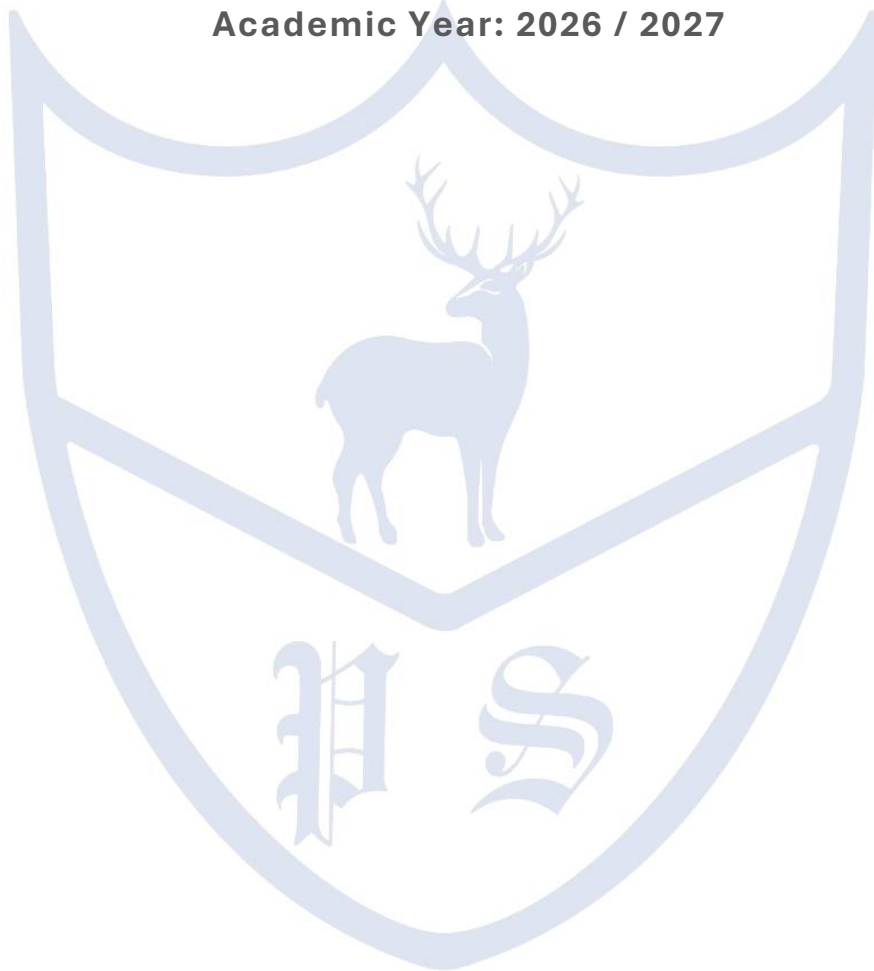


Search & Confiscation Policy

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PARK SCHOOL

Aim of policy:

The aim of this policy is to provide a clear framework for conducting searches that safeguards the welfare, health, safety and wellbeing of pupils and staff. The core principle is to respect the dignity, privacy and rights of all individuals. **Park School** is committed to maintaining a safe, respectful and supportive environment in which pupils can live and learn. While the School seeks to develop relationships based on trust, mutual respect and personal responsibility, there may be exceptional circumstances in which a search is necessary to prevent harm, protect individuals, recover prohibited items or investigate serious concerns.

The School recognises that any search has the potential to impact a pupil's dignity and wellbeing. Searches will therefore only be undertaken when justified, lawful, proportionate and in accordance with safeguarding principles and statutory guidance.

Related Guidance and School Policies

This policy outlines the school policy and procedures relating to searches and confiscation of items but is not exhaustive in its scope and should be used in conjunction with the following policies, statutory guidance and advice:

Policies:

- *Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy*
- *Behaviour & Sanction Policy*
- *Early Years Framework*
- *Accessibility Plan*
- *Complaints & Concerns Policy*
- *Crisis Management Policy*
- *Drug, Alcohol & Tobacco Misuse Policy*
- *Educational Visits & Offsite Activities Policy*
- *EDI Policy*
- *Low Level Concerns Policy*
- *Whistleblowing Policy*
- *Risk Assessment Policy*
- *SEND Policy*

Statutory & Regulatory Guidance:

- *Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026*
- *Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026*
- *Searching, Screening and Confiscation in Schools — July 2023*
- *Behaviour in Schools — February 2024*
- *Use of Reasonable Force in Schools DfE 2013 (updated April 2026)*
- *Restrictive Interventions, Including the Use of Reasonable Force, in Schools — effective April 2026*

