Searching, Screening and Confiscation Policy

September 2026

THE JO RICHARDSON
SUCCESS FOR ALL
COMMUNITY SCHOOL
ACHIEVE

Date of previous review	September 2025
Review frequency	Annually
Date of next review	September 2027

JRCS is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and expects all staff to share this commitment.

Objectives

This policy is intended to explain the school's powers of screening and searching students so that JRCS staff have the confidence to use them. In particular, it explains the use of the power to search students without consent. It also explains the powers the school has to seize and then confiscate items found during a search. It includes statutory guidance which schools must have regard to.

The Department for Education released Departmental Advice called 'Searching, Screening and Confiscation' in July 2022. This advice applies to all schools in England.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/62d1643e8fa8f50bfbefa55c/Searching__Screening_and_Confiscation_guidance_July_2022.pdf

Please also read this policy in conjunction with the Policy on the Use of Reasonable Force and Other Restrictive Interventions.

Use of reasonable force and other restrictive interventions guidance

Statement of intent

We take our duty of care very seriously. We want students to come to school and feel safe and respected. We place our trust in them to do the right thing and we provide educational opportunities to help them make informed decisions. We fully support and actively participate in principles behind being a trauma ready school. We never want our actions to add to the trauma that some students experience in their daily lives. We also acknowledge that a student's expectation of privacy increases as they get older. However, we also understand that students can make poor choices at times and that we must protect our school community. We will intervene if we feel a student or group of students may have on their person something that could be damaging to them or other members of our community. This decision will never be taken lightly, there will always be reasonable grounds for suspicion and SLT must always be informed unless in emergency situations. This is to protect everyone involved.

The above considers the European Convention on Human Rights:

- Under article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights, students have a right to respect for their private life. In the context of these particular powers, this means that students have the right to expect a reasonable level of personal privacy;
- The right under Article 8 is not absolute, it can be interfered with, but any interference with this right by a school (or any public body) must be justified and proportionate;
- The powers to search in the Education Act 1996 are compatible with Article 8. A school exercising those powers lawfully should have no difficulty in demonstrating that it has also acted in accordance with Article 8. This advice will assist schools in deciding how to exercise the searching powers in a lawful way.

This document should be read in conjunction with the school's Behaviour Management, Anti-Bullying, Safeguarding and Child Protection and Use of Reasonable Force Policies.

School staff may wish to consider using CCTV footage to decide whether to screen or conduct a search for an item.

The Headteacher will oversee the school's practice of searching to ensure that a culture of safe, proportionate and appropriate searching is maintained, which safeguards the welfare of all students and staff with support from the Designated Safeguarding Lead (or Deputy). We remain vigilant to bias and monitor recording documents very carefully. **All searches will be logged in the bound book and an entry will be made on our internal Child Protection Monitoring Programme (CPOMS).**

Students in possession of drugs, alcohol or weapons should be considered vulnerable and at risk of exploitation. Keeping Children Safe in Education (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
- At risk of modern slavery or financial exploitation
- Young carers
- Children with specific medical conditions
- Also those who as classed as vulnerable when considering the context in which the school works

The log feeds into our safeguarding process. This is important as a trauma informed school.

1. Screening

What the law allows:

- Schools can require students to undergo screening by a walk-through or hand-held metal detector (arch or wand) even if they do not suspect them of having a weapon and without the consent of the students;
- Schools' statutory power to make rules on student behaviour and their duty as an employer to manage the safety of staff, students and visitors enables them to impose a requirement that students undergo screening;
- Any member of school staff can screen students;
- Screening may also include random full class bag checks for prohibited or banned items;
- This is a protective measure without judgement or accusation.

Also note:

- If a student refuses to be screened, the school may refuse to have the student on the premises. Health and safety legislation requires a school to be managed in a way which does not expose students or staff to risks to their health and safety and this would include making reasonable rules as a condition of admittance;
- If a student fails to comply, and the school does not let the student in, the school has not excluded the student and the student's absence should be treated as unauthorised. The student should comply with the rules and attend;
- This type of screening, without physical contact, is not subject to the same conditions as apply to the powers to search without consent;
- If a wand is used it must be done by a person of the same sex (unless in an emergency situation) and ideally with a witness. This is to protect all involved.

2. Searching

What the law says:

Searching with consent

Schools' common law powers to search:

- School staff (as identified by the Headteacher) can search students with their consent for any item;
- The ability to give consent may be influenced by the child's age or other factors.
- We will always uphold consider the needs of SEN students in this process.

Also note:

- Schools 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;
- It is clear in the school behaviour policy and in communications to parents and students what items are banned. These are also identified in the student planner;
- If a member of staff suspects a student has a banned item in his/her possession, they can instruct the student to turn out his or her pockets or bag and, if the student refuses, the teacher 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, schools can apply an appropriate disciplinary penalty;
- It is likely that a student who refuses to be searched will be removed from the school population until their parent or responsible adult can attend school. The search will then occur in their presence.

