject to a strip search with unusual frequency. Where required, preventative approaches will be put in place in order to avoid harm to the identified student, or group of students', wellbeing.

### **Recording a search**

All searches for prohibited or banned items and those conducted by police officers will be recorded via the school's safeguarding systems.

Records of searches for prohibited items, both by staff and by the police, will include:

- The date, time and location of the search.
- The name of the student subject to the search.
- The name of the individual who conducted the search.
- The name of any other adults or students present during the search.
- The item being searched for.
- The reason for the search.
- Whether the item was found.
- Any other items found.
- What follow-up actions were taken as a consequence of the search.

### **Informing parents or carers**

The student's parents or carers will be informed when a search of their child is conducted in order to recover prohibited or banned items.

Where a strip search is requested, the school will inform the student's parents or carers of the search before it is conducted, unless there is an immediate risk of harm. Where there is an immediate risk of harm, the student's parents or carers will be informed about the strip search as soon as possible. When searching for prohibited or banned items, the student's parents or carers will be told after the search has taken place. If a student refuses to consent for a search, parents' and carers will be informed as appropriate, in a timely manner.

Complaints about searching, screening or confiscation will be managed via the school's complaints procedure, in line with the Complaints Procedures Policy.

### **Screening**

Under the school's statutory power to create and apply rules on student behaviour and the duty to manage the safety of staff, students and visitors, the school can impose a requirement that students undergo screening.

Appropriate staff will have the authority to screen students. Grey Court School will use a 'wand' metal detector to facilitate any necessary screening, as part of the search procedure (see above).

The school also uses appropriate IT software to screen students' use of IT, for behaviour and safeguarding purposes.

### **Electronic devices**

If an electronic device that is prohibited by the school rules or that is reasonably suspected to have been, or is likely to be, used to commit an offence or cause personal injury or damage to property is found during a search, the staff member is permitted to examine any data or files on the device where there is good reason to do so.

Parental consent is not required in order to search a student's electronic device if it has been seized in a search without consent.

Staff will consider whether an appropriate safeguarding response is required if they reasonably believe that any images, data or files found on a student's electronic device is likely to put others at risk. The staff member will involve the DSL immediately where this is the case.

Staff members have the authority to delete data or files if they believe there is a good reason to do so, unless the device is suspected to be relevant to an offence, or contains a pornographic image of a child or an extreme pornographic image. In these cases, files and

data will not be deleted and the device will be given to the police, in consultation with the DSL.

It will be considered a good reason if the staff member reasonably suspects that the data or files on the device have been, or could be, used to cause harm, disrupt teaching or break the school rules.

Any electronic device that has been seized which is prohibited by the school rules, and there are reasonable grounds to suspect that it contains evidence relating to an offence, will be given to the police as soon as possible.

If a member of staff does not find any material they suspect is evidence in relation to an offence, and decides to not give the device to the police, they are permitted to decide whether it is appropriate to delete any files or data from the device or retain the device as evidence of a breach of school rules.

### **Indecent images of students**

Staff will be aware that creating, possessing, and distributing indecent imagery of children is a criminal offence, regardless of whether the imagery is created, possessed, and distributed by the individual depicted; however, staff will ensure that students are not unnecessarily criminalised.

Where a member of staff becomes aware that an electronic device they are searching involves indecent images of a child, they will refer this to the DSL as soon as possible and will:

- Refrain from viewing, copying, printing, sharing, storing or saving the imagery.
- Confiscate the device and ensure it is securely stored.
- Inform the DSL immediately if they accidentally view an indecent image and seek support.
- Explain to the student being searched that the incident will need to be reported.
- Not blame or shame anyone involved, and reassure the student being searched that they can receive support from the DSL.
- Report the incident to the DSL.

The DSL will attempt to understand what the image contains **without viewing it** and the context surrounding its creation and distribution. They will categorise the incident into one of two categories:

- **“Aggravated”** – incidents which involve additional or abusive elements beyond the creation and distribution of indecent images of children, including where there is an adult involved, where there is an intent to harm the child depicted, or where the images are used recklessly.

- **“Experimental”** – incidents involving the creation and distribution of indecent images of children where there is no adult involvement or apparent intent to cause harm or embarrassment to the child.

For there to be a good and clear reason to view indecent imagery, the DSL will need to be satisfied that this action is:

- The only way to make a decision about whether to involve other agencies because it is not possible to establish the facts, e.g. the contents of the imagery, from the student(s) involved.
- Necessary to report it to a website, app or suitable reporting agency to have the image taken down, or to support the student or their parent in making a report.
- Unavoidable because the student has presented the image directly to a staff member or the image has been found on a school device or your school’s network.

Where it is necessary to view the imagery, e.g. if this is the only way to make a decision about whether to inform other agencies, the DSL will:

- Never copy, print, share, store or save them as this is illegal – if this has already happened, they will contact the local police for advice and to explain the circumstances.
- Discuss the decision with the Headteacher or a member of the SLT.
- Make sure viewing is undertaken by them (or a deputy) or another member of the safeguarding team with delegated authority from the Headteacher or a member of the SLT.
- Make sure viewing takes place with another member of staff present in the room, ideally the headteacher or a member of the SLT. This staff member does not need to view the images.
- Wherever possible, make sure viewing takes place on the school premises, ideally in the Headteacher’s office or a member of the SLT’s office.
- Make sure, wherever possible, that they are viewed by a staff member of the same sex as the student in the images.
- Record how and why the decision was made to view the imagery in the safeguarding or child protection records, including who was present, why the imagery was viewed and any subsequent actions.

Where the incident is categorised as ‘aggravated’, the situation will be managed in line with the school’s Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy, and the police will be involved.

Where the incident is categorised as ‘experimental’, any students involved are supported to understand the implications of sharing indecent imagery and to move forward from the incident.

Where there is reason to believe that indecent imagery being circulated will cause harm to a student, the DSL escalates the incident to the appropriate children's social care services. Where indecent imagery of a student has been shared publicly, the DSL will work with the student to report the imagery to websites on which it has been shared and will reassure them of the support available.

### **Staff Conduct**

All staff members are expected to act in accordance with this policy. Any breach of this policy will be managed in line with the school's Disciplinary Policy and Procedure.

Staff members will consider the age, needs and wellbeing of students at all times during searching and screening procedures.

### **Monitoring and Review**

This policy will be reviewed on an annual basis by the Headteacher and appropriate governors.

Any changes to this policy will be communicated to all members of staff, students and their parents.