



Searching, Screening and Confiscation Policy

North Kesteven Academy
2025-2026

Introduction Date: Autumn Term 2025
To be Reviewed: Autumn Term 2026

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1. Statement of intent

North Kesteven Academy 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 academy 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 academy 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.

2. 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 School (Specification and Disposal of Articles) Regulations 2012
- The School Behaviour (Determination and Publicising of Measures in Academies) Regulations 2012
- European Convention on Human Rights
- DfE (2023) 'Searching, Screening and Confiscation'
- DfE (2013) 'Use of reasonable force'
- DfE (2024) 'Behaviour in Schools'
- DfE (2024) 'Keeping children safe in education 2024'
- DfE (2023) 'Schools and college security guidance'
- DfE (2018) 'Equality Act 2010: advice for schools'
- DfE (2023) 'Working together to safeguard children'
- DfE (2012) 'Drugs: advice for schools'

This policy operates in conjunction with the following academy policies:

- Behaviour Policy
- Complaints Procedures Policy
- Disciplinary Policy and Procedure
- CCTV Policy
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Allegations of Abuse Against Staff Policy

3. Roles and responsibilities

The governing board will be responsible for:

- Ensuring this policy is implemented within the academy 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 academy, according to its policies.
- Ensuring the procedures in this policy are implemented consistently across the academy.
- Overseeing the academy's practice of searching to ensure that a culture of safe, proportionate and appropriate searching is established and maintained.
- Ensuring the DSL is called on for support during, or after, searching, as appropriate.
- Ensuring a sufficient number of staff are appropriately trained on how to safely search a student, including managing students who are not co-operating with the search.
- Ensuring all staff understand their rights and the rights of any students being searched.
- Ensuring the senior leadership team 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.
- Searches for items banned by the academy's policies should be recorded.
- Ensuring parents and students are informed about how searches are conducted.
- Ensuring that prohibited items and items banned by the academy are outlined in the relevant policies and are communicated with staff, parents and students.
- Reviewing this policy on an annual basis.

The Assistant Headteachers 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.
- Making referrals, in line with the academy'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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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 student 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 academy.
- Ensuring they implement sanctions fairly, proportionately, and in line with the Behaviour Policy.
- Raising safeguarding concerns with the DSL (or their deputy) as soon as reasonably practicable.

4. Screening

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

Screening equipment

The screening of students via the use of a portable metal detector, or wand, without their consent will be permitted, even if it is not suspected that they are in possession of a weapon.

Where a student has additional needs or a disability, the academy will ensure reasonable adjustments are made to the screening process. The academy will also consider the age of students being screened. a member of staff

Where a student refuses to be screened a member of the senior leadership team will make an assessment of whether it is necessary to conduct a search.

Students who refuse to be screened will be assumed to be carrying a banned item and will be appropriately sanctioned in line with the Behaviour Policy and taken out of circulation for the safety of staff and students.

5. 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:

- Deputy Headteacher
- Assistant Headteachers
- Heads of Year
- Inclusion Team

When deciding which members of staff will be authorised to undertake searches under these powers, the headteacher will consider whether each member of staff requires any additional training to enable them to carry out their responsibilities safely and lawfully.

6. List of prohibited and banned items

Prohibited items

Prohibited items include:

- Knives or weapons
- Alcohol
- Illegal drugs
- Stolen items
- Tobacco and cigarette papers
- Fireworks
- Pornographic images
- Any item that a member of staff reasonably suspects has been, or is likely to be, used;
 - to commit an offence; or
 - to cause personal injury to any person, including the student themselves; or
 - to damage the property of any person, including the student themselves
- E-cigarettes and vapes
- Lighters
- Aerosols
- Legal highs/psychoactive substances
- Energy drinks
- Paint thinners
- Non-prescribed hypodermic needles
- Additional jewellery (see Uniform Policy for list of acceptable jewellery items)
- Laser pens
- See section 13 for information about mobile phones

7. Searching with consent

Any member of 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 academy 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/or bag.

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.

8. 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 item (see [section 5](#)). The staff member will decide what constitutes reasonable grounds for suspicion on a case-by-case basis.

An item banned by the academy rules will only be searched for without consent if it is identified in this policy and/or the Behaviour Policy that it is an item that can be searched for.

Staff members who are not authorised by the headteacher to implement searches without consent will not do so. Where a search is required, and the student does not give their consent to be searched, unauthorised staff members will contact an authorised member of staff immediately.

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 co-operation of the student prior to the commencement of the search without consent. The student may be sanctioned in line with the Behaviour Policy if they refuse to co-operate.

9. Privacy

Wherever possible, students will only be searched by staff members who are the same sex as them. All searches will be witnessed by another member of staff who will be, where possible, the same sex as the student being searched.

Where a staff member is not the same sex as the student subject to a search, they will summon a staff member of the same sex as the student, where practicable. The summoned staff member will be the one to conduct the search.

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.

The academy may consider the use of CCTV footage in order to decide whether to conduct the search for an item. Any CCTV usage will be conducted in line with the academy's CCTV Policy.

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

10. 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.
- **“Possessions”** – any goods over which the student has or appears to have control, including, lockers and bags.

A student's possessions or their locker 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 if the search is not conducted immediately.

Staff will always remain aware that the power to search without consent **only** enables a personal search involving the removal of coats, blazers and shoes, and the searching of pockets, lockers, etc.

If a student does not consent to a search or withdraws their consent, then they may be subject to a search without consent, but only for prohibited items.

11. 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

All confiscations will lead to a detention or further sanction, dependent upon the item confiscated.

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

When a staff member conducting a search finds:

- **Alcohol**, they will retain and dispose of the item.

- **Controlled drugs**, they will deliver them to the police as soon as possible.
- **Other substances** which are not believed to be controlled drugs, they will confiscate, retain and dispose of them if they believe them to be detrimental to behaviour, discipline and safety. E.g. vapes, aerosols etc.
- **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.
- **Tobacco or cigarette papers**, they will retain and dispose of them.
- **Fireworks**, they will be retained or disposed of.
- 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.
- 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, 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.
- **Jewellery** will be confiscated, be handed to student reception and will be returned to the student once the detention has been served.

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 academy to contact the police if high-value items, e.g. laptops, or illegal items, e.g. fireworks, are involved.

12. Informing parents

In some circumstances, the academy may need to inform the student’s parents about the search for a banned item, e.g. in the interests of safeguarding the student.

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

13. Electronic devices

Students are allowed to bring mobile phones into the academy but these should not be used, seen or heard during the school day. Students should ensure these are turned off and put away before they enter through the school gates in the morning. Students are allowed to use their phones to contact home when they have left the buildings at the end of the day.

If phones are used by students, seen or heard by staff, the phone will be confiscated. The phone will be handed to student reception who will log the confiscation and issue a detention. Should a student refuse to hand over their phone, this will result in an "Incident" being reported, in line with our Behaviour policy. Should the student continue to refuse to hand over their phone, this is likely to result in a suspension being issued. The student would be expected to hand over their phone on their next school day.

If an electronic device that is prohibited by the academy 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.

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 academy rules.

Any electronic device that has been seized which is prohibited by the academy 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 academy 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 an academy device or your academy’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 academy 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 academy'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.

14. 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 academy's Disciplinary Policy and Procedure. Staff members who conduct searches without consent but are not authorised to do so will be managed in line with the Disciplinary Policy and Procedure.

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

15. Monitoring and review

This policy will be reviewed on an annual basis by the senior leadership team.

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