



Searching, Screening and Confiscation Policy

Version	Date	Author	Changes
1.0	May 2026	R Martin	Policy Created
1.1	22.05.2026	R Martin	Appendix added.

- 1. Why do we need to search pupils?**
- 2. What we can search for**
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We advise that this policy is read alongside the following policies:

- Behaviour Policy
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (2025)
- Lone Working Policy
- Health and Safety Policy

This policy has been written drawing on the [Searching, Screening and Confiscation Advice for Schools \(DfE, 2022\)](#) guidance.

1. Why do we need to search pupils?

1.1 At Supreme Start School we have a duty to keep staff and pupils safe and provide a safe environment and maintain high standards of behaviour where all can learn. To do this, there may be occasions where it is necessary to search or screen pupils in our setting.

1.2 We define a 'search' of a student as looking for something on the pupil or in their possessions.

1.3 We define 'screening' as using a metal detector to scan pupils for weapons, where this may be necessary.

1.4 Searching pupils can be a distressing experience for those involved and it is not a decision that we take lightly. We ensure that the welfare of those being searched is always considered by staff and understand the vital role that the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) has to play in this process. We also recognise that under Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights, pupils have a right to

respect for their private life – therefore, any interference with this must be justified and proportionate.

2. What we can search for

2.1 We can search for any of these prohibited items:

- Knives and weapons
- Alcohol
- Illegal drugs
- Stolen items
- 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 property of; any person (including the pupil themselves)
- An article specified in regulations^[1]:
 - Tobacco and cigarette papers
 - Fireworks and
 - Pornographic images

2.1.1 We recognise that a child who is in possession of prohibited items could indicate that they have also been the victim of abuse, harm, or exploitation and that this may be an indicator of extra-familial risks that the child faces. Where the school finds a prohibited item, the DSL will be informed and will consider making a referral to Children's Social Care or seeking their advice over the next steps.

2.2 We can also search for items banned in Supreme Start School's behaviour policy.

2.3 We also have the power under common law to search for any other item not listed above with the agreement of the pupil. In such cases, the pupil will be fully informed of the reason for the search and how it will be conducted to ensure that they are able to provide informed consent.

3. The search process

3.1 When we can search

3.1.1 We recognise that searching pupils is intrusive. We will therefore conduct relevant enquiries prior to any search to establish whether this can be avoided (e.g. by asking the pupil to handover the suspected item without being searched, or by checking CCTV).

3.1.2 We can search for the prohibited items listed at **2.1** and banned items at **2.2** if we have reasonable grounds to suspect the pupil may have any of these in their possession.

3.1.3 A search does not have to take place immediately and the pupil may be placed away from other pupils and supervised until a search takes place. A member of staff must liaise with the Headteacher if they believe this course of action is appropriate.

3.2 Where we can search

3.2.1 We will only search pupils on school premises or when they are under our lawful control^[2] (e.g., on a school trip).

3.2.2 We will always search pupils out of view of other pupils unless the search needs to be conducted urgently or the pupil is preventing this from being possible.

3.3 Who can conduct a search

3.3.1 Only the Headteacher or a member of staff authorised by the Headteacher will carry out the search. All these members of staff will understand their rights and the rights of the pupil who is being searched.

3.3.2 The person conducting the search will be the same sex as the pupil. They will always be witnessed by another member of staff who is the same sex. However, in the below limited circumstances, this does not apply:

- The member of staff conducting the search reasonably believes that there is a risk of serious harm to a person if an urgent search is not conducted AND
- It is not reasonably practicable to get a same-sex member of staff to conduct the search OR it is not reasonably practicable for the search to be carried out in the presence of another member of staff.

3.3.3 A member of the school's senior team can conduct a search in line with the above guidance. This will always be overseen by a member of permanent staff at Supreme Start School.

3.4 How we conduct a search

3.4.1 Prior to any search taking place, we will explain to the pupil why it is necessary to search them and give them an opportunity to ask questions. We will also seek to obtain the co-operation of the pupil for the search.

