

# Bushbury Hill Primary School



## Electronic Devices – Searching, screening and confiscation policy

<b>Document Holder</b>	<b>Charlie Price</b>
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## Bushbury Hill Primary School's Electronic Devices - Searching Screening and Confiscation

<b>Designated Safeguarding Lead:</b>	<b>Charlotte Underwood</b>
<b>Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads:</b>	<b>Aaron McMath, Rachelle Hodge, Rabia Adeogun</b>
<b>Online Safety Lead:</b>	<b>Charlie Price</b>
<b>Named Governor with lead responsibility:</b>	<b>Karen Jones</b>

### Introduction

The changing face of information technologies and ever-increasing learner use of these technologies has meant that the Education Acts were updated to keep pace. Part 2 of the Education Act 2011 (Discipline) introduced changes to the powers afforded to schools by statute to search learners in order to maintain discipline and ensure safety. Schools are required to ensure they have updated policies which take these changes into account. No such policy can on its own guarantee that the school will not face legal challenge but having a robust policy which takes account of the Act and applying it in practice will however help to provide the school with justification for what it does.

The particular changes we deal with here are the added power to screen, confiscate and search for items 'banned under the school rules' and the power to 'delete data' stored on confiscated electronic devices.

Items banned under the school rules are determined and publicised by the Headteacher (section 89 Education and Inspections Act 1996).

An item banned by the school rules may only be searched for under these new powers if it has been identified in the school rules as an item that can be searched for. It is therefore important that there is a school policy which sets out clearly and unambiguously the items which:

- are banned under the school rules; and
- are banned AND can be searched for by authorised school staff

The act allows authorised persons to examine data on electronic devices if they think there is a good reason to do so. In determining a 'good reason' to examine or erase the data or files the authorised staff member must reasonably suspect that the data or file on the device in question relates to an offence and/or may be used to cause harm, to disrupt teaching or could break the school rules.

Following an examination, if the person has decided to return the device to the owner, or to retain or dispose of it, they may erase any data or files, **if they think there is a good reason to do so**.

The Headteacher must publicise the school behaviour policy, online safety policy and AUPs in writing and electronically to staff, parents/carers and learners yearly.

### Responsibilities

The Headteacher is responsible for ensuring that the school policies reflect the requirements contained within the relevant legislation. The formulation of these policies may be delegated to other individuals or groups. The policies will normally be taken to Governors for approval. The Headteacher will need to authorise those staff who are allowed to carry out searches.

This policy has been written by and will be reviewed by: Charlie Price (Online Safety Lead)

The Headteacher has authorised the following members of staff to carry out searches for and of electronic devices and the deletion of data/files on those devices: Charlotte Underwood, Charlie Price, Aaron McMath, Rachelle Hodge and Rabia Adeogun.

The Headteacher may authorise other staff members in writing in advance of any search they may undertake, subject to appropriate training.

### Training/Awareness

Members of staff should be made aware of the school's policy on "Electronic devices – searching, confiscation and deletion":

- at induction
- at regular updating sessions on the school's online safety policy

Members of staff authorised by the Headteacher to carry out searches for and of electronic devices and to access and delete data/files from those devices should receive training that is specific and relevant to this role. Specific training is required for those staff who may need to judge whether material that is accessed is inappropriate or illegal.

### Policy Statements

#### Search:

The school **Behaviour Policy** refers to the policy regarding searches with and without consent for the wide range of items covered within the Education Act 2011 and lists those items. This policy refers only to the searching for and of electronic devices and the deletion of data/files on those devices.

Learners are allowed to bring mobile phones to school but cannot use them on school premises, they are to be handed in to the school office on arrival and collected again at the end of the school day. Mobile phones not handed in will be confiscated and returned to the child or child's parent/carer at the end of the school day depending on whether it was used on school premises.

**If learners breach these rules the sanctions can be found in the Online Safety Policy.**

Authorised staff (defined in the responsibilities section above) have the right to search for such electronic devices where they reasonably suspect that the data or file on the device in question has been, or could be, used to cause harm, to disrupt teaching or break the school rules.

- Searching with consent - Authorised staff may search with the learner's consent for any item
- Searching without consent - Authorised staff may only search without the learner's consent for anything which is either 'prohibited' (as defined in Section 550AA of the Education Act 1996) or appears in the school rules as an item which is banned and may be searched for

### In carrying out the search:

The authorised member of staff must have reasonable grounds for suspecting that a *learner* is in possession of a prohibited item i.e. an item banned by the school rules and which can be searched for. The authorised member of staff should take reasonable steps to check the ownership of the mobile phone/personal electronic device before carrying out a search.

The authorised member of staff should take care that, where possible, searches should not take place in public places e.g. an occupied classroom, which might be considered as exploiting the learner being searched.

