KING EDWARD VI
SCHOOL LICHFIELD

Searching, Screening and Confiscation Policy 2026

Original Version:	*Ratified on 9/10/2025, now superseded*
To be reviewed by:	*Assistant Headteacher (Community)*
Governors Review: Summary of Changes: Ratified: Date:	*Addition of Smart Glasses to the list of prohibited items* *Student and Staff Welfare Committee* *8/10/2026*
Version:	*FINAL*
Dissemination: Teams policy folder KES website Other	*√* *√* *√ KES All Staff Team*
Next Review:	*October 2028*

Headteachers and staff authorised by them have a statutory power (outlined in Department for Education guidelines) to search students or their possessions, without consent, where they have reasonable grounds for suspecting that the student may have a prohibited item. Prohibited items include:

- knives or weapons
- alcohol
- illegal drugs
- stolen items
- tobacco and cigarette papers
- vapes
- snus/nicotine pouches
- fireworks
- pornographic images
- ear-piercing equipment
- smart glasses (Glasses which can record video)
- any article that the member of staff reasonably 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 (including the student). (See Appendix 1 for further guidance)

The Headteacher and authorised staff can also search for any item banned by the school rules which has been identified in the rules as an item which may be searched for.

Authorised Staff

- Any member of the Senior Leadership Team
- Achievement Leaders
- Any member of the Student Support Team

Confiscation

School staff can seize any prohibited item found as a result of a search. They can also seize any item, however found, which they consider harmful or detrimental to school discipline.

Searching with Consent

Schools' common law powers to search:
Authorised school staff can search students with their consent for any item. Staff are not required to have formal written consent from the student for this sort of search – 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.

If a member of staff suspects a student has a banned item in his/her possession, they will instruct the student to turn out his pockets or bag and, if the student refuses, the staff member can apply an appropriate punishment as set out in the school's behaviour policy.

A student refusing to co-operate with such a search raises the same kind of issues as where a student refuses to stay in a detention or refuses to stop any other unacceptable behaviour when instructed by a member of staff – in such circumstances, the school will apply an appropriate disciplinary penalty.

Searching without Consent

At King Edward VI School, authorised staff have the power to search without consent for:

- Knives or weapons, alcohol, illegal drugs and stolen items; and
- Tobacco and cigarette papers, fireworks and pornographic images; and
- Any article that the member of staff reasonably suspects has been, or is likely to be, used to commit an offence, or to cause personal injury to, or damage to property; and
- Any item banned by the school rules which has been identified in the rules as an item which may be searched for.

The staff member conducting the search will be the same sex as the student being searched.

There will be a witness (also a staff member) and, if possible, they will be the same sex as the student being searched.

Staff members will only undertake a search without consent if they have reasonable grounds for suspecting that a student may have in his or her possession a prohibited item. The staff member will decide in each particular case what constitutes reasonable grounds for suspicion.

For example, they may have heard other students talking about the item or they might notice a student behaving in a way that causes them to be suspicious.

In the exceptional circumstances when it is necessary to conduct a search of a student of the opposite sex or in the absence of a witness, the member of staff conducting the search will bear in mind that a student's expectation of privacy increases as they get older. When a member of staff conducts a search without a witness, they should immediately report this to another member of staff, and ensure a record of the search is kept.

Before conducting any search, the member of staff will explain to the student why they are being searched, how and where the search is going to take place and give them the opportunity to ask any questions.

During the Search

An appropriate location for the search will be used and where possible this will be away from other students.

The person conducting the search must not require the student to remove any clothing other than outer clothing. 'Outer clothing' means clothing that is not worn next to the skin or immediately over a garment that is being worn as underwear but 'outer clothing' includes hats; shoes; boots; gloves and scarves.

'Possessions' means any goods over which the student has or appears to have control – this includes desks, lockers and bags.
A student's possessions can 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.

Members of staff can use such force as is reasonable given the circumstances when conducting a search for knives or weapons, alcohol, illegal drugs, stolen items, tobacco and cigarette papers, fireworks, pornographic images or articles that have been or could be used to commit an offence or cause harm. Such force cannot be used to search for items banned under the school rules.

The member of staff conducting the search may use a wand or metal detector if required. Completely black shoes. Backless, toeless and shoes with high heels, which can be especially dangerous on the schools many staircases, should not be worn. Smart boots can be worn. Sandals are not allowed.

As an alternative to a black or white shirt and a school tie, Sixth Form students may wear plain or patterned clothing in black, grey or white which would be considered appropriate to be worn under a blazer in a place of work. This clothing may have a small logo.

Students may wear discreet jewellery which would be considered appropriate for a place of work.