3.4.2 If the pupil refuses to co-operate, we will explore the reasons why this may be. The member of staff conducting the search will speak with members of staff who may know the pupil better to obtain further information. They may explore whether the child is in possession of a prohibited item, whether they have understood the instruction, if they are aware of what such a search might involve or whether they have had a previous distressing experience of being searched. The staff member will work with the child to resolve this.

3.4.3 When conducting a search, we will consider the age and needs of the pupils being searched. This includes any individual needs or SEND, and reasonable adjustments may be required and made in such circumstances.

3.4.4 Where a pupil continues to refuse to co-operate with a search, the member of staff conducting the search will consider whether it is appropriate and proportionate to conduct this using reasonable force. Where practicable, they will liaise with the Headteacher to discuss what the next steps should be. This is only permissible for prohibited items as outlined in paragraph 2.1. The school will not use reasonable force for items which are only identified in the school rules. For refusal to co-operate with a search for banned items the school may still sanction in line with the Behaviour Policy.

For considering whether to use reasonable force to search for a prohibited item the school will specifically consider whether conducting the search will prevent the pupil:

- Harming themselves or others
- Damaging property or
- Causing disorder

Such decisions will be made on a case-by-case basis and the judgement will differ depending on whether the member of staff is searching possessions or the pupil themselves.

3.4.5 Staff members conducting a search in line with **3.4.3** will have received suitable training in how to do this safely and lawfully.

3.4.6 A member of Supreme Start School staff can only search:

- Outer clothing, such as coats, blazers, jumpers, hats, gloves, scarves, and shoes
- Pockets
- Possessions, such as bags and pencil cases

3.4.7 Throughout the search, the members of staff present will consider the age and needs of the pupil and support them appropriately.

4. 'Strip searching' and the role of the police

4.1 We only have the power to search as described in 3.4.5. If the removal of anything more than outer clothing is required during a search, then we will consider contacting the police. Only police officers have the power to carry out this form of search, known as a 'strip search'.

4.2 Prior to contacting the police, we will consider the necessity of a 'strip search', balancing this with the pupil's mental and physical wellbeing. We recognise that such a search is likely to be distressing for a pupil, especially when in school, and we take this into account. As with other forms of searching, we will look to exhaust less invasive methods prior to contacting the police. This course of action would only be taken where there was a serious risk of harm to the child or to others in the setting. The Headteacher will make the decision on whether to contact the police.

4.3 The decision to undertake a 'strip search' is solely that of the police. If they attend Supreme Start School in order to search a pupil, our role is to advocate for that pupil's wellbeing. We are likely to know the pupil better than the police officers

involved and are therefore in an appropriate position to undertake such a role. However, the school will not simply defer to the authority of the police and will challenge or seek clarity about the actions they intend to take. If the school is not satisfied with the course of action and the police still decide to undertake a 'strip search' the school will advocate for the child and record this challenge.

4.4 Ahead of a 'strip search', unless there is an immediate risk of harm, all efforts will be taken to inform the pupil's parents/carers that such a search will be taking place, even if the parent is not acting as the appropriate adult. If this is not possible, they will be contacted immediately afterwards.

4.5 Any 'strip search' of a pupil must be in the presence of at least two others, one of whom will be the 'Appropriate Adult (AA)'^[3]. These adults must be the same sex as the pupil, unless the pupil asks for an AA of a different sex. Only in exceptional circumstances will there be more than two others present.

4.6 A search will only take place without an AA if:

- b)** There is a risk of serious harm to the pupil or others **or**
- b) The pupil states, in the presence of the AA, that they are happy for the search to proceed without the AA being present **and** the AA agrees.

4.7 In cases of 4.6.B, a record will detail this decision and be signed by the AA.

4.8 The school will facilitate the pupil's parents/carers as the AA, where possible.

4.9 As in 4.2, we recognise that 'strip searches' may be highly distressing for the pupil involved, as well as others involved. We will always debrief with those involved and the pupil searched will always have an opportunity to express their views on the search. We will ensure that the pupil searched is appropriately safeguarded by ...

