

SACRED HEART HIGH SCHOOL



SEARCHING, SCREENING & CONFISCATION POLICY

SEPTEMBER 2019

To be reviewed September 2021

*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 DANGEROUS ITEMS

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 Items prohibited in schools by legislation (DfE guidance January 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*)

Sacred Heart High School considers the following items to be inappropriate and therefore they must not be brought into school.

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

- Chains
- Catapults
- Lighters/matches
- Tools (screwdriver, hammer nails etc.)
- Pepper Sprays and Gas canisters
- Any item fashioned to cause injury i.e a sharpened stick, shard of glass
- Laser pens
- Mobile phones, when in contravention of school rules (if found will be confiscated and retained by the school for sixth months)
- Age inappropriate media in any form
- Dangerous chemicals (acids, hair dyes, bleaches, nail varnish remover etc.)
- Stink Bombs
- Solvents
- Needles (Syringes if required for medical grounds should be kept in accordance with the pupils' care plan and our drugs/medical policy)
- Offensive material – pornography, racist, homophobic, extremist material (in any medium)
- Rope and cable ties

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

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

2.4 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.

At present this does not happen at Sacred Heart High School and there are no current plans to put this in place unless deemed necessary in the future.

2.5 Searching

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 normally be the Head of School, 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.

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

When being searched, pupils cannot be required to remove their socks or tights, shirts, skirt or trousers in the Sixth Form. They may only be required to remove 'outer clothing' such as coats and jumpers.

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.

2.6 Confiscation

Where objects are found and where the object constitutes a significant breach of the school rules (including prohibited items), the individual pupil's parents or carers will be contacted and the item confiscated.

Mobile phones are the cause of significant disruption to the workings of the school. When found, these will be confiscated and held by the school for six months, irrespective of ownership.

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.

2.7 Referrals

The Headteacher / Head of School 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 Staffing, management & Finance committee on 24 September 2019. The document will be reviewed in September 2021.



Mrs M Doyle
Headteacher



Lorraine Lawson
Chair of the Staffing, Management & Finance Committee