



Search Policy

Policy number	BS040
Applies to	Whole School
Endorsed by	Head Master
Responsibility	Head Master
Date reviewed	September 2022
Next review	September 2024

Bedford School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the members of its community. Ensuring school staff and pupils feel safe and secure is vital to establishing calm and supportive environments conducive to learning. Using searching, screening and confiscation powers appropriately is an important way to ensure pupil and staff welfare is protected and helps Bedford School establish an environment where everyone is safe.

Accordingly, there may be occasions when it becomes necessary to search the person, the belongings, locker or room of a pupil. These instructions set out the circumstances in which such searches can be carried out and the means by which it should be done, in accordance with DFE Guidance for Schools on Screening, Searching and Confiscation (July 2022).

The policy should be applied alongside the following policies:

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Anti-Bullying and Cyber Bullying policy
- Behaviour Policy

The people in the school who can carry out any such search are members of CMT or the Housemaster of the pupil(s) concerned. In exceptional circumstances, the Head or Vice Master may authorise others to carry out such a search. This policy would apply on authorised school trips where school rules are in force. In all circumstances, the consent of the pupil to any search should be requested. A second adult witness should always be present. Incident reports must be submitted about any such search, listing the following:

- the date, time and location of the search;
- which pupil was searched;
- who conducted the search and any other adults or pupils present;
- what was being searched for;
- the reason for searching;
- what items, if any, were found; and
- what follow-up action was taken as a consequence of the search

Parents should always be informed of any search for a “prohibited” item (as set out in the behaviour policy) that has taken place, and the outcome of the search as soon as is practicable.

Any search should consider the age and needs of the pupils being searched or screened, including accounting for any reasonable adjustments to account for SEND.

Whether or not any items have been found as a result of any search, staff should consider whether the reasons for the search, the search itself, or the outcome of the search give cause to suspect that the pupil is suffering, or is likely to suffer harm, and/or whether any specific support is needed.

In the general course of school life, given pupils’ good conduct overall and the strong relationships between pupils and staff, it is unlikely that searching pupils will be necessary. There are however some occasions when it might be; at those times, this policy should be followed.

For the purpose of this policy, ‘prohibited’ items are knives, weapons, alcohol, illegal drugs, tobacco and cigarette papers, fireworks, pornographic images, stolen items, or any item a member of staff reasonably suspects has been or may be used to commit a crime or to cause personal injury to or

damage to the property of any person, including the person themselves. The school's behaviour policy also sets out that searched can be made for e-cigarettes, vapes, and vaping paraphernalia.

Essentially, there are two types of search: those with consent and those without consent. These searches are outlined below:

Searching with Consent

- School staff can search pupils with their consent for any item banned by the school rules and detailed in the behaviour policy.
- Schools are not required to have written consent from the pupil for this sort of search – it is enough for the teacher to ask the pupil for him to turn out their pockets or if the teacher can look in his locker or bag.
- If the pupil refuses to comply, this is not necessarily an admission of guilt; however, the matter should be referred to a senior member of staff if appropriate. Staff should consider why a pupil is not willing to co-operate.

Searching without Consent

- Prohibited items or other items set out in the behaviour policy can be searched for under these powers.
- The search should always be carried out in the presence of another adult witness, and, where reasonably practicable, a male member of staff.
- The search may be carried out if the school has reasonable grounds of suspecting that a pupil is in possession of a prohibited item.

Searching a Pupil's Person

- If a pupil is suspected of carrying a prohibited item, he should be asked, in the presence of a second adult witness, to turn out his pockets.
- Staff should not touch the pupil but are allowed to ask him to remove any outer clothing in order to conduct the search. (Outer clothing refers to any item which is not immediately touching the skin.)
- If this fails and possession of such items is still strongly suspected, he should then be told that the police will be called, who are allowed to conduct a search involving the removal of more than outer clothing if they believe that a crime has been committed. Under such circumstances the Guidance for Schools on Screening, Searching and Confiscation will be followed.

Searching of a Pupil's Possessions

- Those authorised to carry out searches may search school property, such as a pupil's locker or desk, if they believe prohibited items or other items set out in the behaviour policy are stored there.
- Prior consent can be sought, but individuals should be made aware that the school may still proceed with a search even if consent is refused. The decision to go ahead in such circumstances would take into account the likelihood of an offence having been committed. A pupil's possessions can only be searched in the presence of the pupil and another member of staff, except where there is a risk that serious harm will be caused to a person if the search is not conducted immediately and where it is not reasonably practicable to summon another member of staff.
- The extent and nature of the search should be proportionate to the value of the item sought and the likelihood of the item being found. Care must be taken to avoid persistent targeting of individuals where allegations of victimisation or discrimination might arise.
- Forcible entry into locked school property is only justified in extreme circumstances and would also need the authorisation of the Head or Vice Master.

School Trips

- This policy on searches of pupils and their belongings applies at all times, irrespective of whether the pupil is at the school or on a non-residential, or residential, trip, outside Bedford.
- There may therefore be occasion to carry out a search on a school trip. If this occasion arises, the adult in charge of the trip should make an effort to contact either the Head or the Vice Master to obtain authorisation. If this proves impossible and the circumstances are such as to make a search necessary, the adult in charge is empowered to carry out such a search, following all the above procedures. A second adult should act as a witness. Full records must be kept and an incident report submitted.