SLT should be advised before any search occurs, even if consent is given. This is to protect all parties involved.

Searching without a student's consent
Only Headteachers and staff authorised by them have the statutory power to search students or their possessions, without consent, where they have reasonable grounds for suspecting that student may have a prohibited item. A prohibited item is different to a banned one. Prohibited items are usually illegal items such as knives and drugs (including vapes) or any item that can pose a risk to the security of the school and individuals within it.

What you can search for
You can only undertake this type of search if you have 'reasonable grounds' for suspecting a student may have a prohibited item in their possession.

It is up to the school to decide what 'reasonable grounds' might be. For example:
- Hear other students talking about the prohibited item; or
- Notice a student behaving in a way that causes you to suspect they're concealing a prohibited item.

Prohibited items are:
- Knives or weapons;
- Alcohol;
- Illegal drugs and controlled substances (including vapes);
- Stolen items;
- Tobacco and cigarette papers;
- Fireworks;
- Pornographic images;
- Items that may be used for making or sharing nudes or semi nudes, including AI-generated imagery;
- Any article that the member of staff reasonably suspects has been, or is likely to be, used to:
    - Commit an offence;
    - Cause personal injury or damage to property.

We can also search for any item that:
- Is banned by the school's rules as identified in the Behaviour Management Policy; **and**
- Has been identified in the rules as an item which may be searched for.

Force should not be used when searching for banned items. At this stage, the Policy on the Use of Reasonable Force and Other Restrictive Interventions will be applied until parents/carers can arrive to support the school.

We will always use the least invasive measure possible. We may also call the police if we feel any law has been or could be broken.

CCTV may be used as an identification tool.

Who can do the search?
Only the Headteacher or a member of school staff authorised by them can search without consent.

The searcher must be the same sex as the student being searched, and another staff member must be present (if possible, they should be the same sex as well).

However, staff can search an opposite sex student and/or search without a witness present where:
- There is a risk that serious harm will be caused to a person if they don't conduct the search immediately; and
- It isn't reasonably practicable to summon another member of staff.

Staff, other than security staff, can refuse to undertake a search. The law states that Headteachers may not require anyone other than a member of the school security staff to undertake a search. The required training will be given to all those authorised to search.

If volunteers are authorised to conduct searches, they must have appropriate DBS checks. Any volunteer frequently involved in searching, screening or supervising children is in regulated activity and requires an enhanced DBS check with children's barred list information.

Where can a student be searched?
Searches without consent can only be carried out on the school premises or, if elsewhere, where the member of staff has lawful control or charge of the student, for example, on a school trip in England.

The powers only apply in England.

This must be recorded as the use of restrictive practice line with the Policy on the Use of Reasonable Force and Other Restrictive Interventions.

During a search
The extent of the authorised search covers clothes, possessions, desks, electronic devices and lockers.

Clothing
The searcher may not require the student to remove any clothing other than outer clothing (ie, clothing not worn next to the skin or immediately over underwear).

Intimate searches can only be conducted by a person with more extensive powers (eg, a police officer). We operate a child first policy and would request that police either contact the parents or conduct the search at the police station following their own procedures. We would always challenge such a decision. The rights of the child will always be championed.

Possessions - lockers, desks and bags
These 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 they don't conduct the search immediately; and
- It isn't reasonably practicable to summon another member of staff

Lockers and desks: These are allocated to students on the condition that they consent to having these searched for any item whether or not they are present.

When electronic devices are searched and harmful content is discovered, this information will feed into our annual filtering and monitoring review process, conducted by the Senior Leadership Team member responsible for this area, supported by the DSL and IT support, as required by KCSIE 2026.

Use of force
Staff can use reasonable force when conducting a search for any prohibited items listed above (see also Policy on the Use of Reasonable Force and Other Restrictive Interventions).

Such force cannot be used to search for items banned under school rules which do not come under the heading of prohibited items.

Being in possession of a prohibited item – especially knives, weapons, illegal drugs or stolen items – may mean that the pupil is involved, or at risk of being involved, in anti-social or criminal behaviour including gang involvement, and in some cases may be involved in child criminal exploitation. A search may 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.

Ealy identification can save lives.

Only SLT (as directed by the Headteacher) can carry out searches without consent. Use of force is never acceptable as a form of punishment.
We offer a student first policy in this building.

3. Confiscating items and other actions following a search

Education and Inspections Act 2006
You can confiscate, retain or dispose of a student's property as a disciplinary penalty, where reasonable to do so.

A person 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.

If an item is classed as an offensive weapon, it must be passed to the police.

There are ways you should handle specific legally prohibited items (see below).

