

SACRED HEART HIGH SCHOOL



SEARCHING, SCREENING & CONFISCATION POLICY

NOVEMBER 2021

To be reviewed November 2023

*This Policy should be read in conjunction with
all other Sacred Heart High School Policies*

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1 INTRODUCTION

At Sacred Heart High School, we want to ensure that all pupils, staff and visitors are safe from harm and threats of harm.

This policy identifies items which are banned from schools (DfE Guidance) and others that are banned from Sacred Heart High School as a matter of school policy.

The policy then clarifies the extent (or reach) of the policy beyond school premises, and the powers available to the school as regards screening and searching pupils and confiscation.

This policy has been prepared in accordance with:

- DfE Guidance, Searching, screening and confiscation (Advice for Principals, school staff and governing bodies) January 2018
- DfE Behaviour and Discipline in Schools: January 2016
- DfE Use of Reasonable Force guidelines: 2013

2 BANNED ITEMS

In line with the school's behaviour policy section 14 and DfE Guidance, there are a broad range of items which, if brought into a school setting, or in the possession of a child or young person could compromise the health and safety of the individual pupil, other pupils, staff or visitors to the school.

2.1 Dangerous items prohibited in schools by legislation (DfE guidance Jan 2018)

- Knives or weapons
- Alcohol
- Illegal drugs and often incorrectly called 'legal highs'
- Stolen items
- Tobacco and cigarette papers
- Fireworks
- Pornographic images
- 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 the property of, any person (including the pupil)

Definitions

For the purposes of this policy – the definition of **'knife'** includes any bladed article including: craft knife, Stanley knife, Swiss army knife, fishing knife, razors, kitchen knives, plastic knives or any other bladed item.

The term **'weapon'** refers to any gun, including Air Rifles, BB gun, Toy Gun, Pellet Gun, Cross bow, Taser, Blowpipe, Knuckleduster or any similar item and includes any item made for the purposes of assault or defence.

This policy is not constrained by the criminal definition of an offensive weapon. It refers to any item that could cause harm, injury or distress to the holder or others, or which could be used to threaten, alarm, distress or intimidate others

2.2 Further Items Unauthorised at Sacred Heart

In addition to the prohibited items identified above and detailed in the DfE Screening, Searching and Confiscation guidelines, there are a number of other items which could cause 'harm, distress or injury to pupils or persons, or adversely affect good order and discipline of the school community' (*DfE Behaviour and Discipline in Schools Jan 2016*)

These items can also be searched for without the consent of the pupil if necessary.

This is not an exhaustive list and the Head Teacher/Associate Headteacher may consider other items as inappropriate if believed that the possession of the item is to cause harm, distress or injury to another.

- Dangerous instruments or offensive or dangerous weapons including any item fashioned to cause injury i.e a sharpened stick, shard of glass
- Lighters/matches
- Tools (screwdriver, hammer, nails etc.)
- Chains
- Catapults
- Rope and cable ties
- Pepper Sprays and Gas canisters
- Aerosols
- Flammable substances
- Solvents
- Dangerous chemicals (acids, hair dyes, bleaches, nail varnish remover etc.)
- Nail Varnish
- Tippex
- Chewing Gum
- Laser pens
- Age inappropriate media in any form
- Offensive material – pornographic images, racist, homophobic, extremist material (in any medium)
- Needles (Syringes if required for medical grounds should be kept in accordance with the pupils' care plan and our drugs/medical policy)
- Drug paraphernalia
- Cigarettes/Nicotine vapes
- Vaping devices, including Juuls used for liquid drugs
- Drugs including over the counter medications
- Stink Bombs
- Jewellery except that permitted under school uniform policy
- Digital Watches with access to the internet, e.g. Apple watches
- Personal electronic devices of any kind (except when given permission)
- Non-school uniform clothing
- Mobiles phones (see section 2.3 for exemptions)

2.3 Mobile Phones

In line with section 13 of the school's Behaviour Policy, the following rules apply with regards to mobile phones.

Year 7

To support transition, Year 7 pupils are allowed to bring a mobile phone to school, but only if this has no internet capability. **This means no smartphones, but instead a phone that is only capable of making calls and sending texts.** These should be kept switched off and put away (for example in a locker or school bag) at all times while in school. If a Year 7 pupil is found to in possession of a smart phone this will be confiscated and the policy for Year 8-11 will be followed.

Years 8-11

Mobile phones are a banned item for Years 8-11. Pupils in Years 8-11 are not allowed to bring any sort of mobile phone on to school premises and are therefore also not

allowed a mobile phone on their journey to or from school. **If staff see any pupils in Years 8-11 using a mobile phone, even out of school before or after the school day, this will be confiscated for two weeks, but for repeat offenders the school reserves the right to retain the phone for 3 months. If a pupil refuses to hand over the phone as requested by a member of staff, this will lead to a Level 3 Sanction**

The only exception to this would be if pupils have been given express permission to bring mobile phones on a residential school trip.

Sixth Form

Mobiles are not a banned item for Sixth Formers. Sixth Form pupils are allowed mobile phones. They may use their phone at break or lunch but not in corridors or in class. If staff see sixth formers using their phones in corridors or in class this may lead to a Level 2 sanction, which would be escalated to Level 3 in the behaviour persisted.