4.10 The school will give particular consideration to any pupils who have been strip searched more than once and/or groups who are more likely to be subjected to strip searching with unusual frequency, and consider preventative approaches.

5. Actions following a search

5.1 The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) should be informed if any prohibited (2.1) or banned (2.2) item is found. They will consider whether this indicates that the child has been harmed or is at risk of harm. If they believe this to be the case, the DSL will make a referral to Children's Social Care. They will be especially mindful of the fact that the possession of a weapon can indicate that the child is being criminally exploited.

5.2 The school will always consider disciplining the child in line with the behaviour policy, this can be considered for both banned and prohibited items (2.2). For prohibited items, the school may need to report to the police.

5.3 All searches will be recorded on the Searching and Screening Form, signed by the Headteacher and uploaded to CPOMS for secure storage.

5.4 Each record will include:

- The date, time, and location of the search
- The name of the pupil being searched
- The member of staff conducting the search and any other adults or pupils present
- The item being searched for
- The reason for searching
- Items found during the search
- Follow-up actions taken as a result of the search

5.5 We will regularly analyse our search data to see if any groups are being disproportionately searched, including strip searching. This will be analysed at school level, group level, individual staff and student level. We will also analyse the data by protected characteristic and use those findings to inform policy and practice which may help ensure we are meeting our duty under the Equality Act 2010. If our records identify such a group, we will put in preventative measures to support this cohort. Part of this analysis will consider whether 'adultification'^[4] has taken place.

5.6 Parents/carers will always be informed of any search of their child.

5.7 Although the Headteacher may not be present during every search, they will oversee the practice of searching to ensure that we foster a culture of safe, proportionate, and appropriate searching. The Proprietor will hold them to account in this area.

5. Screening

6.1 We may require pupils to undergo screening upon entry to our setting. This may take the form of a walk-through arch or by using a wand to scan pupils for weapons.

6.2 If we do consider implementing such a policy, we will consult with our local police to discuss whether this would be appropriate and proportionate to the risks in our community.

6.3 If a pupil refuses to be screened, we will consider the reasons why this may be. We may consider searching them or sanctioning them in line with our behaviour policy, depending on the circumstances.

7. Confiscation

7.1 Following a search, we can confiscate items found. Items may be confiscated if the member of staff searching the pupil has reasonable grounds for suspecting that the item:

- Poses a risk to staff or pupils
- Is prohibited or identified in the Behaviour Policy as a banned item
- Is evidence in relation to an offence

7.2 See the below paragraphs, and the flow charts in Annex A, for how we may deal with specific items that we confiscate.

7.3 Controlled drugs will be delivered to police as soon as possible, unless there is good reason not to. The Headteacher or staff identified by the Headteacher will use their professional judgement when making this decision.

7.4 Alcohol, tobacco, cigarette papers or fireworks will be disposed of safely.

7.5 Pornography will be disposed of appropriately, unless its possession is an offence (e.g., indecent images of children or extreme pornography). In such cases, this will be delivered to or collected by the police as soon as possible.

7.6 Stolen items will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis. Staff will consider the value of the item, whether the item is banned by the school, whether retaining or returning the item may place any person at risk of harm and whether the item can be disposed of safely.

7.7 Knives/weapons and items that are evidence of suspected offences will be delivered to the police as soon as possible.

7.8 Items used/likely to be used to commit offences, cause personal injury or damage to property will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis. Staff must use their professional judgement when deciding how to deal with such items.

7.9 Items banned under school rules will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis in line with our behaviour policy. Staff must use their professional judgement when deciding how to deal with such items and will consider the value, whether it is appropriate to return the item and whether it is likely to disrupt the calm, safe, supportive environment of the school.

8. Electronic devices

8.1 Upon confiscation of any electronic device, staff may examine and erase data if they have good reason to do so:

- Good reason to examine – the member of staff reasonably suspects that data on the device has been or could be used to cause harm, undermine the safe school environment, disrupt teaching, or be used to commit offence.
- Good reason to erase - if this data is not evidence of a criminal offence **and** if the continued existence of the data is likely to continue to cause harm to any person **and** the pupil or parent has refused to delete the data themselves.

