

The Friary School

SEARCH, SCREEN AND CONFISCATION POLICY



Introduction

The Friary School is committed to ensuring a safe learning environment for our students and staff. Ensuring school staff and students feel safe and secure is vital to establishing calm and supportive environments conducive to learning. Using searching, screening and confiscation powers appropriately is an important way to ensure student and staff welfare is protected and helps schools establish an environment where everyone is safe.

This policy complies with the Department for Education's (DfE's) advice on "[Searching, Screening and Confiscation](#)" published in July 2022. This policy should be read in conjunction with our School's Behaviour and Exclusion policies.

Powers of Search

The Headteacher can search a student and their possessions for any item with the student's consent. The consent of the student is not required to be written. It is enough for the teacher to ask the student to turn out his or her pockets or if the teacher can look in the student's bag or locker and for the student to agree. The power to search is extended to members of staff authorised to do so by the Headteacher, these are:

- The Senior Leadership Team
- Members of the Student Support Team
- Designated Safeguarding Leads and Deputy Safeguarding Leads

The Headteacher and any staff authorised by them have a statutory power to search students or their possessions without their consent where they have reasonable grounds for suspecting that the student has prohibited items.

The items that can be searched for under this power are:

- Knives or weapons
- Alcohol
- Illegal drugs
- Stolen items
- Tobacco and cigarette papers
- Fireworks
- Pornographic images
- Any item that a member of staff reasonable suspects has been or is likely to be used to commit an offence, or to cause personal injury to, or damage to the property of any person.

The Headteacher and staff authorised by them can also search for any item banned by the school rules and identified as an item which may be searched for without consent.

Such items include, amongst other items:

- Vapes or items associated with the use of vapes

- Mobile phones if used not in line with the school rules
- Laser pens
- Cigarette lighters and matches
- Items associated with alcohol or illegal drugs
- Items that have been taken without consent from within the school grounds, for example from a classroom or another part of the school

Staff can only undertake a search without consent if they have reasonable grounds for suspecting that a student may have in their possession a prohibited item or an item banned under the school rules.

How To Conduct Searches

Staff of the same sex as the student will carry out any search conducted without consent and there will be another member of staff present as a witness (preferably of the same sex as the student). However, staff can carry out a search of a student of the opposite sex and without a witness present where they reasonably believe that there is a risk that serious harm will be caused to a person if they do not conduct the search immediately and where it is not reasonably practicable to summon another member of staff.

Staff can undertake a personal search of a student involving the removal of outer clothing (not worn next to the skin or immediately over a garment worn as underwear). It does not, however, allow staff to conduct an intimate search.

Staff can search lockers and desks for any item provided the student agrees. The school may make it a condition of having a locker or desk that the student consents to have these searched for any item, whether or not, the student is present. If a student does not consent to such a search of the school's property, then it is possible to conduct a search without consent but only for prohibited items and items banned by the school rules.

A student's possessions will only be searched in the presence of the student and another member of staff, except where there is a risk that serious harm will be caused to a person if the search is not conducted immediately and where it is not reasonably practicable to summon another member of staff. The procedure for a search involves:

- Asking the student to empty the contents of their bag onto a desk. The contents and the empty bag are then inspected.
- Asking the student to remove the contents of their jacket pockets and place them on a desk and then to remove their jacket. The contents and the jacket are then inspected.
- Asking the student to turn out their trouser pockets.
- Asking the student to remove their shoes. The insides of the shoes are then inspected.

Searches without consent can only be carried out on the school premises or where the member of staff has lawful charge of the student such as on educational visits.

Metal detectors may be used to assist in searches.

If a child refuses to be searched, their parents will be contacted to come into school and conduct the search, and if appropriate the police will be contacted. The student will not be allowed to leave site.

without parental involvement - due to this the risk of the prohibited item - and appropriate sanctions will be applied up in relation to both the search and the item up to and including permanent exclusion.

Use of Force

Staff can use reasonable force when conducting a search without consent for prohibited items. Such force cannot, however, be used to search for items banned under the School rules.

Confiscation

School staff have a general power to confiscate, retain or dispose of a student's property where reasonable to do so which is found as a result of a search with consent. For items found as a result of a search without consent, staff can confiscate any item they have reasonable grounds for suspecting is a prohibited item or is banned under the School rules. Where the item may be returned to the student, such as a mobile phone, the item will be taken to the Student Support Office at the earliest opportunity and the staff member shall name the student from whom the item has been confiscated and the item will be kept securely until it is returned to the student or parent as per the Behaviour Policy.

Where a member of staff conducting a search:

- Finds alcohol, they may retain or dispose of it but not return it to the student.
- Finds controlled drugs, these should be handed to the police but may be disposed of if there is a good reason to do so.
- Finds other substances which are not believed to be controlled drugs, such as 'legal highs', these can be confiscated where a teacher believes them to be harmful or detrimental to good order and discipline and should be treated as controlled drugs.
- Finds stolen items, these should be delivered to the police as soon as possible but may be returned to the owner if there is a good reason to do so (for example, a low value item).
- Finds tobacco or cigarette papers, they may retain or dispose of them but not return them to the student.
- Finds fireworks, they may retain or dispose of them but not return them to the student.
- Finds a pornographic image they may dispose of the image unless it constitutes an offence (such as child pornography) in which case it must be handed to the police as soon as possible.
- Finds any weapons or items which are evidence of an offence, they must be passed to the police as soon as possible.
- Finds an item which is banned under the school rules, they may return it to the owner, retain it or dispose of it.
- Finds a device prohibited by the school rules or that they reasonably suspect has been, or is likely to be, used to commit an offence or cause personal injury or damage to property, they may examine any data on the device where there is a good reason to do so. They may also delete data if they think there is a good reason to do so (for example, it could be used to disrupt teaching or cause harm) unless they are going to give the device to the police. They may otherwise return the device to the owner, retain it or dispose of it.

School Trips

This policy on searches of students and their belongings applies at all times, irrespective of whether the student is at the school or on a school trip.

In such cases the trip leader and other supervising staff are permitted to carry out a search. During a school trip staff may also search a student's room. Prior consent from the student is not required and this must be carried out by two members of staff.

Staff will keep an internal record of any search (including information on the student, date, consent or otherwise, item found, whether it was retained, returned to the owner, disposed of or handed to the police, the person who conducted the search and any witness). The school is not required to inform parents before a search takes place or to seek their consent. Staff will inform parents subsequently about the search and any item found. Complaints about screening, searching or confiscation will be dealt with through the school's complaints procedure.

Any student who refuses to co-operate with a search will be considered to have refused a reasonable staff instruction and will be sanctioned in accordance with our Behaviour Policy.

Reviewed By	Full Governors	Implementation Date	Sept 2025	Review Date	Nov 2027
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