Newhouse Academy

Hollingworth Learning Trust

A Hollingworth Learning Trust Academy

Search Policy
2026 to 2027

Statutory or non-statutory:	It is not statutory to have a stand-alone Search Policy, however, as it links to the Behaviour Policy, it will be treated as such.
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Policy responsibility:	Mr Matt Aspden, Deputy Headteacher Mrs Vicky Wilde, Designated Safeguarding Lead
Reviewing body:	Local Governor Board or Standards Committee
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1. Confiscation, searches, screening

Searching, screening and confiscation is conducted in line with the DfE's latest guidance on searching, screening and confiscation.

Confiscation
Any prohibited items (see below) found in a student's possession as a result of a search will be confiscated. These items will not be returned to the student.

We will also confiscate any item that is harmful or detrimental to school discipline. These items will be returned to students after discussion with senior leaders and parents, if appropriate.

2. Searching a student

Searches will only be carried out by a member of staff who has been authorised to do so by the Headteacher, or by the Headteacher themselves.

Subject to the exception below, the authorised member of staff carrying out the search will be of the same sex as the student, and there will be another member of staff present as a witness to the search.

An authorised member of staff of a different sex to the student can carry out a search without another member of staff as a witness if:

The authorised member of staff carrying out the search reasonably believes there is 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 student; or

It is not reasonably practicable for the search to be carried out in the presence of another member of staff

When an authorised member of staff conducts a search without a witness they should immediately report this to another member of staff, and ensure a written record of the search is kept.

If the authorised member of staff considers a search to be necessary, but is not required urgently, they will seek the advice of the Headteacher, designated safeguarding lead (or deputy) or pastoral member of staff who may have more information about the student. During this time the student will be supervised and kept away from other students.

A search can be carried out if the authorised member of staff has reasonable grounds for suspecting that the student is in possession of a prohibited item or any item identified in the school rules for which a search can be made, or if the student has agreed.

An appropriate location for the search will be found. Where possible, this will be away from other students. The search will only take place on the school premises or where the member of staff has lawful control or charge of the student, for example on a school trip.

Before carrying out a search the authorised member of staff will:

- Assess whether there is an urgent need for a search
- Assess whether not doing the search would put other students or staff at risk
- Consider whether the search would pose a safeguarding risk to the student
- Explain to the student why they are being searched
- Explain to the student what a search entails – e.g. I will ask you to turn out your pockets and remove your coat, blazer.
- Explain how and where the search will be carried out – this will be in a confidential space.
- Give the student the opportunity to ask questions
- Seek the student's cooperation

If the student refuses to agree to a search, the member of staff can give an appropriate behaviour sanction.

If they still refuse to cooperate, the member of staff will contact the Headteacher / designated safeguarding lead (or deputy) / pastoral lead, to try and determine why the student is refusing to comply.

Should any students refuse to be searched in the manner outlined above, they will be detained in a secure place until their parent(s) or carer(s) have been contacted and the matter resolved to the school's satisfaction.

Should any student suspected of having in their possession a weapon refuse to be searched, the police will be contacted as well as the parent(s) or carer(s).

Should any student suspected of having drugs in their possession, refuse to be searched, the police may be contacted, as well as the parent(s) or carer(s).

The authorised member of staff may use a metal detector to assist with the search.

An authorised member of staff may search a student's outer clothing, pockets, possessions or desks.

Outer clothing includes:

- Any item of clothing that is not worn immediately over a garment that is being worn wholly next to the skin or being worn as underwear (e.g. a jumper or jacket being worn over a t-shirt)
- Hats, gloves, shoes, boots

Searching a student's possessions
Possessions means any items that the student has or appears to have control of, including:

- Desks
- Lockers
- Bags

A student's possessions can be searched for any item if the student agrees to the search. If the student does not agree to the search, staff can still carry out a search for prohibited items (listed below) and items identified in the school rules.

An authorised member of staff can search a student's possessions when the student and another member of staff are present.

If there is a serious risk of harm if the search is not conducted immediately, or it is not reasonably practicable to summon another member of staff, the search can be carried out by a single authorised member of staff.

A search will take place when we have reason to believe that students may have in their possession:

- items or substances which may be harmful to themselves, other students, members of staff, or the property of students, staff or the school;
- items which have been stolen;
- contraband items or items that students may intend to sell in school.

Unless a student is told in advance that it is the item which is being searched for, a mobile phone found during a search will not be confiscated.

Digital Device Searching – staff are instructed not to delete or erase data or files from confiscated electronic devices (such as mobile phones) if they suspect the device contains evidence of an offence or illicit images. The device must be handed directly to the police.

Mobile Phone Confiscation: The Department for Education (DfE) statutory guidance mandates that **all schools in England must be mobile phone-free environments by default from 1 September 2026**. While the guidance officially became statutory on 29 June 2026, school leaders and staff are expected to fully implement and enforce it starting this September term

Headteachers are heavily backed by the DFE to confiscate mobile phones as a disciplinary sanction for any length of time they deem proportionate, while also considering the student's age and specific education needs.

Informing the designated safeguarding lead (DSL)
The staff member who carried out the search should inform the DSL without delay:

Of any incidents where the member of staff had reasonable grounds to suspect a student was in possession of a prohibited item as listed below
If they believe that a search has revealed a safeguarding risk

All searches for prohibited items (listed below), including incidents where no items were found, will be recorded in the school's safeguarding system.

Informing parents
Parents will always be informed of any search for a prohibited item (listed below). A member of staff will tell the parents as soon as is reasonably practicable:

- What happened
- What was found, if anything
- What has been confiscated, if anything
- What action the school has taken, including any sanctions that have been applied to their child

Support after a search
Irrespective of whether any items are found as the result of any search, the school will consider whether the student may be suffering or likely to suffer harm and whether any specific support is needed (due to the reasons for the search, the search itself, or the outcome of the search).

If this is the case, staff will follow the school's safeguarding policy and speak to the designated safeguarding lead (DSL). The DSL will consider if pastoral support, an early help intervention or a referral to children's social care is appropriate.

3. Strip searches

The authorised member of staff's power to search outlined above does not enable them to conduct a strip search (removing more than the outer clothing) and strip searches on school premises shall only be carried out by police officers in accordance with the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (PACE) Code C.

4. Appendix 1:

The following is a list of banned items for which a search may be made (Section 550ZA of the Education Act 1996):

- 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 student concerned

- Any article specified in regulations (The Schools Regulations 2012):
- tobacco and cigarette papers
- fireworks
- pornographic images
- In Newhouse Academy e-cigarettes, vapes and nicotine pouches are also banned.

Note: The academy reserves the right to ban any item (even if not listed above) if it jeopardises the health, safety and wellbeing of staff, students or the community or affects the smooth running of the academy.

5. Links to other policies:

Newhouse Academy's policies can be found at: https://newhouseacademy.co.uk/policies/. This policy links to:

- Behaviour and statement of behaviour principles
- Acceptable use policy
- Mobile phone policy
- Safeguarding and Child Protection policy