James Rennie School

Searching, Screening and Confiscation

At James Rennie School, we have a duty to keep all pupils safe. On rare occasions this may mean that staff need to search a pupil or their belongings when there is a concern that they may be carrying an item which could place themselves or others at risk.

We recognise that many of our pupils have significant communication, learning, sensory and emotional needs. Because of this, any decision to carry out a search is considered very carefully. We will always seek to balance the need to keep everyone safe with the need to protect the dignity, wellbeing and rights of the individual pupil.

The Headteacher, and staff authorised by the Headteacher, have a statutory power to search a pupil or their possessions where there are reasonable grounds to suspect that a prohibited item may be present. The school follows the Department for Education guidance *Searching, Screening and Confiscation in Schools* (July 2023) as well as its own Searching, Screening and Confiscation Policy. [gov.uk], [Searching,...nfiscation | Word]

Whenever possible, staff will explain why they are concerned and what they would like to do. Communication will always be adapted to meet the needs of the pupil. We understand that pupils may feel anxious or confused in these situations and staff will take time to reassure them and explain the process in a way that is meaningful and accessible. Wherever appropriate, staff will seek the cooperation of the pupil before any search takes place. [Searching,...nfiscation | Word]

If a search is necessary, it will normally take place in the presence of the pupil and another member of staff. Staff will always seek to carry out any

search respectfully and proportionately. The member of staff undertaking the search will normally be the same sex as the pupil. The only exception would be where staff believe that delaying the search could result in serious harm and it is not reasonably practicable to summon another member of staff immediately. [gov.uk], [Searching,...nfiscation | Word]

Any items discovered during a search will be managed in accordance with Department for Education guidance and the school's safeguarding procedures. Where a search identifies wider concerns, such as possible exploitation, criminal behaviour, substance misuse or risks to a pupil's welfare, the matter will be referred immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead so that appropriate support and intervention can be put in place. [Searching,...nfiscation | Word]

We are mindful that pupils who are found in possession of prohibited items are often vulnerable themselves. Our response therefore focuses not only on the item found, but also on understanding why the situation has occurred and what support the pupil may need moving forward. Searches may therefore form part of wider safeguarding, pastoral or multi-agency work designed to promote a pupil's safety and wellbeing. [Searching,...nfiscation | Word]

All searches are recorded appropriately and reviewed by leaders to ensure that procedures are being followed consistently and fairly. We are committed to ensuring that searching practices are proportionate, safeguarding-led and free from discrimination or bias.