



KING WILLIAM'S COLLEGE

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# Search and Confiscation Policy

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## CONDUCTING A SEARCH: POLICY & PROCEDURE

Living and working in the school community at King William's College is firmly based on mutual trust and respect; however, there may be occasions when for the health or safety of the students themselves, or of others, it may be necessary to conduct a search for a prohibited item such as those listed in the school rules, examples of which are given below.

Any search must be conducted with sensitivity and in such a manner as to avoid embarrassment or distress to students and where possible to respect their privacy. A search should be preceded by an explanation of the reason for conducting a search and an opportunity should be provided for any prohibited items to be handed over voluntarily. Police searches are not covered by this policy.

### 1. What items are prohibited?

The school rules currently identify the following prohibited items:

- Stolen items and counterfeit goods
- Drugs (including undisclosed medication), alcohol, tobacco, e-cigarettes and 'legal highs'
- Matches, lighters and cigarette papers and e-cigarette paraphernalia
- Solvents
- Fireworks
- Knives and weapons
- Firearms, BB guns, laser pointers, explosives
- Pornographic images
- Any item that a member of staff might reasonably suspect has been or is likely to be used to commit an offence, or to cause personal injury to (including cyber-bullying), or damage to property of, any person (including the student).
- Electronic devices containing images on it or information relating to the above.
- Electronic devices which are being used to disrupt teaching.

### 2. Who can conduct a search?

2.1 Any member of teaching or boarding staff who has reasonable grounds to suspect that a student has a prohibited item in their possession may conduct a search **with student consent** and co-operation. For example a student might be asked to empty the contents of their pockets or to show someone the contents of a bag or locker.

2.2 If a **student refuses consent**, a search may still be undertaken if there are grounds to suspect that a student is in possession of a prohibited item. In such circumstances two members of staff should be present, so the assistance of a senior member of staff should be sought, either the Deputy Head Pastoral or the Deputy Head Academic. If a student is being searched, the member of staff conducting the search should be of the same gender and ideally so would the other staff witness; however, there is limited exception to this rule if you believe there is risk of serious harm and it is not practicable to summon another member of staff. Outer clothing may be searched but students must be asked to remove items first. This policy **does not** authorise an intimate search or physical compulsion in removing clothing. If a student refuses to co-operate, parents or the police would be called.

### 3. Where can a search take place?

3.1 A search may only take place on school premises or anywhere that a member of staff is responsible for a student, on a school trip for example.

#### **4. Searching boarding accommodation**

4.1 A general search to locate lost or stolen items in a boarding house may take place after prior consultation with a Deputy Head or the Principal. The extent of any search should be proportionate to the value or risk factor of the item being sought.

4.2 Where a search of boarding accommodation is deemed appropriate, ideally the students should be present in their own rooms and invited to show the members of staff the contents of bags and drawers. There should always be two members of staff present during a search, one to act as a witness.

4.3 It is possible to conduct a search of a room without the student's consent and without them being present but only if there are strong grounds to suspect that a student is in possession of a prohibited item. Such a search should only be undertaken by the Head of Boarding and another member of staff, following consultation with a Deputy Head or the Principal.

#### **5. Confiscation**

5.1 School staff may confiscate any prohibited item found as a result of a search. They can also seize any item, however found, which they consider harmful or detrimental to school discipline.

#### **6. What happens to confiscated items?**

6.1 Any item that is confiscated may be retained; disposed of; returned to parents at the next available opportunity; or it may be given to the police. Confiscated items should be passed directly to the Head of Boarding or a Deputy Head. A Deputy Head or the Principal will decide the appropriate course of action. Weapons and knives and extreme or child pornography must always be handed over to the police as soon as possible.

#### **7. Dealing with electronic devices**

7.1 Where a member of staff conducts a search for an electronic device it may be retained and passed to the Head of Boarding, a Deputy Head or the Principal who may examine any data or files on it if they have good reason to do so. The member of staff must reasonably suspect that the data or file has been, or could be, used to cause harm, to disrupt teaching, or to break the school rules.

7.2 If inappropriate material is found on the device, it is up to a Deputy Head or the Principal to decide whether the material should be deleted, retained as evidence (of a breach of school discipline or a criminal offence) or whether it requires the involvement of an external agency. Any material found that could break the law will be reported to the appropriate authorities.

#### **8. Notifying parents**

8.1 There is no legal requirement to inform parents before a search takes place, or to seek specific consent. Where alcohol, drugs or potentially harmful substances are found, parents will be informed as part of the school's disciplinary procedures.

#### **9. Record keeping**

9.1 There is no requirement to keep a written record. The Deputy Head Pastoral will keep a record of any search and its outcome in a disciplinary log.

#### **10. Complaints**

10.1 Any complaints by a student or parent about the way in which a search has been carried out should be made following the school's complaints procedure.

Guidance:

*Screening, searching and confiscation*: advice for head teachers, staff and governing bodies (DfE February 2014);  
replacing guidance in *BSA Boarding Briefing Paper No 15* (January 2005)

*Behaviour and Discipline in Schools*: advice for headteachers and school staff (DfE September 2014)