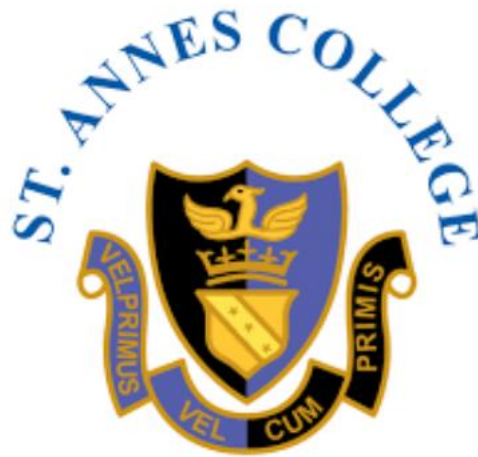


St Annes College Grammar School



Search, Screening and Confiscation Policy

Registered proprietor	St Annes College Ltd
Policy owner	Abigail Welsby, Principal
Designated safeguarding lead	Andrea Burrell
SEND lead	Wendy Cottier-Brown, SENCO
Approved by	St Annes College Ltd, acting through Abigail Welsby as authorised director
Approval date	27 th September 2026
Review date	September 2027 or sooner following a material change or incident
Availability	School website and on request from the school office

1 Purpose and scope

SACGS maintains a safe environment while respecting pupils' privacy, dignity and rights. Searches, screening and confiscation may remove dangerous, illegal or harmful items, but must be lawful, justified and proportionate. Staff must consider both behaviour and safeguarding, including whether possession of an item suggests exploitation, abuse or unmet need.

This policy covers Nursery through Sixth Form on school premises and wherever a member of staff has lawful control or charge of a pupil in England, including educational visits and school transport. The Principal may authorise named staff to carry out searches for specified items or categories of items. Staff who are not authorised must preserve safety and seek an authorised colleague.

2 Legal framework and related policies

This policy has regard to sections 550ZA to 550ZD of the Education Act 1996; sections 91 and 93 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006; the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014; the Schools (Specification and Disposal of Articles) Regulations 2012; DfE Searching, screening and confiscation guidance (July 2022, page updated July 2023); DfE Restrictive interventions guidance (April 2026); KCSIE 2026; the Equality Act 2010; the Human Rights Act 1998; PACE and its applicable codes; and UKCIS guidance on sharing nudes and semi-nudes. Read it with the Behaviour and Exclusions, Safeguarding, Restrictive Interventions, Prohibited Items, Online Safety, SEND, Equality, Medicines, Staff Conduct and Complaints policies.

3 Search powers and definitions

Only the Principal or staff authorised by the Principal may exercise the statutory power to search without a pupil's agreement for a prohibited item or an item identified in school rules as searchable. Under common law, school staff may search for any item where the pupil gives informed agreement after an explanation of the reason and how the search will happen. A search of possessions, lockers or desks remains subject to the safeguards below.

- Outer clothing means clothing not worn wholly next to the skin or immediately over underwear, together with hats, shoes, boots and scarves.
- Possessions means goods over which the pupil has or appears to have control, including bags, desks and lockers.
- Screening means the use of a walk-through or hand-held metal detector to scan pupils for weapons.
- A strip search involves the removal of more than outer clothing. School staff must never conduct one.

4 Items for which a statutory search may be made

Where there are reasonable grounds for suspicion, the Principal or an authorised staff member may search without agreement for knives or weapons; alcohol; illegal drugs; stolen items; an article reasonably suspected to have been or to

be likely to be used to commit an offence, cause personal injury or damage property; tobacco and cigarette papers; fireworks; and pornographic images. Vapes and e-cigarettes are not included in the statutory tobacco category.

5 School-rule searchable items

SACGS identifies the following additional items as searchable under school rules where reasonable grounds for suspicion exist: vapes, e-cigarettes, nicotine products and related items; matches and lighters; harmful intoxicating substances; medication held contrary to school medicines arrangements; imitation weapons and other objects presented as weapons; mobile phones, cameras and smart devices brought or used contrary to published school rules; items reasonably suspected of being used for bullying, harassment or illicit recording; and items prohibited by examination rules during an examination. The published Behaviour and Exclusions Policy and Prohibited Items Policy must identify these searchable items consistently and be communicated to pupils, parents and staff.

A general ban or a statement that a list is non-exhaustive does not itself make an unspecified item searchable without agreement. Before relying on the statutory power for a school-rule item, staff must verify that the exact item or a clear category is identified in published school rules. If it is not, seek informed agreement or address any immediate risk by other lawful means.

6 Grounds and preparation

Reasonable grounds may arise from credible information, direct observation, CCTV, screening, conduct or related evidence. Rumour, stereotypes, disability or a protected characteristic alone are insufficient. The searcher assesses the reliability and urgency of the information, the exact item and authority, likely risk and a less intrusive safe alternative. Searches must not be used to humiliate or punish.

Before searching, explain the reason, place and proposed method; seek the pupil's cooperation; allow time to respond; and make appropriate adjustments for age, SEND, disability, communication, trauma, medical needs and religious clothing. Choose a suitable private location. Where urgency permits, seek the Principal, DSL or SENCO's advice. The DSL or deputy should be told of searches based on suspected statutory prohibited items and involved without delay if a safeguarding risk emerges.

7 Refusal and force

Where the pupil refuses, explore why and consider adjustments, such as a trusted adult, more time or asking the pupil to empty a pocket or bag under observation. Supervise safely while seeking senior advice where the risk is not urgent. Refusal does not itself justify force. Any disciplinary response must be reasonable and take account of SEND and safeguarding.

Force may be used to search only for an item in the statutory prohibited list, never merely for a school-rule item such as a phone or vape. If force is considered, staff must assess lawfulness, necessity, proportionality and whether police assistance is safer. The School's Restrictive Interventions Policy applies. A significant use of force must be recorded and reported to parents in writing under the applicable 2026 duties.

8 Conduct of searches

Except for the urgent serious-harm exception below, the searcher must be the same sex as the pupil and another member of staff must witness the search. Staff should also consider the pupil's wishes while observing the statutory requirements. A search may cover outer clothing, pockets and possessions. Staff may ask for a coat, hat, shoes, boots or scarf to be removed, with sensitivity to religious dress, but must never require removal of more than outer clothing. Staff may search desks and lockers for a searchable item, or other items with the pupil's agreement or under clear conditions attached to the use of that space.

Possessions must be searched in the presence of the pupil and another member of staff, unless a risk of serious harm requires an immediate search and another member of staff cannot reasonably be summoned. A metal detector may assist the search. Staff must never conduct a strip or intimate search.

Urgent exception: a search may take place without a same-sex searcher or witness only if the searcher reasonably believes that a person risks serious harm unless the search occurs urgently and it is not reasonably practicable in the available time to meet the relevant requirement. Record the precise reason. A search without a witness must be reported immediately to another member of staff, and the Principal and DSL must be informed promptly.

9 Police searches and strip searches

Only police may conduct a strip search, under PACE. Before requesting police attendance where a strip search could follow, the Principal and DSL should weigh the safety risk of leaving the item against the serious effect of a strip search and consider less intrusive options. Once police attend, the decision and conduct of a police strip search are police responsibilities; staff continue to advocate for the pupil and safeguard their wellbeing.

Unless there is an immediate risk of harm and where reasonably possible, inform a parent in advance. A member of staff must inform parents after any police strip search. Police must meet the requirements of PACE, including privacy, officers' sex and appropriate-adult safeguards where intimate parts could be exposed. Facilitate a parent acting as appropriate adult if they wish and this is possible. Keep a record, arrange support whether an item is found or not, hear the pupil's views when ready, and scrutinise repeated or disproportionate strip searches.

10 Screening

SACGS does not use routine screening as at the date of this policy. If introduced, the Principal will assess necessity, seek police advice where appropriate, explain the process to pupils and parents in advance, make reasonable adjustments and review its impact. Screening with a metal detector does not itself require suspicion. Staff must not physically force a pupil through equipment; refusal prompts an assessment of its reason and whether a lawful search or other proportionate response is needed.

11 Aftercare recording and parental information

Following any search, whether or not an item is found, assess the need for support or a safeguarding referral. Inform the pupil of the outcome and provide an opportunity to raise concerns. SACGS will record every staff search and police search, including searches with agreement or for school-rule items and searches finding nothing, as soon as practicable and normally the same day.

The record should include the date, time and location; pupil, searcher and witness; item sought and authority; reasonable grounds or informed agreement; relevant adjustments; what was searched; result; any force or urgent exception; item handling; DSL involvement and referrals; parental information; and review. The search record must be distinct from, or linked to, any required significant-force incident record.

Parents should be informed as soon as practicable of any search for a statutory prohibited item, its outcome, confiscation and action taken. SACGS will ordinarily also tell parents of other searches, normally the same day. The DSL may delay or tailor information where telling a parent would put the pupil at risk, documenting the safeguarding decision; the separate statutory duties governing significant force, seclusion or restraint must still be followed. After a police strip search, the DfE guidance says parents must always be informed.

12 Confiscation and property handling

An authorised searcher may seize items reasonably suspected of posing a risk, being prohibited or searchable under school rules, or being evidence of an offence. Confiscation as a disciplinary measure must be reasonable. Secure hazardous items without unnecessary handling, restrict access, seek police advice where appropriate and maintain a chain-of-custody record for evidence.

- Knives and weapons: pass to police as soon as practicable. Illegal drugs: pass to police as soon as practicable unless a good reason supports safe disposal; seek police advice if uncertain.

- Stolen property: ordinarily return to owner or pass to police; any retention or disposal must follow the legal criteria. Articles used or likely to be used for an offence, injury or damage: consider police transfer, safe return, retention or lawful disposal, preserving evidence.
- Alcohol, tobacco and cigarette papers, fireworks and other harmful items: do not return prohibited items to the pupil; follow the specific statutory disposal rules, safety requirements and police advice. For fireworks seek specialist advice where needed.
- Pornographic images: dispose of ordinary pornography as required; preserve and refer suspected child sexual abuse material, prohibited images of children or extreme pornography to the DSL and police without viewing or reproducing it.
- School-rule items: decide reasonable return, retention or disposal considering safety, value and the risk of further disruption. Manage medicines through the School's medicines procedures, not informal disposal.

13 Electronic devices and sexual images

Where a confiscated device has been seized under the relevant power, an authorised staff member may examine files only with good reason: reasonable suspicion that material has been or could be used to cause harm, undermine school safety or teaching, or commit an offence. Examination must be targeted, proportionate and recorded. Do not browse unrelated private material.

If nude or semi-nude images of a child are suspected, do not intentionally view, copy, print, forward, share, save or store them. Stop accidental viewing, secure the device and refer immediately to the DSL, who follows KCSIE and UKCIS guidance. Suspected criminal evidence must be preserved and passed to police as soon as reasonably practicable. Data may be erased only when lawful and justified under DfE guidance: the material is not suspected offence evidence, its continued existence is likely to cause harm, and the pupil or parent refuses to delete it themselves. Record the decision without creating unnecessary copies. Do not demand passwords by force or threat.

14 SEND equality and Early Years

Searches require individual consideration of reasonable adjustments, communication needs, sensory sensitivity, physical disability, trauma, medical requirements and religious dress. Staff must avoid disproportionate or stereotyped decisions. For an EYFS child a search should be exceptional, led by welfare and developmentally appropriate; ordinarily two adults and a familiar adult should support the child, with the statutory urgent exception applied only where its conditions are met. Inform the DSL and parents under section 11.

15 Roles oversight and review

The registered proprietor approves this policy and oversees lawful operation. The Principal authorises and trains appropriate searchers, monitors serious incidents and reports to the proprietor. The DSL assesses safeguarding concerns, image-sharing reports, police involvement and aftercare; the SENCO advises on adjustments. Staff protect safety, follow their authorisation and record and report searches promptly.

The Principal and DSL review search records regularly, including grounds, outcomes, use of force, exceptions, police searches, repeated pupils, SEND and protected-characteristic patterns, notification, complaints and safeguarding outcomes. A confidential summary goes to the proprietor at least termly; a serious concern prompts immediate review. The proprietor reviews this policy at least annually and sooner following a serious incident, change in law or identified weakness. Keep the searchable-items list aligned with the published Behaviour and Prohibited Items policies.

16 Complaints and allegations

Complaints follow the published Complaints Policy. Allegations about unsafe, abusive or discriminatory conduct, or excessive force, follow KCSIE 2026, safeguarding and low-level-concerns procedures as appropriate, including LADO advice where the harm threshold may be met. Preserve records and offer support to pupils and staff.