After the Search

The member of staff can use their discretion to confiscate, retain and/or destroy any item found as a result of a 'with consent' search so long as it is reasonable in the circumstances. Where any article is thought to be a weapon it will be passed to the police.

Staff have a defence to any complaint or other action brought against them. The law protects members of staff from liability in any proceedings brought against them for any loss of, or damage to, any item they have confiscated, provided they acted lawfully.

A staff member carrying out a search can seize anything they have reasonable grounds for suspecting is a prohibited item or is evidence in relation to an offence.

Where a staff member conducting a search finds alcohol, they may retain and dispose of it. This means that schools can dispose of alcohol as they think appropriate but this should not include returning it to the student.

Where they find controlled drugs, these will be delivered to the police as soon as possible.

Where they find other substances which are not believed to be controlled drugs these can be confiscated where a teacher believes them to be harmful or detrimental to good order and discipline. This would include, for example, so called 'legal highs'. Where staff suspect a substance may be controlled they will treat them as controlled drugs as outlined above.

Where they find stolen items, these will be delivered to the police as soon as reasonably practicable – but may be returned to the owner (or may be retained or disposed of if returning them to their owner is not practicable) if the person thinks that there is a good reason to do so.

Where a member of staff finds tobacco or cigarette papers or vapes/e-cigarettes they will retain and dispose of them.

As with alcohol, this means that the school will dispose of tobacco or cigarette papers as they think appropriate but this will not include returning them to the student.

Fireworks found as a result of a search will be retained and will not be returned to the student. If a member of staff finds a pornographic image, they will dispose of the image unless its possession constitutes a specified offence (i.e. it is extreme or child pornography) in which case it will be delivered to the police as soon as reasonably practicable. If the member of staff conducting the search suspects they may find an indecent image of a child (sometimes known as nude or semi-nude images), the member of staff should never intentionally view the image, and must never copy, print, share, store or save such images. When an incident might involve an indecent image of a child and/or video, the member of staff should confiscate the device, avoid looking at the device and refer the incident to the designated safeguarding lead (or deputy) as the most appropriate person to advise on the school's response. The UK Council for Internet Safety also provides the following guidance to support school staff and designated safeguarding leads: Sharing nudes and semi-nudes: advice for education settings working with children and young people (updated March 2024) - GOV.UK

Images found on a mobile phone or other electronic device can be deleted unless it is necessary to pass them to the police.

Where an article that has been (or could be) used to commit an offence or to cause personal injury or damage to property is found it will be delivered to the police or returned to the owner. It may also be retained or disposed of.

Where a member of staff finds an item which is banned under the school rules they will discuss this with a member of senior staff who will take into account all relevant circumstances and use their professional judgement to decide whether to return it to its owner, retain it or dispose of it.

Any weapons or items which are evidence of an offence will be passed to the police as soon as possible.

After any search is carried out whether prohibited items are found or not, a DSL should consider the impact this may have on the student(s) who has been searched and offer appropriate pastoral intervention, if required. This could include Early Help intervention or a referral to Children's Social Care Services.

Recording Searches

At King Edward VI, any search conducted by an authorised member of staff for a prohibited item will be logged on Go4Schools and all searches conducted by police officers should be recorded in the school's safeguarding reporting system – My Concern, including whether or not an item is found.

The following information will be included in the record of each search:

- Name of the student(s) searched
- The date, time and location of the search;

- The names of the staff members who conducted the search and any other adults or students present;
- What was being searched for and the reason for searching;
- What items, if any, were found;
- What follow-up action was taken as a consequence of the search.

Parental Contact

When a student has been searched, parents/carers will be informed by the school, regardless of the outcome of the search.

Strip Searching

A strip search is a search involving the removal of more than outer clothing. Strip searches on school premises can only be carried out by police officers under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (PACE) Code A and in accordance with the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (PACE) Code C. While the decision to undertake the strip search and its conduct are police matters school staff retain a duty of care to the Student(s) involved and must advocate for Student wellbeing at all times.

Before calling the police into our school, staff will assess and balance the risk of potential strip search on the student's mental and physical well-being and the risk of not recovering the suspected item. Staff should consider whether introducing the potential for a strip search through police involvement is absolutely necessary and should always ensure that the appropriate, less invasive approaches have been exhausted.

Unless there is an immediate risk of harm and where reasonably possible, staff should inform a parent/carer of the student suspected of concealing an item in advance of the search, even if the parent is not acting as the appropriate adult. Parents/carers should always be informed by a staff member once a strip search has taken place. At King Edward VI the Lead DSL will record details of any strip searches carried out by the police on Myconcern.

