

## What to do... Conducting Searches on Students

### Why?

If there is reasonable belief that the student is in possession of a prohibited item as listed below:

- Knives and weapons
- Alcohol
- Illegal drugs and related paraphernalia
- Stolen items
- 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 property of; any person
- tobacco and cigarette papers
- fireworks
- pornographic images

If there is reasonable belief that the student is in possession of an item listed in the behaviour policy such as:

- Mobile telephones
- Compass / sharpener
- Chewing gum
- Vape, lighter or other smoking paraphernalia
- Medication (prescribed or otherwise)

### Where?

An appropriate location for the search should be found. Where possible, this should be away from other students. For example, a staff office or empty classroom. In both instances doors should be kept open.

The search must only take place on the school premises or where the member of staff has lawful control or charge of the student, for example, on a school trip.

### Who?

The principal and staff authorised by the principal are able to undertake searches. The following staff are authorised to conduct searches at Dixons Croxteth Academy:

- Senior leadership team
- Trust Assistant Principals
- Heads of year
- Safer schools police officer
- Other members of staff with explicit approval of the principal

Students should be searched by a member of staff of the same sex and with a witness present. The only exceptions to this are stated below:

- 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.
- 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 student or it is not reasonably practicable for the search to be carried out in the presence of another member of staff.
- It is likely that the only time that either of the above exceptions would be viable is when there is the suspicion that there is an offensive weapon in the possession of the student.

Where this exception is acted upon, a senior member of staff (either the SVP or principal) must be informed immediately.

## How?

Before any search takes place, the member of staff conducting the search should explain to the student why they are being searched, how and where the search is going to take place and give them the opportunity to ask any questions.

The authorised member of staff should always seek the co-operation of the student before conducting a search. If the student is not willing to co-operate with the search, the member of staff should consider why this is. Reasons might include that they:

- are in possession of a prohibited item
- do not understand the instruction
- are unaware of what a search may involve
- have had a previous distressing experience of being searched.

A suitable script could be:

*'We have been passed some information that you have an item in your possession that you shouldn't. Do you have anything with you today that you shouldn't have? Our first duty as a school is to keep you and others safe and we are able to conduct searches to support this. I am going to search your belongings and you, is that ok? I will search your bag and coat, ask you to turn out your pockets and then use the metal detector. Do you have any questions? Ok, let's begin.'*

Staff may search a student's outer clothing, pockets, possessions, desks or lockers.

The person conducting the search must not require the student to remove any clothing other than outer clothing. 'Outer clothing' means any item of clothing that is not worn wholly next to the skin or immediately over a garment that is being worn as underwear, as well as hats, shoes, boots or scarves. This also includes where a student has a second pair of trousers or shorts beneath their outer layer.

'Possessions' means any goods over which the student has or appears to have control – this includes desks, lockers and bags.

Staff are able to search lockers or other personal spaces at the school for any item provided the student agrees.

Staff can search lockers or other personal spaces at the school without consent if there is reasonable belief that a student is in possession of a prohibited item.

A student's possessions can only be searched in the presence of the student and another member of staff, except where there is a risk that serious harm will be caused to a person if the search is not conducted immediately and where it is not reasonably practicable to summon another member of staff.

The member of staff may use a metal detector to assist with the search.

If a student refuses to co-operate, the appropriate member of staff may sanction the student in line with the behaviour policy, ensuring they are responding to misbehaviour consistently and fairly.

## Informing parents

Parents must be informed for any search conducted based on reasonable suspicion that a student was in possession of a prohibited item.

Consideration should be given to informing parents for a search conducted based on reasonable suspicion that a student was in possession of an item listed in the behaviour policy.

Students who are subject to regular searches must have a risk assessment signed by parents.

## Recording searches

Every search must be recorded on CPOMS stating the following information:

- The date, time and location of the search
- Who conducted the search, and any other adults or students present
- What was being searched for (does not need to be included if the search is stipulated in a risk assessment)
- The reason for searching (does not need to be included if the search is stipulated in a risk assessment)
- What items, if any, were found
- What follow-up action was taken as a consequence of the search

If any further follow up is required, the DSL should return the CPOMS entry to the HOY and SLT link on CPOMS.