8.2 If the member of staff finds any data on the phone that they suspect might constitute an offence, then this will be delivered to the police as soon as possible.

8.3 If the member of staff suspects that they will find an indecent image of a child on the device, they must stop examining the device and inform the DSL who will decide on the response. They will be guided by the '[When to call the police](#)' document referred to in Keeping Children Safe in Education.

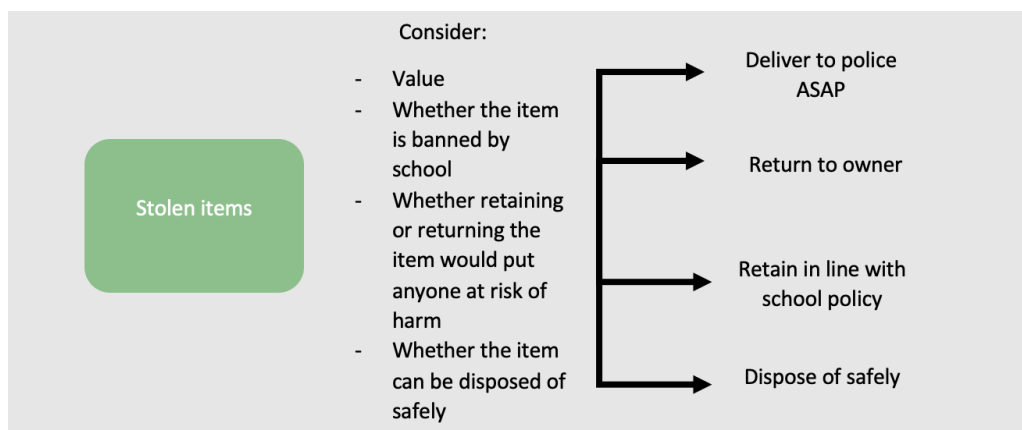
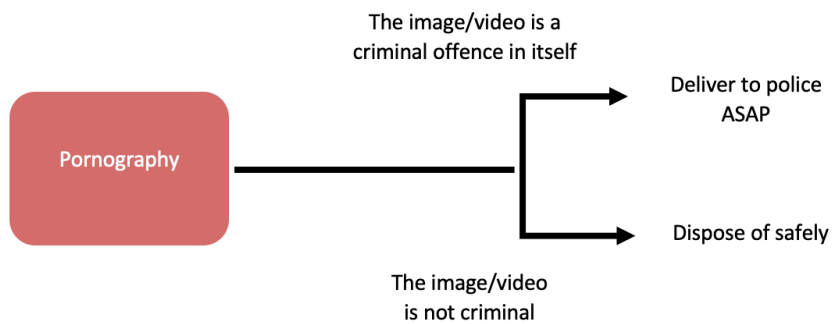
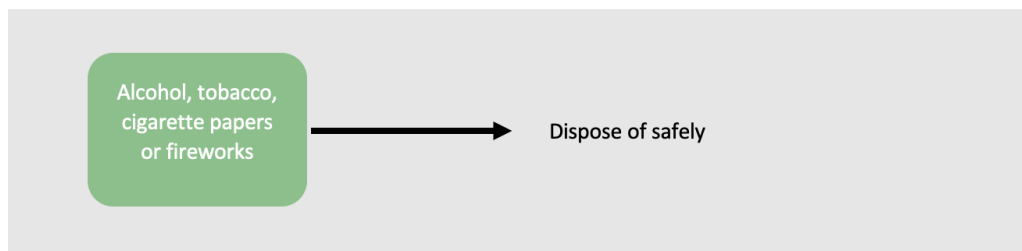
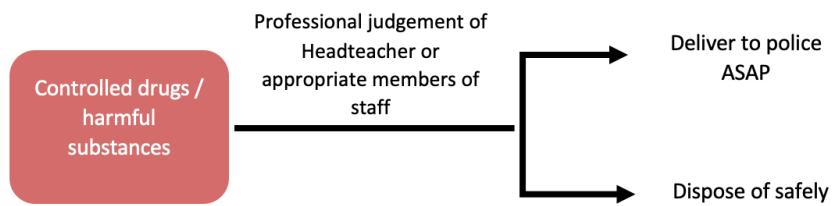
8.4 Staff may confiscate an electronic device as a disciplinary penalty.