Weapons or items which are evidence of an offence
Pass these on to the police as soon as possible. Staff must remain vigilant around the use of knives and weapons. All concerns must be raised immediately with the DSL and senior staff.

Alcohol, tobacco and cigarette papers, vapes, fireworks
Either retain or dispose of these, but do not return them to the student.

Controlled substances and drugs
In most cases, deliver these to the police as soon as possible.

However, you can dispose of them if you think there's a good reason to do so. Take into account the relevant circumstances and use your professional judgement to determine whether you can safely dispose of it yourself.

If you are not sure of the legal status of a substance but you have reason to believe it may be a controlled drug, treat it as such.

Other substances
These can be confiscated if they are believed to be harmful or detrimental to good order and discipline.

Stolen items
If the items are valuable or illegal, deliver these to the police as soon as possible.

If they are low value, you may return them to the owner if you think there is a good reason to do so or retain or dispose of them if returning them is not practicable.

Banned items under school rules
Please refer to the Behaviour Management Policy.

If a criminal offence is suspected, we will always refer to our School's Police Liaison Team for advice.

When prohibited items are found that may indicate exploitation (including modern slavery, financial exploitation, or criminal exploitation), the DSL must be informed immediately to determine whether a safeguarding referral is required. This is particularly relevant when students are found with:

- Large amounts of cash or valuable items;
- Items suggesting involvement in criminal activity;
- Drugs or weapons that may indicate county lines involvement.

Electronic devices (Headteacher and designated staff only)
If during a search you find an electronic device, you may examine its data or files if you have a good reason to do so and:

- The device is prohibited by school rules; or
- You reasonably suspect it has been, or is likely to be, used to:
    - Commit an offence;
    - Cause personal injury or damage to property.

You may delete data or files if you think there is a good reason to do so, unless they are going to be given to the police.

This power applies to all schools and there is no need to have parental consent to search through a student's phone if it has been seized in a lawful 'without consent' search and is prohibited by the school rules or it is reasonably suspected of being, or being likely to be, used to commit an offence or cause personal injury or damage to property.

A 'good reason' to examine devices or erase data or files is if you reasonably suspect that data or files on the device in question have been, or could be, used to:

- Cause harm;
- Disrupt teaching;
- Break the school rules;
- Undermine the safe environment;
- Used to commit an offence.

In determining whether there is a 'good reason' to erase any data or files from the device, the member of staff should consider whether the material found may constitute evidence relating to a suspected offence. In those instances, the data or files should not be deleted, and the device must be handed to the police as soon as it is reasonably practicable. If the data or files are not suspected to be evidence in relation to an offence, a member of staff may delete the data or files if the continued existence of the data or file is likely to continue to cause harm to any person and the pupil and/or the parent refuses to delete the data or files themselves.

Evidence related to an offence
If you have reason to believe that the device contains evidence in relation to an offence, you must give the device to the police as soon as reasonably practicable.

If you search the device and find data or files related to the offence, do not delete these before handing the device over.

Inappropriate images
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.

Any such concerns must be reported to the Headteacher and DSL.

Please see Appendix 1 for more information.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/647389/Overview_of_Sexting_Guidance.pdf

Harmful Sexual Behaviour (HSB) Continuum
When examining electronic devices, staff should be aware that harmful sexual behaviour exists on a continuum, as outlined in KCSIE 2026 Part Five. Any concerns identified through device searches should be assessed within this framework, and the DSL must be consulted to determine the appropriate safeguarding response, which may range from education and support to formal safeguarding procedures.

4. Reporting searches

Informing parents
Our partnership with parents is critical. We want to keep them informed about every element of their child's school experience.

Parents will always be informed of any search for a prohibited item that has taken place, and the outcome of the search as soon as is practicable. A member of staff will inform the parents of what, if anything, has been confiscated and the resulting action the school has taken, including any sanctions applied.

Parents will always be informed of any search for a prohibited item that has taken place, and the outcome of the search as soon as is practicable. However, where safeguarding concerns are identified during a search, the timing of parental notification will be determined in consultation with the DSL to ensure the child's safety is prioritised. In some cases, immediate notification may not be appropriate.

Internal records
All searches must be recorded using the bound book and logged on CPOMS.

Complaints about screening or searching should be dealt with through the normal school Complaints Policy.

Staff have 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 loss of, or damage to, any item they have confiscated, provided they acted lawfully.

The following information should be recorded for any search by a member of staff for a prohibited item and all searches conducted by police officers. This is regardless of if anything was found.

The incident needs to be logged in the bound book and on CPOMS:

- the date, time and location of the search;
- which pupil was searched;
- who conducted the search and any other adults or pupils present;
- what was being searched for;
- the reason for searching;
- what items, if any, were found; and
- what follow-up action was taken as a consequence of the search.

Search levels will be monitored in the spirit of self-improvement.