- *Equality Act 2010: Advice for Schools — June 2018*
- *SEND Code of Practice: 0 to 25 Years — updated September 2024*
- *Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Statutory Framework — effective September 2026*
- *Education Act 1996, s.550ZA–550ZD and Education Act 2011 — the statutory power to search without consent and the list of prohibited items*
- *[ADD: Education and Inspections Act 2006, s.93 — use of reasonable force]*
- *Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 and Psychoactive Substances Act 2016 — handling and disposal of confiscated substances*
- *Sharing Nudes and Semi-Nudes: Advice for Education Settings — UKCIS, March 2024 (searching and viewing of devices)*

Scope of the Policy

This policy applies to all pupils attending **Park School**, across all age groups. It applies to the searching of:

- Pupils' possessions.
- Personal belongings.
- Bags, lockers and storage areas.
- Electronic devices.

Pupils are informed about this policy through induction procedures, behaviour expectations and other age-appropriate communications. This policy is also published on the School website.

The School recognises that pupils have a right to privacy under Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights. However, this right is qualified and may be lawfully and proportionately restricted where necessary to protect children, safeguard welfare, prevent crime and protect property.

Principles Governing Searches

Any search undertaken by the School must be guided by the principles of necessity, proportionality, professionalism and safeguarding.

Searches will:

- Only be conducted where there is a legitimate reason.
- Be proportionate to the level of risk and concern.
- Be undertaken respectfully and sensitively.
- Consider the welfare and emotional wellbeing of the pupil.
- Take account of individual circumstances and vulnerabilities.
- Be appropriately recorded.
- Be subject to oversight by senior leaders where required.

The School recognises that maintaining positive relationships and trust within the community should remain a priority at all times, including when difficult decisions are necessary.

Items That May Be Searched For

Searches may be undertaken where staff have reasonable grounds to believe that a pupil may possess a prohibited, banned, dangerous or harmful item.

Items may include:

- Weapons, knives or offensive weapons.
- Alcohol.
- Illegal drugs or controlled substances.
- Stolen property.
- Tobacco products.
- Vaping devices and associated materials.
- Fireworks.
- Pornographic material.
- Extremist material.
- Any item prohibited by School rules.

A search may also be undertaken where staff reasonably suspect that an item has been used, or may be used, to:

- Commit a criminal offence.
- Cause injury or harm.
- Damage property.
- Compromise safeguarding.
- Disrupt the good order or discipline of the School.
- Undermine the safety and wellbeing of others.

For the purposes of this policy, possessions include any item over which a pupil appears to exercise ownership or control, including bags, pockets, desks, lockers, cupboards, electronic devices.

Circumstances in Which a Search May Be Required

A search may be considered where there are reasonable grounds for suspicion.

Such circumstances may include:

- Significant behavioural changes.
- Credible reports from pupils, staff or parents.
- Observation of prohibited items.
- Safeguarding concerns.
- Information arising from School investigations.
- Evidence from CCTV systems.
- Concerns relating to theft.
- Concerns regarding harmful, dangerous or illegal materials.
- Risks to health, welfare or safety.

Where circumstances allow, the reasons for the search and the basis for any suspicion should be documented before the search is undertaken.

Searches Conducted with Consent

Wherever possible, the School will seek a pupil's cooperation and consent before undertaking a search.

Staff should explain:

- Why the search is necessary.
- What is being searched for.
- How the search will be conducted.
- What may happen if prohibited items are found.

Pupils should normally be given the opportunity to voluntarily produce any item being sought before a search takes place.

Particular care will be exercised where pupils:

- Have Special Educational Needs or Disabilities.
- Have experienced trauma.
- Have communication difficulties.
- Have identified emotional vulnerabilities.
- Have cultural or religious considerations that may be relevant.

Reasonable adjustments will be made wherever appropriate.

Verbal consent may be sufficient for many searches.

Searches Conducted Without Consent

The School recognises that searches without consent should only occur where justified by law, safeguarding concerns or significant risks.

Authorised staff may conduct a search without consent where there are reasonable grounds to suspect that a pupil possesses a prohibited item or where there is a serious risk to safety, welfare or discipline.

Where a search is conducted without consent:

- The decision must be justifiable and proportionate.
- The least intrusive approach should be used.
- The dignity and welfare of the pupil must remain paramount.
- Senior authorisation should be sought whenever reasonably practicable.

The fact that an item is not found does not mean that the decision to search was inappropriate if reasonable grounds existed at the time.

Where concerns involve potentially criminal activity, illegal substances, weapons or other serious matters, the School may involve the police and other relevant agencies.

Authority to Conduct Searches

Where a search is required, the matter should normally be referred to the Headmaster.

The Headmaster may authorise an appropriately trained member of staff to conduct a search.