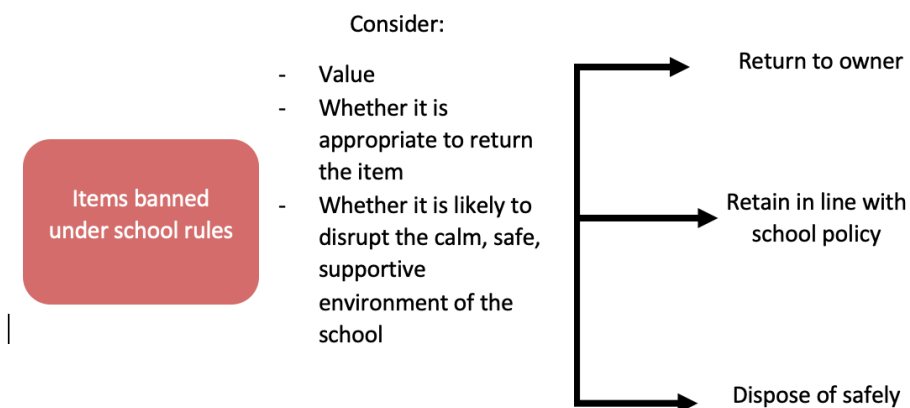
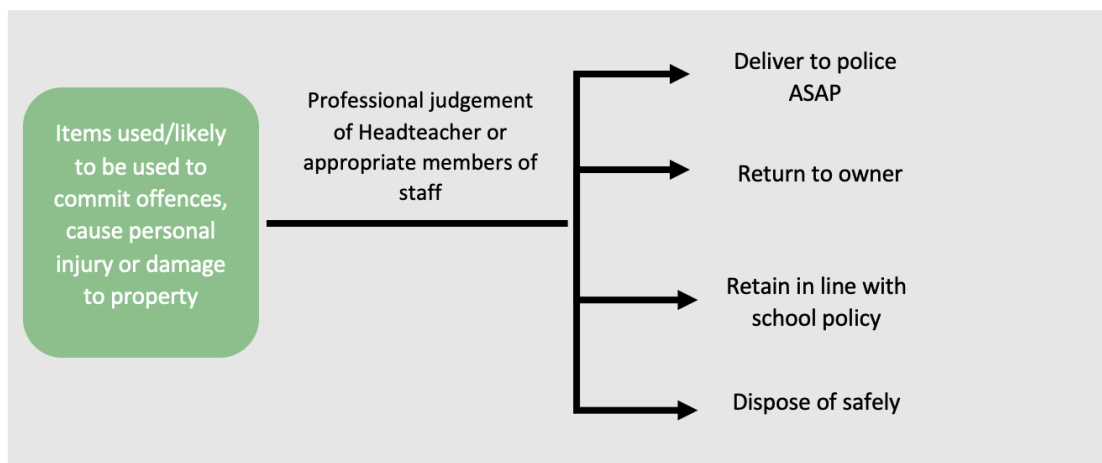
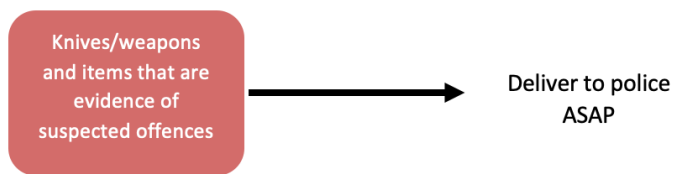
9. Complaints

Any complaints about searching, screening or confiscation should be dealt with through the normal school complaints procedure.