Legislation considered when forming this policy:

- Coroners and Justice Act 2009
- Criminal Justice and Immigration Act 2008
- Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974
- The Education Act 1996
- The Education and Inspections Act 2006
- The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2014
- The Schools (Specification and Disposal of Articles) Regulations 2012

APPENDIX 1

Making or Sharing of Nudes or Semi-Nudes (including AI-generated imagery

Information provided by the School's Police Liaison Team for clarity.

The term 'nudes or semi-nudes' replaces previous terminology including 'sexting', 'youth produced sexual imagery', and 'indecent images of children'. This includes images that are:

- Created, shared, or possessed by children under 18;
- Of a sexual nature;
- Digitally altered or wholly generated by artificial intelligence (eg, deepfakes).

All incidents involving the making or sharing of nudes or semi-nudes mandate a safeguarding response, as outlined in KCSIE 2026.

Should the image be viewed?

Staff and parents or carers must not intentionally view any nudes and semi-nudes unless there is good and clear reason to do so as outlined below. Wherever possible, responses to incidents should be based on what DSLs (or equivalents) have been told about the content of the imagery.

It is important that all members of staff are clear on what they can and cannot do in relation to viewing nudes and semi-nudes and that this is communicated to any child, young person or parent and carer requesting that imagery be viewed.

The decision to view any imagery should be based on the professional judgement of the DSL (or equivalent) and should always comply with the child protection policy and procedures of the education setting. Imagery should never be viewed if the act of viewing will cause significant distress or harm to any child or young person involved.

If a decision is made to view imagery, the DSL (or equivalent) would need to be satisfied that viewing:

- is the only way to make a decision about whether to involve other agencies because it is not possible to establish the facts from any child or young person involved;
- is necessary to report it to a website, app or suitable reporting agency (such as the IWF) to have it taken down, or to support the child or young person or parent or carer in making a report;
- is unavoidable because a child or young person has presented it directly to a staff member, or nudes or semi-nudes have been found on an education setting's device or network.

If it is necessary to view the imagery, then the DSL (or equivalent) should:

- never copy, print, share, store or save them; this is illegal. If this has already happened, please contact your local police for advice and to explain the circumstances;
- discuss the decision with the Headteacher or a member of the Senior Leadership Team;
- make sure viewing is undertaken by the DSL (or equivalent) or another member of the safeguarding team with delegated authority from the Headteacher or a member of the Senior Leadership Team;
- make sure viewing takes place with another member of staff present in the room, ideally the Headteacher or a member of the Senior Leadership Team. This staff member does not need to view the images;
- wherever possible, make sure viewing takes place on the premises of the education setting, ideally in the Headteacher or a member of the Senior Leadership Team's office;
- make sure wherever possible that they are viewed by a staff member of the same sex as the child or young person 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 nudes or semi-nudes were viewed and any subsequent actions. Ensure this is signed and dated and meets any appropriate wider standards, eg, such as those set out in statutory safeguarding guidance and local authority policies and procedures;

- if any devices need to be taken and passed onto the police, the device(s) should be confiscated and the police should be called. The device should be disconnected from Wi-Fi and data and turned off immediately to avoid imagery being removed from the device remotely through a cloud storage service. The device should be placed in a secure place, for example in a locked cupboard or safe until the police are able to come and collect it.

Further details on searching, deleting and confiscating devices can be found in the DfE's Searching, Screening and Confiscation advice (note this advice is for schools only). Any procedures for searching, deleting and confiscating devices should be included in the educational setting's safeguarding or child protection procedures.

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sharing-nudes-and-semi-nudes-advice-for-education-settings-working-with-children-and-young-people

APPENDIX 2

Search recording document

We must log via the bound book all students who have been subject to a search and record the following details on CPOMS

Date –

Student name –

Reason for the search –

Was this voluntary – Y / N

Name of staff conducting the search –

Name of staff observing the search –

Outcome –

Parents' response –

APPENDIX 3

Mobile phones – June 2026

Mobile phones in schools - GOV.UK

As with most schools in the UK, there is a total ban of phones in JRCS. This occurred in September 2025. Phones and electronic devices are banned items.

In September 2026, this ban has been taken one step further in line with Government guidelines and wellbeing advice.

Smartphones are banned in Years 7–9. Students must not have them in their bag or on their person. They are totally banned from JRCS and its immediate vicinity.

Years 10–11 may have them in their bag, but they must not be seen or heard in school.

Years 12–13 may use the devices in restricted areas.

This is covered at length in the Behaviour Management Policy, but a summary is below.

- Mobile phones are banned in school.
- They must be turned off and placed in the bottom of a student's bag before they enter any of the school buildings.
- If students look at their phone OR it goes off in their bag, it will be confiscated. If this is the first offence, it will be taken for one day until parents/carers collect. If it is a repeat event, it will be confiscated for five days.