

Marsh Green Primary School

Searching, Screening and Confiscation Policy

2025-2026



Approved by:	School Governing Body	Date: 12 th November, 2025
Last reviewed on:	13 th November, 2024	
Next review due by:	30 th November, 2026	

Contents

1. Introduction	4
2. Searching a pupil.....	4
3. Before carrying out a search	5
4. Searching pupils' possessions.....	5
5. Examining electronic devices	6
6. Informing the DSL.....	7
7. Informing parents	7
8. Support after a search.....	8
9. Strip searches.....	8
10. Communication and record-keeping	8
11. Who will be present?.....	9
12. The appropriate adult.....	9
13. Care after a strip search.....	9
14. Confiscation	10
15. Monitoring arrangements	11
16. Links with other policies	11

1. Introduction

Searching and confiscation is conducted in line with the DfE's [latest guidance on searching, screening and confiscation](#).

All school staff have a duty to consider the best interests of pupils in our school. This is covered in paragraph 2 of [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#), which states that:

“Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is everyone’s responsibility. ‘Children’ includes everyone under the age of 18. Everyone who comes into contact with children and their families has a role to play. In order to fulfil this responsibility effectively, all practitioners should make sure their approach is child centred. This means that they should consider, at all times, what is in the best interests of the child.”

2. Searching a pupil

Searches will only be carried out by a member of staff who has been authorised to do so by the headteacher, or by the headteacher themselves.

Subject to the exception below, the authorised member of staff carrying out the search will be of the same sex as the pupil, and there will be another member of staff present as a witness to the search.

A search can be carried out if the authorised member of staff has reasonable grounds for suspecting that the pupil is in possession of a prohibited item for which a search can be made, or if the pupil has agreed to the search.

An appropriate location for the search will be found. Where possible, this will be away from other pupils. The search will only take place on the school premises or where the member of staff has lawful control or charge of the pupil, for example on a school trip.

An authorised member of staff of a different sex to the pupil can carry out a search without another member of staff as a witness if:

- The authorised member of staff carrying out the search reasonably believes there is risk that serious harm will be caused to a person if the search is not carried out as a matter of urgency; and
- In the time available, it is not reasonably practicable for the search to be carried out by a member of staff who is the same sex as the pupil; or
- It is not reasonably practicable for the search to be carried out in the presence of another member of staff.

When an authorised member of staff conducts a search without a witness, they should immediately report this to another member of staff and ensure a written record of the search is kept.

If the authorised member of staff considers a search to be necessary, but is not required urgently, they will seek the advice of the (DSL, Deputy DSL, Headteacher or Deputy

Headteacher, who may have more information about the pupil. During this time the pupil will be supervised and kept away from other pupils.

3. Before carrying out a search

Before carrying out a search, the authorised member of staff will:

- Assess whether there is an urgent need for a **search**.
- Assess whether not doing the search would put the pupil and / or other pupils and / or staff at risk.
- Consider whether the search poses a safeguarding risk to the pupil.
- Explain to the pupil why they are being searched.
- Explain to the pupil what a search entails – e.g. “I will ask you to turn out your pockets and remove your scarf.”
- Explain how and where the search will be carried out.
- Give the pupil the opportunity to ask questions.
- Seek the pupil’s co-operation.

If the pupil refuses to agree to a search, the member of staff can give an appropriate behaviour sanction.

If they still refuse to co-operate, the member of staff will contact the DSL or Deputy DSL, to try and determine why the pupil is refusing to comply.

The authorised member of staff will then decide whether to use reasonable force to search the pupil. This decision will be made on a case-by-case basis, taking into consideration whether conducting the search will prevent the pupil harming themselves or others, damaging property or from causing disorder.

An authorised member of staff may search a pupil’s outer clothing, pockets, possessions, desks or trays.

Outer clothing includes:

- Any item of clothing that is not worn immediately over a garment that is being worn wholly next to the skin or being worn as underwear (e.g. a jumper or jacket being worn over a tee-shirt).
- Hats, scarves, gloves, shoes, boots.

4. Searching pupils’ possessions

Possessions are any items that the pupil has or appears to have control of, including desks, trays and bags.

A pupil’s possessions can be searched for any item, if the pupil agrees to the search. If the pupil does not agree to the search, staff can still carry out a search for prohibited items and items identified in the school rules.

An authorised member of staff can search a pupil's possessions when the pupil and another member of staff are present.

If there is a serious risk of harm if the search is not conducted immediately, or it is not reasonably practicable to summon another member of staff, the search can be carried out by a single authorised member of staff.

5. Examining electronic devices

The headteacher or any member of staff authorised to do so by the headteacher can carry out a search and confiscate any electronic device that they have reasonable grounds for suspecting:

- Poses a risk to staff or pupils; and/or
- Is identified in the school rules as a banned item for which a search can be carried out; and/or
- Is evidence in relation to an offence.