Annex A – Flow charts for confiscated items

Annex A – Flow charts for confiscated items





^[1] The Schools (Specification and Disposal of Articles) Regulations 2012.

^[2] Our powers to search only apply in England and we will follow the law of any other country when required.

^[3] The role of the Appropriate Adult is to safeguard the rights, entitlements and welfare of young people being subjected to police powers.

^[4] The Cambridge Dictionary definition of this states that adultification is the process or fact of treating or considering a child as if they are an adult, usually in a way that is wrong or harmful: adultification bias is a form of racial prejudice where children in some groups are treated as being older than they actually are. Adultification reduces the responsibility of professionals to safeguarding and protect children, while increasing children's responsibility to safeguard themselves.

Appendix 1 – Form to be completed

This Searching, Screening and Confiscation form must follow the information and guidance in the following policies:

- Health and Safety Policy
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (2025)
- Behaviour Policy
- Lone Working Policy

Pupil Name:		Date of Search:	
Year Group:		Time of Search:	
Class:		Location of Search:	
Detailed Reason for Search (reasonable grounds): Include factual observations, disclosures or intelligence – not assumptions.			
Item(s) being searched for:			

Pupil Voice:	
Was the reason for the search given (Y/N)	
Was the pupil given the opportunity to ask questions (Y/N)	
Did the pupil cooperate? (Y/N)	
If not, how was this managed?	

	Name	DSL Trained? Y / N
Lead Staff conducting search:		
Witness staff:		
Same gender staff as pupil (Y/N) If no, what is the legal reason for this?		

Search Authorised by (name):	
Legal Base for Search: <i>Prohibited items</i> <i>Banned items</i> <i>Risk of harm to self</i> <i>Risk of harm to others</i> <i>Risk of damage to property</i> <i>Intelligence / Disclosure received</i>	Include specific facts, not opinions or assumptions
Date Authorised:	
Signed:	

Consideration of Alternatives: <i>Ask pupil to hand the item(s) over to staff</i> <i>Check CCTV</i> <i>Gather further information</i> <i>Conversation with pupil for more information</i>	
SEND Support and Reasonable Adjustments <i>Use of familiar adult</i> <i>Visual Explanation / Social Story</i> <i>Calm/ Quiet environment</i> <i>Processing time given</i> <i>Reduced sensory stimuli</i> <i>Alternative communication method</i>	

Search Conducted:				
Bag(s)		Pockets		Outer Clothing

***Only Police are able to undertake a search under outer clothing. They MUST be called if this is a necessary next step.**

Use of Reasonable Force:		
Force used:	Yes	No
Justification:		
Type of intervention used:		

Proportionate (Y/N) explain		
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***if reasonable force has been used a Restrictive Physical Intervention Form must also be completed and uploaded to CPOMS, as per the process for this.**

Outcome of Search:					
Item Found (Y/N):		Type of Item(s)		Description of Item(s)	

Action Taken:	
Item taken:	
Item handed to police:	
Item safely disposed of:	
Item retained:	
Returned to parent/carer:	
Other (explain)	

Post-search Pupil Voice:
<i>Emotional response / Support provided / staff supporting</i>

Safeguarding Considerations	
DSL Informed (Y/N)	
Date and Time Informed:	
Does this indicate any further safeguarding concerns: Exploitation (CCE/County Lines) Abuse / Neglect Mental Health Concerns Prevent	

Actions Taken by DSL:
<i>Monitor, Early Help, Referral to Children's Social Care, Police Involvement</i>

Parents Informed, by whom and how?
<i>*Parents must be informed immediately. If this did not happen, please explain why.</i>

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Equality and Monitoring:	
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Any disproportionate impact (Y/N)	
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Any concerns re: bias/adultification (Y/N)	
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SLT Review and comments

<i>Search was legal, necessary and proportionate (Y/N) / Next Steps / Name and Signature:</i>

When this form has been completed, it needs to be uploaded to the child's CPOMS profile and the 'Searching, Screening and Confiscation' tag ticked as appropriate.

