

Christ Church (Brondesbury) CE Primary School

Search & Confiscate Policy

Annex to Safeguarding and Behaviour Policies



Date Approved	May 2025
Date of next review	Summer 2026
Signature	

Christ Church (Brondesbury) CE Primary School

School Vision

Christ Church (Brondesbury) CE Primary School is a vibrant, welcoming and inclusive school at the centre of our diverse local community. We are perceived as a “family” by all who know us. As a Christian school, we encourage everyone to be their best and to grow in God’s creation. We provide a supportive, safe, respectful and reflective environment in which all flourish irrespective of their culture and belief.

We provide the highest standard of learning for all of our community and encourage them to pursue aspirational goals.

The school's vision is deeply rooted within the scripture passage:

2 Corinthians 8:7

“But as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, and in all eagerness and in the love from us that is in you—make sure that you excel in this act of kindness too.”

Our vision is embedded within the Christian values of:

Compassion, Respect, Friendship, Forgiveness, Perseverance, Wisdom.

Our vision is expressed by all as “**Going for GOLD with faith**”.

This is explained and explored below:

Vision	Demonstrated as
G ive learning your best	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Try your best at everything• Follow the “give me five” rules
O wn your choices	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Be respectful and polite• Be honest and take responsibility for your words and actions
L ove yourself, as God loves you	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Love yourself, for you are special• Love your neighbours with all your heart
D ream big, work hard and pray	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Aim high• Always be ready to learn• With prayer, everything is possible

This policy reflects and supports our school vision in that through our safeguarding & child protection and behaviour procedures we strive to “...provide a supportive, safe and respectful environment in which all flourish...” This is also reflected in every strand of our Going for GOLD with faith statement.

Policy Rationale

Following the Safeguarding Practice Review from the case of Child Q, the DfE reviewed and updated its guidance on Searching, Screening and Confiscation in schools.

The updated DfE guidance placed a larger emphasis on the school's safeguarding duty in respect of these issues, including:

- A change in approach on which staff members can search
- That schools should record certain searches in their safeguarding system
- New guidance on what schools should do before, during and after a search
- New guidance on strip searches and supporting the pupil afterwards
- That where possible, schools should inform parents of a search for a prohibited item **before** they carry out a search. Schools should **always** inform parents of any search for prohibited items and the outcome as soon as practicable
- The importance of staff understanding the rights of the pupil being searched

As schools have a duty of care to all pupils and staff, this means that we should balance:

- The need to safeguard all pupils by confiscating harmful, illegal, or disruptive items
- The safeguarding needs and wellbeing of pupils suspected of possessing these items

[Keeping Children Safe in Education](#) (KCSIE) sets out the statutory duty of all staff to make sure that they make decisions in the best interests of the child. This applies to decisions to search pupils and confiscate items.

Schools should also consider that all pupils have a right to expect a reasonable level of personal privacy, under [Article 8](#) of the European Convention on Human Rights. Any 'interference' with this right by the school must be justified and proportionate.

While a school will only search a pupil if they have good reason to, we must consider that, for the pupil, it could infringe upon their wellbeing and rights in several different ways. For example:

- Physical loss of privacy when clothes, bags, or possessions are searched
- Loss of a sense of security, if they feel they are being monitored and searched without reason
- The impact to a pupil's dignity or reputation if they are unduly searched or suspected of possessing prohibited items

Understanding of possible bias

As a school we are aware of, and encourage staff to be especially vigilant about, possible biases affecting decisions to carry out or escalate searches. [The Safeguarding Review into the Child Q](#) case found that "racism (whether deliberate or not) was likely to have been an influencing factor in the decision to undertake a strip-search".

We will review the data from our record of searches annually to see if any groups are disproportionately subject to searches.

Confiscations as a safeguarding issue

Children in possession of drugs, alcohol or weapons should be considered vulnerable and at risk of exploitation. Paragraph 18 of [KCSIE](#) highlights the need to be alert to the potential risks of children who are:

- Showing signs of being drawn in to anti-social or criminal behaviour

- In challenging family circumstances, such as drug and alcohol misuse
- Misusing drugs or alcohol themselves

A search can play a vital role in identifying pupils who may benefit from early help or a referral to the local authority children's social care services. Our designated safeguarding lead (DSL) will make an immediate referral if they find evidence that a child is at risk of harm.

The DSL will be informed of any searching incidents that are believed to have revealed a safeguarding risk, or gave reasonable grounds to suspect that a pupil was in possession of a prohibited item (see the section below for a list of such items).

Staff members who can conduct searches

Only the Headteacher / DSL, and members of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) will be authorised to conduct searches. They can do this if:

- The pupil agrees to the search, **or**
- The authorised staff member has 'reasonable grounds' (more on this below) to suspect that the pupil may have a prohibited or banned item (see the next section for definitions of these)

This is outlined in paragraphs 2, 4 and 10 of the [DfE's guidance on searching and screening](#).