The authorised member of staff carrying out the search must be the same gender as the *learner* being searched; and there must be a witness (another staff member named in this policy) and, if at all possible, they too should be the same gender as the *learner* being searched.

There is a limited exception to this rule: Authorised staff can carry out a search of a learner of the opposite gender including without a witness present, but only where you reasonably believe that there is a risk that serious harm will be caused to a person if you do not conduct the search immediately and where it is not reasonably practicable to summon another member of staff.

### Extent of the search:

The person conducting the search may not require the learner to remove any clothing other than outer clothing. Outer clothing means clothing that is not worn next to the skin or immediately over a garment that is being worn as underwear (outer clothing includes hats; shoes; boots; coat; blazer; jacket; gloves and scarves).

‘Possessions’ means any goods over which the learner has or appears to have control – this includes trays and bags. A learner’s possessions can only be searched in the presence of the learner 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 power to search without consent enables a personal search, involving removal of outer clothing and searching of pockets; but not an intimate search going further than that, which only a person with more extensive powers (e.g. a police officer) can do.

Use of Force – force cannot be used to search without consent for items banned under the school rules regardless of whether the rules say an item can be searched for.

### Electronic devices

- Electronic devices, including mobile phones, can contain files or data which relate to an offence, or which may cause harm to another person. This includes, but is not limited to, indecent images of children, pornography, abusive messages, images or videos, or evidence relating to suspected criminal behaviour.
- As with all prohibited items, staff should first consider the appropriate safeguarding response if they find images, data or files on an electronic device that they reasonably suspect are likely to put a person at risk
- Staff may examine any data or files on an electronic device they have confiscated as a result of a search if there is good reason to do so (defined earlier in the guidance as)
  - poses a risk to staff or pupils.
  - is prohibited, or identified in the school rules for which a search can be made or
  - is evidence in relation to an offence.
- If the member of staff conducting the search suspects they may find an indecent image of a child (sometimes known as nude or semi-nude images), the member of staff should never intentionally view the image, and must never copy, print, share, store or save such images. When an incident might involve an indecent image of a child and/or video, the member of staff should confiscate the device, avoid looking at the device and refer the incident to the designated safeguarding lead (or deputy) as the most appropriate person to advise on the school’s response. Handling such reports or concerns can be especially complicated and schools should follow the principles as set out in [Keeping children safe in education](#). The UK Council for Internet Safety also provides the

following guidance to support school staff and designated safeguarding leads: [Sharing nudes and semi-nudes: advice for education settings working with children and young people](#).

- If a member of staff finds any image, data or file that they suspect might constitute a specified offence, then they must be delivered to the police as soon as is reasonably practicable.
- In exceptional circumstances members of staff may dispose of the image or data if there is a good reason to do so. In determining a 'good reason' to examine or erase the data or files, the member of staff must have regard to the following guidance issued by the Secretary of State
  - In determining whether there is a 'good reason' to examine the data or files, the member of staff should reasonably suspect that the data or file on the device has been, or could be used, to cause harm, undermine the safe environment of the school and disrupt teaching, or be used to commit an offence.
  - In determining whether there is a 'good reason' to erase any data or files from the device, the member of staff should consider whether the material found may constitute evidence relating to a suspected offence. In those instances, the data or files should not be deleted, and the device must be handed to the police as soon as it is reasonably practicable. If the data or files are not suspected to be evidence in relation to an offence, a member of staff may delete the data or files if the continued existence of the data or file is likely to continue to cause harm to any person and the pupil and/or the parent refuses to delete the data or files themselves

### Care of Confiscated Devices

School staff are reminded of the need to ensure the safe keeping of confiscated devices, to avoid the risk of compensation claims for damage/loss of such devices.

### Audit/Monitoring/Reporting/Review

The responsible person (Charlotte Underwood, Charlie Price, Aaron McMath, Rachelle Hodge, Rabia Adeogun) will ensure that full records are kept of incidents involving the searching for and of electronic devices and the deletion of data/files. Information regarding searches will be added to the schools CPOMs reporting system as well as any outcomes or possible follow-up work that may need to take place.

These records will be reviewed by Charlotte Underwood (Headteacher/DSL), Charlie Price (Online Safety Lead) Aaron McMath, Rachelle Hodge and Rabia Adeogun (DDSLs) termly or in light of recurrent incidences.

This policy will be reviewed by the head teacher and governors annually and in response to changes in guidance and evidence gained from the records.

### Useful DfE Guidance links:

[The DfE guidance – Searching, Screening and Confiscation](#) which was updated in July 2022.

The DfE Guidance – [“Behaviour in Schools”](#) was updated in July 2022 and refers to behaviour online.

[Keeping Children Safe in Education](#) guidance document is in force from September 2022. Schools should be aware of new guidance concerning [Harmful Sexual Behaviour](#)