



## Searching Pupils and Their Possessions Policy

Reviewed: July 2025

### 1. Policy Statement

St John's School is committed to safeguarding the welfare of all pupils. We aim to create a culture of trust where pupils are treated fairly and sensitively. In the rare event that a search is needed, we will act in line with the Department for Education's *Searching, Screening and Confiscation: Advice for Schools* (July 2022), the Education Act 1996, Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSiE 2025), and other relevant guidance.

### 2. Key Principles

- Always act with due care, sensitivity and respect for privacy.
- Safeguarding pupils and protecting people and property is paramount.
- Professional judgement must be used in each situation. When in doubt, seek advice from a senior member of staff, unless there is an urgent risk.
- Boarding pupils' living spaces should be treated with particular care, as they are their homes.
- Staff must balance the need to act quickly and safely with the need to follow this policy.

### 3. When a Search May Be Carried Out

A search may be carried out when there are reasonable grounds to suspect a pupil has an unauthorised, prohibited or harmful item.

Staff must:

- ✓ Use professional judgement to decide if a search is necessary.
- ✓ Always try to gain the pupil's cooperation first.
- ✓ Keep the pupil under supervision during any delay.
- ✓ Involve a senior member of staff if the pupil refuses.
- ✓ Contact parents if appropriate to encourage cooperation.
- ✓ Call the Police if there is a significant risk or if a personal search becomes necessary and the pupil refuses.

### 4. Personal Searches

- Staff may **not** physically search a pupil's person.



- Staff can **ask** the pupil to turn out pockets or bags voluntarily, ideally with a second adult present.
- Forced personal searches should be avoided but may be necessary in extreme circumstances to prevent harm.
- Any restraint must follow the School's Restraint Policy.

## 5. Searching School Property & Belongings

- Lockers, rooms and bags on school premises can be searched if there is reasonable suspicion.
- Pupils should be present during the search wherever possible.
- For boarding rooms, pupils should be given the chance to open cupboards/drawers themselves.
- At least two members of staff should be present during any search.
- If the pupil refuses, and there are clear grounds, staff may proceed with the search to protect safety.

## 6. Confiscation

- Items which are inappropriate, illegal or being misused may be confiscated (e.g., phones after lights out, alcohol, cigarettes).
- Confiscation must be reasonable and proportionate - as a guide, up to 48 hours for minor items.
- Consider safeguarding needs (e.g., if confiscating a phone that a boarder may need off-site).
- All confiscated items should be kept securely, e.g., in the boarding safe.

## 7. Specific Items

- **Weapons:** Report to a senior member of staff and the Police. Secure the item safely.
- **Illegal substances:** Follow the School's Drugs, Alcohol and Smoking Policy. Involve a senior member of staff.
- **Tobacco, alcohol, e-cigarettes:** Confiscate and report to a senior member of staff.

## 8. General Do's & Don'ts

### DO:

- ✓ Act with care, respect and proportionality.
- ✓ Keep a second adult present wherever possible.
- ✓ Keep the pupil present for bag or room searches when possible.
- ✓ Record all searches properly.
- ✓ Inform parents where appropriate.



**DON'T:**

- ✗ Touch a pupil forcibly except where needed to prevent immediate harm.
- ✗ Remove a pupil's clothing - they should empty pockets/bags themselves.
- ✗ Search a room or bag without another adult present.
- ✗ Act alone if you are unsure - seek guidance from a senior member of staff.

## **9. Recording Searches**

A clear record must be kept on the pupil's file, noting:

- The reason for the search.
- The date and time.
- The results.
- Staff and other agencies involved.
- The outcome (including any disciplinary action).

## **10. Corporal Punishment**

St John's School strictly prohibits corporal punishment by any pupil or staff member.

## **11. Review Procedure**

Parents/guardians may request a review of a decision to expel or require the removal of a pupil, or to challenge a complaint decision. This must be done using the *Request for a Review Form* (Appendix A), submitted within five school days of the written decision.

A Review Panel will hear the request within 10 working days where possible. The process is informal, confidential, and follows natural justice. The Panel's decision is final. Findings will be shared with all relevant parties and kept available for inspection by the Chair of Directors and the Head of School.



**ST JOHN'S SCHOOL**  
SIDMOUTH, UNITED KINGDOM

## **Appendix A**

### **REQUEST FOR A REVIEW**

To:

Name of Pupil:

Names of those with Parental responsibility:

Address of Parents/Guardian:

Telephone numbers:

(daytime)

(evening)

I/We, having parental responsibility for the above-named pupil, request that a sub-committee of the Board of Directors carries out a review of the decision to require removal of or to expel the pupil / of a complaint. \*

I/We have received with this form a copy of the Policy Statement on Review Procedures and we agree to abide by its terms.

I/We also agree that the proceedings are and will remain confidential and that this review will be final, subject to such (if any) legal rights as may exist.

The grounds upon which we ask for a review and the matters which we wish to discuss (and to ask the sub-committee to take into account) are set out in the attached letter.



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I/We understand that we may be accompanied at the Review Hearing. I/We also understand that that person attends only to provide support and not to act as a representative.

(Two signatures are required where practicable)

First signature:

Full Name:

Relationship to Pupil:

Date:

Second signature:

Full Name:

Relationship to Pupil:

Date: