

Searching, Screening, and Confiscation Policy



1. Introduction

Thomas Rotherham College is committed to ensuring a safe and supportive environment for all students and staff. This policy outlines the procedures for searching, screening, and confiscation in accordance with the Department for Education's guidance (July 2022).

2. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Ensure the safety and welfare of students and staff.
- Maintain a calm and supportive learning environment.
- Provide clear guidelines on the powers and responsibilities of staff regarding searching, screening, and confiscation.

3. Definitions

- **Searching:** The act of looking for prohibited items on a student's person or belongings.
- **Screening:** The use of technology or other methods to detect prohibited items without physical searches.
- **Confiscation:** The act of taking possession of prohibited items found during searches or screenings.

4. Prohibited Items

Prohibited items include, but are not limited to:

- Weapons
- Illegal drugs
- Alcohol
- Stolen items
- Tobacco and vaping products
- Fireworks
- Pornographic images
- Any item that could be used to commit an offence or cause harm

5. Roles and Responsibilities

- **Principal:** Overall responsibility for the implementation of this policy.
- **Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL):** Ensures safeguarding procedures are followed during searches.
- **Authorised Staff:** Members of staff authorised by the Principal to conduct searches and screenings. At TRC, this includes all members of the Senior Leadership Team and the Deputy DSL.

6. Conducting Searches

- Searches should be conducted by authorised staff and, **where possible**, by a member of the same sex as the student.
- The only exception where a member of staff can search a pupil of the opposite sex and/or without a witness present is: if the 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 same sex as the pupil or it is not reasonably practicable for the search to be carried out in the presence of another member of staff. When a member of staff conducts a search without a witness, they should immediately report this to another member of staff and ensure a record of the search is kept.
- A second staff member should be present as a witness.
- Searches should be conducted in a private area away from other students.
- Students should be informed of the reason for the search and their consent should be sought where possible.

7. Screening Procedures

- Screening does not routinely occur.
- Where screening procedures are installed, they may include the use of metal detectors or other technology, and police dogs.
- All students may be required to undergo screening as a condition of entry to the college.
- Refusal to undergo screening may result in disciplinary action.

8. Confiscation

- Prohibited items found during searches or screenings will be confiscated.
- Confiscated items will be stored securely and may be returned to the student's parents or handed over to the police, depending on the nature of the item.
- Students and parents will be informed of the confiscation and the reasons for it.

9. Recording and Reporting

- All searches, screenings, and confiscations must be recorded in the college's incident log.
- Parents should be informed of any search involving their child and the outcome.
- Serious incidents should be reported to the governing body.

10. Training and Review

- Staff involved in searching and screening will receive appropriate training.
- This policy will be reviewed annually and updated in line with any changes in legislation or guidance.

11. Complaints

- Complaints regarding the implementation of this policy should be addressed through the college's complaints procedure.

Appendix 1

Script for Conducting a Bag Search

1. Introduction and Context

Senior Leader (SL): "Good [morning/afternoon], [Student's Name]. I'm [SL's Name], and this is [Witness's Name], who will be present as a witness. We need to conduct a search of your bag today. This is part of our commitment to ensuring the safety and well-being of all students and staff at Thomas Rotherham College."

2. Explanation of the Reason

SL: "The reason for this search is [specific reason, e.g., 'we have reason to believe there may be prohibited items in your bag' or 'this is a routine check to ensure compliance with our college policies']."

3. Seeking Consent

SL: "We would like your cooperation during this process. Can you please place your bag on the table and open it for us?"

4. Conducting the Search

SL: "Thank you. We will now proceed with the search. Please be assured that this will be done respectfully and as quickly as possible."

- *SL and Witness conduct the search, ensuring they handle the student's belongings with care and respect.*

5. Finding Prohibited Items

If no prohibited items are found:

SL: "Thank you for your cooperation, [Student's Name]. We didn't find any prohibited items. You can now take your bag. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to speak with us."

If prohibited items are found:

SL: "We have found [specific item(s)] in your bag, which are prohibited according to our college policy. We will need to confiscate these items. They will be stored securely, and we will inform your parents about this. Depending on the nature of the item, we may also need to involve the police."

6. Informing the Student of Next Steps

SL: "We will record this incident in our log, and you will be informed of any further actions that may be taken. If you have any questions or need support, please don't hesitate to reach out to us or the Designated Safeguarding Lead."

7. Closing the Search

SL: "Thank you for your understanding and cooperation, [Student's Name]. You may now take your bag and return to your class."