Before a search, if the authorised staff member is satisfied that they have reasonable grounds for suspecting any of the above, they will also:

- Make an assessment of how urgent the search is and consider the risk to other pupils and staff. If the search is not urgent, they will seek advice from the Headteacher or DSL.
- Explain to the pupil why they are being searched, how the search will happen, and give them the opportunity to ask questions about it.
- Seek the pupil's cooperation.

Authorised staff members may examine, and in exceptional circumstances erase, any data or files on an electronic device that they have confiscated where they believe there is a 'good reason' to do so.

When deciding whether there is a 'good reason' to examine data or files on an electronic device, the staff member should reasonably suspect that the device has, or could be used to:

- Cause harm; and/or
- Undermine the safe environment of the school or disrupt teaching; and/or
- Commit an offence.

If inappropriate material is found on the device, it is up to the staff member in conjunction with the Headteacher and / or DSL to decide on a suitable response. If there are images, data or files on the device that staff reasonably suspect are likely to put a person at risk, they will first consider the appropriate safeguarding response.

When deciding if there is a good reason to erase data or files from a device, staff members will consider if the material may constitute evidence relating to a suspected offence. In these instances, they will not delete the material, and the device will be handed to the

police as soon as reasonably practicable. If the material is not suspected to be evidence in relation to an offence, staff members may delete it if:

- They reasonably suspect that its continued existence is likely to cause harm to any person; and/or
- The pupil and/or the parent refuses to delete the material themselves.

If a staff member **suspects** a device **may** contain an indecent image of a child (also known as a nude or semi-nude image), they will:

- **Not** view the image.
- Confiscate the device and report the incident to the DSL immediately, who will decide what to do next. The DSL will make the decision in line with the DfE's latest guidance on [screening, searching and confiscation](#) and the UK Council for Internet Safety (UKCIS) guidance on [sharing nudes and semi-nudes: advice for education settings working with children and young people](#).

Any searching of pupils will be carried out in line with:

- The DfE's latest guidance on [searching, screening and confiscation](#).
- UKCIS guidance on [sharing nudes and semi-nudes: advice for education settings working with children and young people](#).
- The school's Online Safety Policy, which sets out our processes in relation to examining electronic devices.

Any complaints about searching for or deleting inappropriate images or files on pupils' electronic devices will be dealt with through the school complaints procedure.

6. Informing the DSL

The staff member who carried out the search should inform the DSL without delay:

- Of any incidents where the member of staff had reasonable grounds to suspect a pupil was in possession of a prohibited item.
- If they believe that a search has revealed a safeguarding risk.
- All searches for prohibited items, including incidents where no items were found, will be recorded in the school's safeguarding system.

7. Informing parents

Parents will always be informed of any search for a prohibited item. A member of staff will tell the parents as soon as is reasonably practicable:

- What happened.
- What was found, if anything.
- What has been confiscated, if anything.
- What action the school has taken, including any sanctions that have been applied to their child.

8. Support after a search

Irrespective of whether any items are found as the result of any search, the school will consider whether the pupil may be suffering or likely to suffer harm and whether any specific support is needed (due to the reasons for the search, the search itself, or the outcome of the search).

If this is the case, staff will follow the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and speak to the DSL. The DSL will consider if pastoral support, an early help intervention or a referral to Children's Social Care is appropriate.

9. Strip searches

The authorised member of staff's power to search outlined above **does not** enable them to conduct a strip search (removing more than the outer clothing).

Strip searches on school premises shall only be carried out by police officers in accordance with the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (PACE) Code C.

Before calling the police into school, staff will assess and balance the risk of a potential strip search on the pupil's mental and physical wellbeing and the risk of not recovering the suspected item.

Staff will consider whether introducing the potential for a strip search through police involvement is absolutely necessary, and will always ensure that other appropriate, less invasive approaches have been exhausted first.

Once the police are on school premises, the decision on whether to conduct a strip search lies solely with them. The school will advocate for the safety and wellbeing of the pupil(s) involved.

Staff retain a duty of care to the pupil involved and should advocate for pupil wellbeing at all times.

10. Communication and record-keeping

Where reasonably possible and unless there is an immediate risk of harm, staff will contact at least one of the pupil's parents to inform them that the police are going to strip search the pupil before strip search takes place, and ask them if they would like to come into school to act as the pupil's appropriate adult.

If the school can't get in touch with the parents, or they aren't able to come into school to act as the appropriate adult, a member of staff can act as the appropriate adult (see below for the role of the appropriate adult).

The pupil's parents will always be informed by a staff member once a strip search has taken place. The school will keep records of strip searches that have been conducted on school premises, and monitor them for any trends that emerge.

11. Who will be present?

For any strip search that involves exposure of intimate body parts, there will be at least two people present other than the pupil, except in urgent cases where there is risk of serious harm to the pupil or others.

One of these must be the appropriate adult, except if:

- The pupil explicitly states in the presence of an appropriate adult that they do not want an appropriate adult to be present during the search; and
- The appropriate adult agrees to this.

If this is the case, a record will be made of the pupil's decision and it will be signed by the appropriate adult.

No more than two people other than the pupil and appropriate adult will be present, except in the most exceptional circumstances.

