

Search Procedure Policy (including EYFS)

Reviewer: Lloyd Dannatt, August 2026

Approved by SMT: August 2026

Body searches, lockers, bags and room searches can be carried out by an authorised member of staff on grounds of 'reasonable suspicion' that a person has anything that has been or is likely to be used to commit an offence or breach the school rules as publicised, or cause injury or damage to the property of another person, or to the person being searched. In accordance with relevant education legislation and current Department for Education guidance, authorised staff may conduct searches where there are reasonable grounds for suspicion.

A search will normally only be authorised by a Deputy Head, a HoM may only authorise a search if a Deputy Head is not available.

This policy should be read alongside the latest Department for Education guidance on Searching, Screening and Confiscation, the College Behaviour Policy, Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, Use of Reasonable Force Policy and IT Policy (acceptable use).

Searches may be conducted for:

- knives/weapons
- alcohol
- illegal drugs
- stolen items
- tobacco/ electronic cigarettes / vapes
- fireworks
- pornographic, indecent or inappropriate images
- any article likely to be used to commit an offence
- any item likely to cause injury
- any item banned by the school's rules
- harmful substances
- items linked to safeguarding concerns

Searches should be carried out by a member of the same sex and in the presence of a witness of the same sex, though these guidelines may be set aside if the member of staff believes the risk of serious harm is imminent and the search is urgent and finding a same sex witness is not practicable.

Reasonable force may be used to search, but only for items listed above, not merely for things banned by the school e.g. chewing gum. Outer clothing (scarves, boots, coats) may be removed for a search.

Electronic devices may be examined and, where lawful, proportionate and appropriate, data may be deleted in accordance with Department for Education guidance, safeguarding requirements and data protection legislation. Anything related to an offence may be seized; alcohol may be disposed of. Any indecent images of children, or material which may constitute a criminal offence, must not be viewed further and must be referred immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead and, where appropriate, the police.

Where a search identifies safeguarding concerns, suspected criminal activity or indecent images, the Designated Safeguarding Lead will be informed immediately.

For children in the EYFS, any search will be proportionate, age-appropriate and undertaken with particular regard to the child's welfare, dignity and safeguarding needs. Parents will normally be informed as soon as reasonably practicable.

1. Power to Search

The government strongly advises schools not to search pupils when resistance is expected, but rather to call the police

When carrying out a search:

- During a search consideration will be given to any safeguarding concerns that become apparent.
- Prior to any search of a pupil's room or person, the pupil should be asked if they have in their possession anything which is not theirs or which they did not bring onto school premises. If so what is it, and where is it?
- Wherever reasonably practicable, the pupil should be present throughout when the room is searched, as should any person who shares that room with the pupil.
- During the search as little as possible should be said by those carrying out the search. There should be no attempt to make light-hearted remarks, threats or any references to the possible consequences of the search.
- If anything suspicious is found a detailed record of what is found and where in the room it is found should be made.
- A detailed note of the search should be kept from the start of the search. This should include times, persons present, anything said and by whom, and if for any reason the search has to be interrupted, the reason for interruption and the times of interruption and resumption. The scene should be preserved in the meantime.
- As detailed in the Drugs Policy, sniffer dogs are brought into the College periodically throughout the year, they are used to check spaces around the Campus and in Houses as well as to check pupils in these locations. The purpose of the sniffer dogs visiting periodically is to act as a visible deterrent. It is possible that the dog(s) may register a find when working. Any use of detection dogs will be undertaken by suitably qualified personnel and managed in a manner that is proportionate, appropriate and respectful of pupils' dignity.
- If anything is found that leads to suspicion of an illegal substance, or a sniffer dog registers a 'find' for drugs, then the pupil should be asked two questions only:
 - Is this yours?
 - What is it or do you know why the sniffer dog has reacted?
- The answers should be carefully noted and the pupil invited to initial the answers as being correct.
- On completion of the search, if anything further is to be done the pupil should be given the opportunity to telephone parents or guardians in private. The HoM will also contact parents to inform them of the search.
- The pupil's room should then be sealed and no one should enter it without the permission of the Deputy Head of the College or the Deputy Head Pastoral.
- Both members of the staff who have carried out the search should afterwards read the notes one or both of them have made and, if they agree that the notes are a correct record of the search, they should sign them as such. Any alterations or additions to the notes should be noted and signified as such.

- Records of all searches must be retained securely in accordance with safeguarding and data protection requirements and may be placed on the pupil's safeguarding or behaviour record where appropriate.

2. Other Matters

At any stage in any investigation those who receive information should note it together with dates and times.

Statements should be made as soon as possible thereafter so as to give the fullest information to the Deputy Head of College before he/she acts.

This Policy should be read in conjunction with the following policies:

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- Drugs Policy
- IT Policy (Acceptable Use section)
- Boarding Handbook
- Data Protection Policy