



# ABINGDON

## Search Policy

### **1. Introduction**

Abingdon School aims to provide a calm, safe and supportive environment in which pupils can learn and develop. Whilst the occasions on which a pupil or their property might need to be searched or property confiscated are extremely rare, the school has developed this policy to ensure that any actions are in accordance with legislation referred to in the DfE's [Searching, Screen and Confiscation Advice for Schools July 2022](#).

Pupils have the right to 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. Powers to search pupils are set out in the Education Act 1996 and are compatible with Article 8.

### **2. Searching**

#### ***2.1 Prohibited Items***

Headteachers, and staff they authorise (in Abingdon's case, members of SLT and Heads of House), have a statutory power to search a pupil or their possessions where they have reasonable grounds to suspect that the pupil may have a prohibited item listed in paragraph below or any other item that the school rules identify as an item which may be searched for.

- Knives and weapons
- alcohol
- illegal drugs
- stolen items
- any article that a member of staff reasonably suspects or is likely to be used to commit an offence or cause personal injury to, or damage property of, any person
- tobacco and cigarette papers
- fireworks
- pornographic images

The Senior Leadership Team or the Head of House of the pupil(s) concerned may also conduct a search of a pupil or their possessions where they have reasonable grounds to suspect that the pupils may have an item banned under the school [Behaviour, Rewards and Sanctions Policy](#) and identified in the school rules (this applies to e-cigarettes and vapes for instance).

The Senior Leadership Team or Head of House can search a pupil for any other items if the pupil agrees. They should ensure the pupil understands the reason for the search and how it will be

conducted so that their agreement is informed. The School trains its DSLs (and some members of SLT and Heads of House) in the Search, Screen and Confiscate for Schools certification.

The Senior Leadership Team or Head of Houses can request to view CCTV footage in accordance with the Foundation's [CCTV Policy](#) in order to make a decision as to whether to conduct a search for an item.

## **2.2 Consent to search**

Where appropriate, the pupil will be asked to produce the banned item voluntarily to avoid the need for a search.

Before any search, full consideration will be given to the age and needs of the pupil which includes those with individual needs or special educational needs and reasonable adjustments made if appropriate. The member of staff conducting the search should explain to the pupil why they are being searched, how and where the search is going to take place and give them the opportunity to ask any questions.

In the very rare event that a pupil will not cooperate and the Senior Leadership Team or Head of House consider that, without removing the prohibited item, the pupil poses a threat of harm to themselves or others, minimal force for the minimum amount of time will be used to undertake the search. This applies to prohibited items as listed above but not to search for banned items which are identified only in the school rules. The headteacher should ensure that a sufficient number of staff are appropriately trained in how to lawfully and safely search a pupil who is not co-operating, so that these trained staff can support and advise other members of staff if this situation arises. It is vital that all staff understand their rights and the rights of the pupil who is being searched.

Any search will always be undertaken with a second member of staff present. The DSL will be notified of all searches undertaken as soon as possible after the search and, should the circumstances require, will make any necessary referrals.

If the pupil refuses to comply, this is not necessarily an admission of guilt; however a pupil refusing to co-operate with such a search raises the same kind of issues as where a pupil 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 consider whether disciplinary action is required in line with the school's behaviour policy.

## **2.3 During a search**

An appropriate location, ideally away from other pupils will be used for the search. The person conducting the search will be the same sex as the pupil being searched and will always have a second member of staff (of any sex) unless:

- the member of staff carrying out the search believes there is a risk that serious harm will be caused to a person if the search is not carried out as a matter of urgency and;
- in the time available, it is not reasonably practicable for the search to be carried out by a member of staff who is the same sex as the pupil or for the search to be carried out in the presence of another member of staff.

The person conducting the search may search a pupil's outer clothing, pockets, possession, desk, locker, or in the case of boarders, study-bedroom, but must not require the pupil to remove any clothing other than outdoor clothing.

Strip searches will not be carried out by members of staff and the Headmaster or other members of the Senior Leadership Team should refer to the DfE's Searching, Screen and Confiscation Advice for Schools July 2022 for further guidance on involving the police.

#### **2.4 After a search and Search Log**

The DSL or deputies will be alerted to any search as soon as possible after it has taken place so that any support or further action can be taken. Any searches for a prohibited item will be recorded as a CPOMS Incident on ISAMS and on the Searches Log, whether or not an item has been found. The record will include: the date, time and location of search, the pupil's name, who conducted the search and the other adult(s) present, what was being searched for, the reason for the search, what items if any were found and what follow-up action was taken as a consequence of the search.

Parents will always be informed of any search for a prohibited item and the outcome of the search as soon as possible. Any complaints by parents relating to this policy should be dealt with in accordance with the school's Complaints Policy.

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.

#### **2.5 Confiscation**

Any prohibited item found in a search can be confiscated by the person undertaking the search. The Senior Leadership Team or Head of House of the pupil(s) concerned will follow the [DfE's Searching, Screen and Confiscation Advice for Schools July 2022](#) to determine what happens to the item as appropriate. This may involve contacting the police, disposing of the item safely or returning the item directly to the parents. Head of Houses should always consult with a member of the Senior Leadership Team on what happens to any prohibited item.

Any evidence which is on an electronic device may need to be dealt with by referring to the school's [Safeguarding Policy](#) and [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#) 2023. A member of staff may confiscate a non prohibited item as a disciplinary measure but will return this item to the pupil or to his parents within an appropriate timescale.

### **3. Consequences for pupils**

Where pupils have been searched and found to have prohibited items, the school will refer to the [Behaviour, Rewards and Sanctions Policy](#), [Anti-Bullying Policy](#) and [Discipline and Exclusion Policy](#) as appropriate.

### **4. School Trips**

Searches without consent can only be carried out on the school premises or, where the member of staff has lawful control or charge of the pupil, for example on school trips or in training settings.

Therefore this policy on searches of pupils and their belongings applies irrespective of whether the pupil is at the school or on a non-residential, or residential, trip, outside Abingdon.

There may therefore be occasion to carry out a search on a school trip. If this occasion arises, the trip leader should make an effort to contact a member of SLT to obtain authorisation. If this proves impossible and the circumstances are such as to make a search necessary, the trip leader is empowered to carry out such a search, following all the above procedures. A second member of staff should act as a witness. Full notes must be kept and an incident report submitted in due course to the DSL for inclusion as a Wellbeing Concern on ISAMS and in the Searches Log.

In addition, the School, may, if staff have a reasonable suspicion that alcohol has been consumed and with prior consent from a parent or pupil if over 16, conduct breathalyser tests. This will usually be on School trips or before events and parents and pupils will have been informed and agreed that this may happen in advance.

**Deputy Head (Pastoral)**

Last internal review: May 2026

Last governor review: May 2026

Next governor review: May 2027