The Process the Police must follow during a Strip Search

Except in cases of urgency where there is risk of serious harm to the student or others, whenever a strip search involves exposure of intimate body parts there must be at least two people present other than the student, one of which must be the appropriate adult. If the student's parent/carer would like to be the appropriate adult, the school should facilitate this where possible. Police officers carrying out the search must be of the same sex as the student being searched. An appropriate adult not of the same sex as the student being searched may be present if specifically requested by the student. Otherwise, no-one of a different sex to the student being searched is permitted to be present, and the search must not be carried out in a location where the student could be seen by anyone else.

Except in urgent cases as above, a search of a student may take place without an appropriate adult only 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. A record should be made of the student's decision and signed by the appropriate adult. The presence of more than two

people, other than an appropriate adult, shall be permitted only in the most exceptional circumstances.

> PACE Code C states that a strip search may take place only if it is considered necessary to remove an item related to a criminal offence, and the officer reasonably considers the student might have concealed such an item. Strip searches should not be routinely carried out if there is no reason to consider that such items are concealed.

After-care following a Strip Search

Students should be given appropriate support, irrespective of whether the suspected item is found. If an item is found, this may be a police matter, but should always be accompanied by a safeguarding process handled by the school which gives attention to the pupil's wellbeing and involves relevant staff, such as the designated safeguarding lead (or deputy).

At King Edward VI, safeguarding will also be at the centre of support following a strip search in which the item is not found, both in the sense of supporting the student to deal with the experience of being searched, and regarding wider issues that may have informed the decision to conduct a strip search in the first place. In both cases, students should feel that they have an opportunity to express their views regarding the strip search and the events surrounding it. School staff should give particular consideration to any students who have been strip-searched more than once and/or groups of students who are more likely to be subjected to strip searching with unusual frequency and consider preventative approaches.

Sanctions

The discovery of any prohibited items will result in sanctions being applied in line with the school's behaviour policy. The level of sanction will be decided by a member of the school's SLT, but may include one or more of the following:

- Loss of privileges
- Detention
- Isolation
- Fixed Term Suspension
- Permanent Exclusion

Screening

Screening is the use of a walk-through or hand-held metal detector (arch or wand) to scan all students for banned items before they enter the school premises. Screening can help provide reassurance to students, staff and parents that the school is taking measures to create a calm, safe and supportive environment.

Schools' statutory power to make rules on student behaviour and their duties as employers in relation to the safety of staff, pupils and visitors enables them to impose a requirement that students undergo screening.

If the headteacher decides to introduce a walk through screening arrangement, students and parents/carers will be informed in advance to explain what the screening will involve and why it will be introduced.

References

Searching, Screening and Confiscation Advice for Schools July 2022

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1091132/Searching__Screening_and_Confiscation_guidance_July_2022.pdf

Appendix 1: List of Banned Items

In the interests of the health and safety of students, staff, other members of the school community and visitors to the school, the school asks parents and students to ensure that any inappropriate and dangerous items, or any inappropriate and harmful substances, are not brought in to school.

In the majority of cases the application of common sense will easily determine what should not be brought in to school. The list below is not exhaustive but is intended as a guide. The specified items on the list, and any item that would fall into the first 3 categories, should not be brought in to school.

Sanctions under the Behaviour Policy may be applied to any student found in possession of any banned item or any item that the school deems to be unsuitable and dangerous. The school reserves the right to exclude students in extreme cases, or when students or parents have received warnings about banned items.

1. FIRE LIGHTING EQUIPMENT

- Matches, lighters etc

2. DRUGS and SMOKING EQUIPMENT

- Cigarettes
- Cigarette Papers
- E-Cigarettes/Shisha/Vape
- Tobacco
- Alcohol
- Solvents
- Any form of illegal drug or so-called ‘legal highs’ including Nitrous oxide/’laughing gas’
- Snus or nicotine pouches
- Any other drugs except medicines covered by the Prescribed Medicines Procedure

3. WEAPONS and OTHER DANGEROUS IMPLEMENTS or SUBSTANCES

- Knives, including pen knives and craft knives
- Razors
- Catapults
- Guns of any kind, including replicas and BB guns
- Laser pens and LED torches
- Knuckle dusters and studded arm bands, bracelets, etc.
- Whips or similar items such as long chains
- Pepper sprays and gas canisters (e.g. CS gas), Tasers.
- Fireworks or explosives of any kind including ‘fun snaps’
- Dangerous chemicals (e.g. strong acids and alkalis, bleaches, hair dyes, etc.)
- Ear piercing equipment

4. OTHER ITEMS

- Any form of liquid based correction fluid *(N.B. students may use correction tape and correction tape devices)*
- Chewing gum
- Energy drinks
- Offensive material (pornographic, homophobic, racist, extremist, etc.)
- Smart glasses (Glasses which can record video)

Note: the school reserves the right to confiscate cameras or mobile phones and to delete any unauthorised pictures or video recordings of students or staff