Those authorised may include:

- The Headmaster.
- The Deputy Head.
- The Designated Safeguarding Lead.
- Senior pastoral leaders.
- Other appropriately trained senior staff.

Staff who may conduct searches will receive appropriate training and guidance relating to:

- Safeguarding.
- Searching procedures.
- Behaviour management.
- Privacy and dignity.
- Record keeping.

- Legal responsibilities.

Procedure for Conducting Searches

General Principles

All searches should be undertaken professionally and respectfully.

Wherever possible:

- The pupil should be present.
- Two members of staff should be present.
- A private and appropriate location should be used.
- The reason for the search should be explained.
- The search should be completed promptly and sensitively.

Searches of Possessions

Staff may ask a pupil to:

- Open bags.
- Empty pockets.
- Open lockers.
- Open storage areas.
- Produce specific items.

Staff may inspect possessions reasonably connected to the concern that has arisen.

Personal Searches

The School will not conduct intimate or intrusive physical searches. Strip searches of any kind are strictly prohibited. Pupils must not be required to remove clothing other than outer clothing such as:

- Coats.
- Jackets.
- Gloves.
- Hats.
- Shoes.

Personal searches should be undertaken by a member of staff of the same sex as the pupil, where this is not possible and the incident is of a severe enough nature then the police may be contacted and advice will be sought from the DSL. Force will not be used except where authorised by law and where

reasonably necessary to prevent immediate injury or serious risk in line with the reasonable use of force and restraint policy.

Electronic Devices

Electronic devices may be searched, examined or confiscated where staff have reasonable grounds to believe that they contain content relevant to safeguarding, wellbeing, discipline or criminal concerns.

Circumstances may include concerns regarding:

- Bullying.
- Cyberbullying.
- Harassment.
- Harmful communications.
- Extremism.
- Illegal activity.
- Safeguarding concerns.

Where a device is examined:

- Another member of staff should be present where reasonably possible.
- Examination should be limited to the concern identified.
- Information should be handled confidentially.

Where staff suspect that a device may contain illegal images of a child or other illegal material, they must not intentionally share or distribute such content. The device should be secured immediately, referred to the Designated Safeguarding Lead and, where appropriate, handed to the police.

Confiscation and Disposal of Items

Staff may confiscate items discovered during a search where doing so is lawful, reasonable and necessary.

Confiscated items will be managed in accordance with School policies and statutory guidance.

For example:

- Illegal drugs will normally be handed to the police.
- Suspected stolen property will normally be returned to its owner or handed to the police.
- Dangerous items will be secured safely.
- Prohibited items may be retained, disposed of or returned depending on the circumstances.

Decisions regarding confiscated items will take account of safeguarding, legality and proportionality.

Recording Searches

A written record must be completed following any search.

Records should include:

- The reason for the search.
- The concerns giving rise to suspicion.
- Date, time and location.
- Staff involved.
- Whether consent was obtained.
- What was searched.
- Items located, if any.
- Actions taken.
- Follow-up or safeguarding actions required.

Records will be stored securely and retained in accordance with School safeguarding and data protection procedures.

Informing Parents

The School recognises the importance of working in partnership with parents.

There is no legal requirement to seek parental consent before undertaking a search. However, parents will normally be informed as soon as practicable following any search, whether or not prohibited items are discovered.

Parents will generally be informed immediately where:

- Prohibited items are found.
- Significant safeguarding concerns exist.
- Police involvement is required.
- Serious disciplinary action may follow.

Parental notification may be delayed where informing parents immediately would place a pupil or another person at risk of harm.

Safeguarding Considerations

All searches should be considered within the wider context of safeguarding and pupil welfare.

A search may identify indicators of:

- Neglect.

- Exploitation.
- Substance misuse.
- Bullying.
- Mental health concerns.
- Criminal activity.
- Extremism.

Where safeguarding concerns arise, the matter must be referred to the Designated Safeguarding Lead and managed in accordance with the School's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

Complaints

Any complaint relating to a search, the manner in which it was conducted or decisions arising from it will be managed through the School's Complaints Procedure.

Complaints will be investigated fairly, sensitively and proportionately. Records of complaints and outcomes will be maintained in accordance with School procedures.

Monitoring and Review

The School will review the implementation of this policy regularly to ensure that searches are conducted lawfully, fairly and consistently.

This policy will be reviewed:

- Annually.
- Following changes in legislation or guidance.
- Following safeguarding reviews or audits.
- Following significant incidents.
- Where monitoring identifies the need for amendment.

Through careful implementation of this policy, **Park School** seeks to balance its safeguarding responsibilities with the privacy, dignity and welfare of all pupils, ensuring that searches are only undertaken when genuinely necessary and always in the best interests of the wider School community.