The Headteacher can:

- Authorise members of staff to search for specific items (e.g. alcohol only), or all banned items
- Require a security staff member (including those who aren't school staff) to conduct a search

Under law:

- The person carrying out the search **must** be the same sex as the pupil being searched
- There **must** be another member of staff present as a witness to the search

The only exception to this is if:

- The searcher reasonably believes that there is a risk of serious harm being caused to a person if a search isn't carried out urgently **and**
- It's not reasonably practical to summon another member of staff (to carry out the search or act as a witness) within the time available

The member of staff witnessing the search must also be the same sex as the pupil being searched **if** this is reasonably practicable ([paragraph 6\(d\)](#) of section 550ZB of the Education Act 1996) .

When an authorised staff member conducts a search without a witness, they should immediately report it to another member of staff, and make sure that a record is kept (see the section on how to record searches for more support).

(Note on "Reasonable grounds")

There is no specific guidance on what 'reasonable grounds' to suspect a pupil has prohibited items means. This is up to the school to decide what it may be. For example, a staff member may:

- Hear the pupil or other pupils talking about an item
- Be told directly of an item
- See an item

- Notice a pupil behaving in a way that causes them to suspect that the pupil is concealing an item

The school may use CCTV footage to decide whether to search for an item (paragraph 9 of the DfE guidance).

The Headteacher will ensure all staff who are authorised to carry out a search know what 'reasonable grounds' means in the school, and apply it consistently.

What can be searched for?

Headteachers and authorised staff members can search a pupil for:

- Any items with the pupil's informed consent
- Prohibited or banned items, with or without the pupil's consent

Prohibited items are:

- Knives or weapons
- Alcohol
- Illegal drugs
- Stolen items
- Tobacco (including vapes and e-cigarettes) and cigarette papers
- Fireworks
- Pornographic images
- Any article that the member of staff reasonably suspects has been, or is likely to be, used to:
 - Commit an offence
 - Cause personal injury (including the pupil) or damage to property

This list is set out in [The Education Act 1996](#) and paragraph 3 of the DfE's guidance on searching, screening and confiscation.

In addition to the list above, Headteachers and authorised staff members can also search for other specific items banned in our school, such as mobile phones or other communication or recording devices taken into the classroom without prior consent.

Protocol for carrying out a search

Before the search

The Headteacher or authorised staff member should:

- Make an assessment of how urgent the search is, and consider the risk to other pupils and staff
- Explain to the pupil why they are being searched, how and where the search will happen, and give them the opportunity to ask questions about it
- Always seek the pupil's cooperation

If the pupil refuses to cooperate

In this case, the authorised member of staff should first consider why this is, and act proportionally. It may be that the pupil:

- Is in possession of a prohibited or banned item
- Doesn't understand your instructions or what a search will involve
- Has had a previous distressing experience of being searched

If the pupil still refuses to cooperate:

- The authorised staff member may sanction them in line with the school's behaviour policy
- If the authorised staff member does not think that a search is needed urgently, they should seek advice from the Headteacher / DSL. During this time, the pupil should be supervised somewhere away from other pupils
- Assess whether it's necessary to use reasonable force to conduct the search. Consider whether this would prevent the pupil from harming themselves or others, damaging property or causing disorder. **Note:** the authorised staff member can only use reasonable force to search for prohibited items but not other items banned in your school

Searching a pupil's clothing

A pupil must be searched in an appropriate location that offers privacy from other pupils.

Authorised staff can search a pupil's pockets and require pupils to remove outer clothing, meaning clothes that are not worn directly next to the skin or over underwear. Outer clothing also includes:

- Gloves
- Scarves
- Shoes

You **cannot** ask pupils to take off any further items of clothing.

Staff will be sensitive to whether a pupil is wearing outer clothing for religious reasons when you conduct a search. For example, we would not require a female pupil to remove a headscarf she is wearing for religious reasons if the witness is male.

Searching a pupil's possessions

Authorised staff can search school trays and bags in the presence of the pupil and another member of staff (except in cases where there's a risk of harm and where it's not reasonably practicable to summon another member of staff - see section above on who can conduct a search for more detail).

Carrying out strip searches

School staff are **not** allowed to carry out strip searches, including the Headteacher and authorised staff. Only police who have been asked to come to the school may decide whether a search is necessary and carry it out.

The police can only carry out a search if they:

- Think this is necessary to remove an item related to a criminal offence, **and**
- Reasonably consider the pupil might have concealed such an item

The school will always put the best interest of the child first. This means that before we decide to call the police into school we will first:

- Make sure that we have exhausted other approaches
- Carefully weigh up the risks to the pupil's mental and physical wellbeing with the need to conduct a search

Before a strip search

- Where reasonably possible, parents will be notified that a strip search will happen (and will **always** be informed after it has been carried out)
- We will ensure that an 'appropriate adult' is present during the search

An 'appropriate adult' is a person whose role is to safeguard the rights and welfare of children who are suspected of a criminal offence, by ensuring they're treated fairly and are able to participate effectively.

