



Onside Education
Search, Screening and
Confiscation Policy
September 2025

1. Purpose and Scope

The purpose of this policy is to set out how Onside Education manages searching, screening and confiscation in a lawful, proportionate and safeguarding-focused manner.

This policy supports:

- the maintenance of a safe and orderly environment
- the prevention of harm
- the protection of children's welfare and dignity
- compliance with statutory guidance

This policy applies to all Onside Education provisions, including onsite and outreach settings, and to all staff authorised to conduct searches.

2. Statutory and Guidance Framework

This policy is informed by and complies with:

- Searching, Screening and Confiscation – Advice for Schools (DfE, current)
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2025
- Education Act 1996
- Education and Inspections Act 2006
- Equality Act 2010
- Data Protection Act 2018 / UK GDPR

This policy should be read alongside:

- Behaviour Policy
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Online Safety Policy
- Physical Intervention Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct

3. Key Principles

Searching and confiscation will always be:

- Lawful
- Reasonable and proportionate
- Non-discriminatory
- Respectful of dignity and privacy
- Safeguarding-led, not punitive

Staff will consider the age, understanding, SEND needs, mental health and vulnerability of the child at all times.

4. Authority to Search

Only staff authorised by the Head of Provision / Programme Lead may conduct searches.

Staff must:

- act in accordance with this policy
- have received appropriate guidance or training
- seek senior or DSL advice where appropriate

5. Screening (e.g. bag checks / visual checks)

Screening may include:

- asking pupils to open bags or lockers
- visual inspection of possessions
- routine checks where appropriate (e.g. entry to provision)

Screening will:

- be applied consistently
- not single out individuals unfairly
- be proportionate to risk

Refusal to cooperate may result in sanctions under the Behaviour Policy and/or escalation to safeguarding leads.

6. Searching With Consent

Staff may search a pupil or their possessions with consent.

This includes:

- asking a pupil to empty pockets
- asking to search bags, coats or personal items

If consent is refused:

- the search must not proceed (unless a no-consent power applies)
- staff should escalate to senior leadership
- parents/carers may be contacted
- police may be involved if appropriate

7. Searching Without Consent

Staff may search a pupil without consent where they reasonably suspect the pupil has a prohibited item, including:

- weapons
- illegal drugs
- stolen items
- alcohol
- fireworks
- tobacco, vapes or e-cigarettes
- pornographic images
- items used to commit an offence or cause harm
- items banned under the Behaviour Policy

Safeguards:

- the search must be conducted by a staff member of the same sex
- another staff member must be present as a witness
- pupils must not be required to remove clothing other than outerwear
- intimate searches are not permitted

8. Searching Electronic Devices

Staff may examine or delete data from electronic devices where they reasonably believe:

- the device contains material that poses a safeguarding risk
- the material may have been used to cause harm or commit an offence

Important safeguards:

- staff must not view illegal images of children
- the DSL must be consulted immediately
- devices containing illegal content must be passed to the police
- content will only be searched where necessary and proportionate

9. Confiscation of Items

Staff may confiscate:

- prohibited items
- items causing disruption
- items posing a risk to safety or welfare

Confiscated items will be:

- returned, retained or disposed of lawfully
- recorded appropriately
- handled in line with safeguarding and data protection requirements

Illegal items will be handed to the police.

10. Use of Reasonable Force

Reasonable force may be used only to:

- prevent injury
- prevent serious damage
- maintain safety

Any use of force must:

- be lawful, necessary and proportionate
- follow the Physical Intervention Policy

- be recorded and reviewed

11. Safeguarding Considerations

Any search or confiscation that:

- reveals safeguarding concerns
- involves sexual images, exploitation or abuse
- raises concerns about a child's welfare

must be:

- immediately reported to the DSL
- recorded on the approved system (Et-Aims CRM)
- managed in line with the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy

Child-on-child sexual violence or harassment is never treated as “banter”.

12. Recording and Monitoring

The following will be recorded on Et-Aims:

- reason for the search
- consent given or refused
- items found
- actions taken
- safeguarding escalation where applicable

Records are reviewed by senior leaders to:

- identify patterns
- ensure consistency
- support safeguarding oversight

13. Equality and SEND

Onside Education recognises its duties under the Equality Act 2010.

Searches will:

- take account of SEND, mental health and vulnerability

- include reasonable adjustments where needed
- avoid discriminatory practice

14. Complaints

Parents/carers may raise concerns through the Complaints Policy.

Any complaint relating to searching will be:

- investigated promptly
- reviewed for safeguarding or training implications

15. Review and Governance

This policy is:

- approved by the Proprietor / Responsible Body
- reviewed annually
- reviewed sooner following:
 - changes to DfE guidance
 - serious incidents
 - safeguarding learning

Compliance is monitored through:

- incident reviews
- safeguarding audits
- behaviour data analysis