General

If a pupil in Years 7-11, needs to call home during the school day, they can come to the school office at break or lunchtime or at the end of the school day and the call will be made.

2.4 Incidents Outside of School

Sacred Heart High School consider that the items detailed in this policy (both those prohibited as identified in the DfE guidance 2018 and those identified by the school) are inappropriate.

Possession of such items:

- in school
- on the journey to and from school
- on a school trip or any extra curriculum activity (on or off the school premises)

is unacceptable (other than where express permission has been given for mobile phones on a residential trip).

For the avoidance of doubt this means that if staff see any pupils in Years 8-11 using a mobile phone, even out of school before or after the school day, this will be confiscated for 2 weeks (or up 3 months for a repeat offence).

The response to any pupil found with or believed to have possession of such items will be managed in accordance with this policy.

2.5 Screening

The law allows schools to require pupils to undergo screening by a walk-through or hand held metal detector, arch or wand, even if they do not suspect them of having a weapon and without the consent of the pupils and/or parents. Any member of staff can screen pupils.

The school acknowledges its duties and responsibilities under the Education Acts, of 1996 and 2011, Education and Inspections Act, 2006 and Health and Safety at Work, 1974, in respect of screening and searching pupils.

In line with DfE's Searching, Screening and Confiscation Guidance 2018 the school reserves the right to conduct regular random screening searches to ensure that the school's policies regarding banned items, including mobile phones are being adhered to. This includes the use of scanners to support the process. This may also include searching of pupils' outer clothing, bags or lockers without consent if we believe there is an item that could cause harm or place pupils at risk.

2.6 Searching

In order to ensure the safety of all pupils and staff, and to maintain the good order of the school, the headteacher reserves the right to carry out random searches for banned items without pupil consent.

Pupil Consent, Staff Gender and Witness

If a member of staff suspects that a pupil is in possession of a prohibited item or an item identified as inappropriate by the school, **the pupil and the pupil's possessions may be searched without their consent.** This search will be conducted by the Headteacher, or a member of staff authorised by the Headteacher (this would be the Associate Headteacher, or a member of the Senior Leadership Team or the Key Stage Directors of Learning).

The search should be conducted by a female member of staff and with another adult present, where possible of the same gender. Before any search is undertaken, consent will be sought from the pupil. If consent is refused, the pupil will be asked to say why she has refused. Refusal to allow a search would be a breach of the school behaviour policy (refusal to follow a staff member's instructions) and would have a sanction imposed. **There is a limited exception to this rule:**

Staff are legally allowed to carry out a search of a pupil of the opposite sex to them with or without a witness present, but only where the school reasonably believes that there is a risk that serious harm will be caused to the pupil or others if they do not conduct the search immediately and where it is not reasonably practicable to summon another member of staff.

Power to Use Reasonable Force

Members of staff have the power to use reasonable force to prevent pupils committing an offence, injuring themselves or others, or damaging property, and to maintain good order and discipline in the classroom. (See Appendix 6 of the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy).

Headteachers and authorised school staff may also use such force as is reasonable given the circumstances when conducting a search without consent for prohibited items including knives or weapons, alcohol, illegal drugs, stolen items, tobacco and cigarette papers, fireworks, pornographic images or articles that have been or could be used to commit an offence or cause harm.

Such force cannot be used when searching for items banned under the school rules.

Removal of Clothing

Staff should not ever require a child to remove clothing during a search other than outer garments such as a blazer, jumper or coat.

Searching Pupil Possessions

Searching the pupil's possessions includes searching a pupil's goods over which she has or appears to have control, this includes bags and lockers. Searches will be conducted in such a manner as to minimise embarrassment or distress. When items are found, they may be confiscated if it is reasonable to do so, and the item is not allowed under school rules. Where any article is thought to be a weapon, illegal drug or stolen property, the school has a duty to pass this to the Police.

Informing Parent and Carers

It is not required to inform parents/carers before or after a search takes place or to seek their consent to search their child.

2.7 Confiscation

Where objects are found and where the object constitutes a significant breach of the school rules (including prohibited items as listed above), the item will be confiscated.

If mobile phones (that are in contravention of this policy) are found, the sanctions in s2.3 & 2.4 above will be adhered to. If a pupil fails to hand over such a phone, they will be subject to a Level 3 sanction as listed in the school's behaviour policy.

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

When planned searches have been carried out, parents and carers will be informed by letter and where a phone has been confiscated, individual parents will also be notified by text.

The law allows a member of staff to confiscate, retain or dispose of a pupil's property as a punishment, so long as it is reasonable in the circumstances. The law protects staff from liability for damage to, or loss of, any confiscated items provided they have acted lawfully.

2.8 Referrals

The Headteacher / Associate Head Teacher will follow the School's Safeguarding Policy and Procedures, including referrals to Children's Social Care or other agencies if required as a result of the search.

3 RATIFICATION

This Policy has been approved and ratified by the Ethos Committee in November 2021. The document will be reviewed in November 2023.



Mrs M Doyle
Headteacher



Michael Phelan
Chair of the Ethos Committee