12. The appropriate adult

The appropriate adult will:

- Act to safeguard the rights, entitlement and welfare of the pupil.
- Not be a police officer or otherwise associated with the police.
- Not be the headteacher.
- Be of the same sex as the pupil, unless the pupil specifically requests an adult who is not of the same sex.

Except for an appropriate adult of a different sex if the pupil specifically requests it, no one of a different sex will be permitted to be present and the search will not be carried out anywhere where the pupil could be seen by anyone else.

13. Care after a strip search

After any strip search, the pupil will be given appropriate support, irrespective of whether any suspected item is found.

The pupil will also be given the opportunity to express their views about the strip search and the events surrounding it.

As with other searches, the school will consider whether the pupil may be suffering or likely to suffer harm and whether any further specific support is needed (due to the reasons for the search, the search itself, or the outcome of the search).

Staff will follow the school's safeguarding policy and speak to the DSL. The DSL will consider if, in addition to pastoral support, an early help intervention or a referral to children's social care is appropriate.

Any pupil(s) who have been strip searched more than once and/or groups of pupils who may be more likely to be subject to strip searching will be given particular consideration, and staff will consider any preventative approaches that can be taken.

14. Confiscation

An authorised staff member carrying out a search can confiscate any item that they have reasonable grounds for suspecting:

- Poses a risk to staff or pupils.
- Is prohibited or identified in the school rules for which a search can be made.
- Is evidence in relation to an offence.

Prohibited items that pupils must not bring into school are defined as all items that are potentially harmful or detrimental to the welfare of pupils and school staff. Any prohibited items found in a pupil's possession, as a result of a search, will be confiscated. These items will not be returned to the pupil.

Prohibited items are:

- Controlled drugs. The member of staff conducting a search should take into account all relevant circumstances and use their professional judgement to determine whether they can safely dispose of the controlled drug. When staff are unsure as to the legal status of a substance and have reason to believe it may be a controlled drug, they should treat it as such. If the member of staff is in doubt about the safe disposal of controlled drugs, they should deliver them to the police.
- Other substances which are not believed to be controlled but which should also be delivered to the police, or disposed of as above, if the member of staff conducting a search believes they could be harmful.
- Alcohol, tobacco and cigarette papers and fireworks. The member of staff conducting a search may retain or dispose of these prohibited items as they think appropriate but should not return them to the pupil.
- Pornographic images. The member of staff conducting a search may dispose of the image unless they have reasonable grounds to suspect that its possession constitutes a specified offence (i.e. it is extreme or an indecent image of a child) in which case it must be delivered to the police as soon as reasonably practicable. Members of staff should never intentionally view any indecent image of a child (also sometimes known as nude or semi-nude images). Staff must never copy, print, share, store or save such images.
- Stolen items. These must be delivered to the police as soon as reasonably practicable. However, if there is good reason to do so, the member of staff may also return the item to the owner or retain or dispose of it if returning them to their owner is not practicable. In determining whether there is a good reason to return the stolen item to its owner or retain or dispose of the item, the member of staff must take into account all relevant circumstances and use their professional judgement to determine whether they can

safely dispose of the seized article. In taking into account the relevant circumstances, the member of staff should consider the following:

- The value of the item - it would not be reasonable or desirable to involve the police in dealing with low value items such as pencil cases, though school staff may judge it appropriate to contact the police if the items are valuable.
- Whether the item is banned by the school.
- Whether retaining or returning the item to the owner may place a person at risk of harm.
- Whether the item can be disposed of safely.
- Weapons or items which are evidence of a suspected offence. These must be passed to the police as soon as possible.
- Items that have been (or are likely to be) used to commit an offence or to cause personal injury or damage to property. If a member staff suspects a confiscated item has been used to commit an offence or is evidence in relation to an offence, the item should be delivered to the police. The member of staff conducting the search must take into account all relevant circumstances and use their professional judgement to determine whether the item should be delivered to the police, retained, returned to the owner or disposed of and consider:
 - whether it is safe to dispose of the item.
 - whether and when it is safe to return the item.

Members of staff should use their judgement to decide to return, retain or dispose of any other items banned under the school rules. In deciding what to do with such an item, the member of staff must take into account all relevant circumstances and use their professional judgement to determine whether they can safely dispose of the seized item. They should consider:

- The value of the item.
- Whether it is appropriate to return the item to the pupil or parent.
- Whether the item is likely to continue to disrupt learning or the calm, safe and supportive environment of the school.

15. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed **annually** by the school's Designated Safeguarding Lead. At every review, approval will be required from the full governing board.

16. Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies and procedures (in alphabetical order):

- Acceptable Use
- Behaviour
- Codes of Conduct (governors, staff and volunteers)
- Complaints Procedure
- Equality Information and Objectives
- Health and Safety
- Intimate Care
- Managing Allegations Against Staff (Including Low-level Concerns)

- Mental Health and Wellbeing (pupils and staff)
- Online Safety
- Safeguarding and Child Protection
- SEND
- Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions