

Hebburn Comprehensive School



Searching, Screening and Confiscation Policy

Statement of Intent

Hebburn Comprehensive School is committed to ensuring a safe and orderly environment for all students and staff. We recognise our legal duty to maintain discipline and to promote the welfare and safety of our school community. This policy sets out the circumstances under which students may be searched or screened, and the procedures for the confiscation of prohibited items, in line with current legislation and DfE guidance.

Legal Framework

This policy is based on the following legislation and guidance:

- Education Act 1996
 - Education and Inspections Act 2006
 - Education Act 2011
 - The School Behaviour (Determination and Publicising of Measures in Academies) Regulations 2012
 - Searching, Screening and Confiscation: Advice for Schools (DfE, July 2022)
 - Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE, latest version)
 - Human Rights Act 1998
 - Equality Act 2010
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Key Principles

- Searches will always be carried out with due regard to the dignity, privacy, and rights of the student.
- Students will not be searched as a punishment but in response to a specific concern.
- Staff authorised to carry out searches or screenings will receive appropriate training.
- Parents will be informed if a prohibited item is found during a search.
- Any safeguarding concerns arising from a search will be dealt with according to the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and/or Behaviour and Reward Policy.

Screening

Hebburn Comprehensive School may require students to undergo screening by a walk-through or hand-held metal detector (arch or wand) as a condition of entry to preserve safety. This is not a search and can be carried out without consent.

- Any refusal to be screened may be treated as a disciplinary matter.
- Screening will be carried out respectfully, and without physical contact.

Searching With Consent

- School staff can search a student for any item with the student's consent.
- Consent does not have to be written — verbal consent is acceptable.
- If a student refuses, disciplinary action may be taken in accordance with the school's Behaviour Policy.

Searching Without Consent

Authorised staff have the legal power to search students or their possessions, without consent, if they have **reasonable grounds** to suspect that a student is in possession of a **prohibited item**.

Prohibited items include:

- Knives or weapons
- Alcohol
- Illegal drugs
- Stolen items
- Tobacco and cigarette papers
- E-cigarettes or vapes
- Fireworks
- Pornographic images
- 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)
- Mobile phones or other items that contravene the school's Behaviour Policy

Searching will be conducted:

- By a same-sex member of staff (unless there is an immediate risk to safety)
- With a witness present (preferably also the same sex)
- In a private space and never in public view

What may be searched:

- The student's clothing, outerwear (e.g., coats), bags, and lockers (with or without the student present)
 - Personal electronic devices, following guidance under Section 90 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006
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Confiscation

School staff can seize any prohibited item found during a search or any item considered harmful or detrimental to school discipline.

- Items may be retained, returned to parents, destroyed, or handed to the police, depending on the nature of the item.
 - Confiscated mobile phones or electronic devices may be searched for data if there is reason to believe the device contains material that poses a safeguarding or criminal risk.
 - If illegal content is found (e.g., indecent images), it must not be shared but referred to the police and safeguarding team immediately.
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Safeguarding Considerations

Any concerns about a student's welfare that arise during a search must be recorded and passed on to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL). This may include possession of items that indicate drug misuse, gang affiliation, or exploitation.

Recording and Communication

- A written record will be made of all searches conducted without consent where prohibited items are found.
 - Parents will be informed if any prohibited item is found and what action is taken.
 - If police involvement is necessary, this will be managed by the senior leadership team.
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Complaints

Complaints about searching, screening, or confiscation will be dealt with through the school's Complaints Policy. Parents and students have the right to raise concerns if they believe a search was conducted improperly.

Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Senior Leadership Team and the Governing Body to ensure it remains compliant with legislation and guidance and continues to meet the needs of the school.

Designated Safeguarding Lead: Mrs S Burdis

Signed:

Head Teacher:



Mr D R Thompson

Chair of Governors:



Mr G Thompson

Ratification Date:

02/10/2025

Date of Next Review:

Autumn Term 2027

Use of Handheld Scanning Wand for Safe Searching

Rationale

The school is committed to maintaining a safe environment for all pupils and staff. The use of a handheld scanning wand supports this commitment by allowing staff to conduct searches safely, respectfully, and efficiently, in line with the Department for Education's guidance *Searching, Screening and Confiscation (July 2022)*.

When a Wand May Be Used

- A handheld wand may be used when there is **reasonable suspicion** that a pupil is in possession of a prohibited or banned item, including but not limited to vapes, mobile phones, electronic devices, or metal objects that may pose a risk.
- A wand may also be used as part of a **routine safety check** (for example, at the start of the school day or before entering certain school events) where authorised by the Head Teacher.
- The wand will **not be used indiscriminately** or as a punitive measure; its use will always be proportionate and justifiable.

Who May Use the Wand

- Only **authorised staff** who have received appropriate training in the use of the handheld scanner and in safe searching protocols may conduct searches using a wand.
- At least one **member of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT)** must be informed prior to any wand-assisted search, unless immediate safety concerns make this impractical.

Procedure for Wand-Assisted Searches

1. **Explanation** – The pupil will be informed of the reason for the search and the method to be used.
2. **Consent** – Where possible, consent will be sought; however, consent is not required if the search is for a prohibited item as defined by law.
3. **Privacy and Dignity** – Searches will be conducted in an appropriate, private location by staff of the same sex as the pupil, and another member of staff will be present as a witness.
4. **Scanning Process** – The wand will be passed over the pupil's clothing and bags without unnecessary physical contact.
5. **Discovery of an Item** – If the wand indicates the presence of metal or a concealed object, the pupil will be asked to reveal or remove the item. If the pupil refuses, the matter will be referred immediately to a senior leader and will follow escalation through school policies.
6. **Recording** – All wand-assisted searches will be recorded, including date, time, staff present, reason for search, and outcome.

Safeguarding and Welfare

- All searches will be conducted with regard to the pupil's welfare and dignity.
- A search will not be used as a form of punishment or humiliation.
- Any concerns arising during a search (e.g. discovery of self-harm implements, evidence of criminal activity, or safeguarding indicators) will be referred to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) immediately.

Accountability and Review

- The Head Teacher will ensure that the use of the wand is monitored and reviewed termly to ensure compliance with statutory guidance and best practice.
- The governing board will be informed annually of the frequency and outcomes of wand-assisted searches as part of safeguarding reporting.