See the [National Appropriate Adult Network's resources](#) for more information on this term.

During a strip search

- The police officers conducting a strip search **must** be the same sex as the pupil
- There **must** be at least 2 people present other than the pupil, including the 'appropriate adult'. The search may only take place without an appropriate adult if:
 - It is an urgent case where there is risk of serious harm to the pupil or others
 - The pupil explicitly states that they do not want an appropriate adult present for the search, and the appropriate adult agrees and signs a record of the pupil's decision
- The appropriate adult should be the same sex as the pupil, unless they specifically request someone else

The role of the appropriate adult

The role of the appropriate adult is to advocate for pupils' wellbeing at all times. A strip search can be highly distressing for the pupil, and for staff and other pupils affected.

The police **cannot** overrule your safeguarding duty, for example by requesting that the appropriate adult leave the room when they talk to the pupil. Make sure that your staff know this.

Supporting the pupil after a strip search

We will always put safeguarding at the centre when supporting the pupil, regardless of whether a prohibited item is found. The pupil should have an opportunity to express their views regarding the search.

If a prohibited item is found:

- It will be considered as a safeguarding matter as well as a police matter
- Relevant staff such as the DSL will be involved and the pupil will be treated as potentially vulnerable

If a prohibited item is not found:

- We will take a safeguarding approach to supporting the pupil to cope with the experience of being searched
- We will consider the wider safeguarding issues that may have informed the decision to request a search in the first place

Recording Searches

The school will make a record in our safeguarding reporting system (CPOMS) of:

- Any searches for prohibited items
- Any search conducted by police officers

These will be recorded whether or not any items were found.

Searches for other items banned by the school will also be recorded.

School records will be scrutinised to look for any trends in the searches carried out and to identify any possible risks that may require a safeguarding response.

(A copy of the search record can be seen as Appendix 1)

Items which can be confiscated by the school

Authorised staff members can confiscate any item they find that they have reasonable grounds for suspecting:

- Poses a risk to staff or pupils
- Is a prohibited or banned item (such as communication or recording devices)
- Is evidence in relation to an offence

Items which have been confiscated will be dealt with in the following manner:

Controlled drugs, or substances you suspect are controlled drugs or could be harmful	Deliver to the police (or safely dispose of if there is a good reason to do so)
Alcohol	Retain or dispose of as appropriate
Tobacco (including vapes or e-cigarettes) or cigarette papers	Retain or dispose of as appropriate
Fireworks	Retain or dispose of as appropriate
Stolen items	Deliver to the police, return to the owner, or dispose of if there is a good reason to do so
Weapons or items which are evidence of a suspected offence	Deliver to the police as soon as possible
Items that have been (or are likely to be) used to cause injury or property damage	Deliver to the police, return to the owner, or dispose of if there is a good reason to do so
Pornographic material	Dispose of (see the section below for guidance)
Pornographic material that you suspect constitutes a specific offence (i.e. it is extreme or an indecent image of a child)	Deliver to the police as soon as possible

In cases where there are multiple options, the Headteacher's professional judgement will be used. In doing so, the Headteacher will consider:

- The value of the item
- Whether returning the item to the owner may place someone at risk of harm, or disrupt learning
- Whether it's appropriate to return the item
- Whether the item can be practically and safely disposed of

Authorised members of staff can also confiscate, retain or dispose of a pupil's property as a disciplinary measure where it's reasonable to do so, as set out in [section 91 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006](#).

Searching and confiscating electronic devices

Authorised staff members may examine any data or files on an electronic device that they have confiscated, if they have good reason to do so.

This will be done where the staff member reasonably suspects that the device has (or could be used to):

- Cause harm
- Undermine the safe environment of the school or disrupt teaching
- Commit an offence

If inappropriate images, video, or other material is discovered, the school will dispose of them unless we have reasonable grounds to suspect that their possession is related to a specific illegal offence.

In this case, we will not destroy the material. Instead, we will hand the material, or device containing the material, over to the police as soon as possible.

If we suspect we may find an indecent image or video of a child on a device, we will avoid viewing it and never copy, share, or save it.

These incidents will be referred to the Headteacher / DSL who will follow the DfE's [guidance](#) on responding to pornographic image-sharing in education settings.

Appendix 1: Record of Search

Date of search		Time	
Pupil name		Class	
Adults present			
Reason for search (Include details of what is being searched for and why)			
Has the child consented to this search?			
Yes		No	
If no – what grounds are there for continuing with the search?			
Have the parents been contacted prior to the search?			
Yes		No	
Please write the date and time when parents have been contacted.			
Date		Time	
Items found			
Follow-up action			
Procedure checked & signed by 3rd Party SLT member			
SLT member			Date