

SEARCH, SCREENING AND CONFISCATION POLICY



**Resilience
Multi Academy
Trust**

Summary	Search, Screening and Confiscation Policy
Responsible Person/Author:	COO
Applies to: (Please circle/delete as appropriate)	Colleagues Student <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Community <input type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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12.08.22	1	Policy Created	
29.07.24	2	Policy Amended	Nomenclature amended
May 2025	3	Amendment	Rebrand
July 2025	4	Policy Amended	Para 10 – Specific reference to searches, screening and confiscation rather than positive handling. Para 25 – Additional section added on searching SEND students Para 34 – Section on strip searches amended because of June 2025 Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel guidance Para 42 – Limitation on electronic searches Appendix 1 – Updated equality assessment

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Introduction

1. RMAT wishes to keep a calm, safe and supportive environment for students to learn and for colleagues to work in. Using searching, screening and confiscation powers appropriately ensures student and colleagues' welfare. All colleagues have a responsibility to supply a safe environment where students can learn.
2. This policy should be read in conjunction with RMAT's Safeguarding policy, its behaviour (PD (Positive Discipline)) policy and its positive handling policy.
3. References in this Policy to Parents should be read as a reference to Parent/Carer

Scope and Purpose of this Policy and who it applies to

4. This policy applies to all colleagues and students. Colleagues are expected to follow this policy, and non-compliance may lead to disciplinary action being taken against them.
5. The powers to search a student arise from the **Education Act 1996** which is compatible with the European Conventions on Human Rights.

Publication of this Policy

6. This policy will be brought to the attention of all Trustees, Local Review Boards, and the Principal of each Academy. The policy will be available on colleagues drives and on demand and should be provided to all parents and carers, students, members of the public and colleagues on request. Following any further review of the policy resulting in an updated version being adopted by the Trust, colleagues and stakeholders will be advised by email where they may access it and advised whether they must supply confirmation that they have read the document.
7. Guidance on any aspect of this policy can be obtained from the COO whose email address is amarham@rmat.uk.

Responsibility for this Policy

8. RMAT has overall responsibility for the effective operation of this policy and for ensuring compliance with the relevant statutory or RMAT framework. The RMAT Board has delegated day to day responsibility for running the policy to the RMAT Executive, the Local Review Boards, and the Principal at each Academy.
9. The Local Review Board and Principal has a specific responsibility to ensure the fair application of this policy, and all members of colleagues are responsible for supporting colleagues and ensuring its success.

Aim of this Policy

10. To ensure that searches, screening and confiscation are conducted lawfully, safely, and proportionately to safeguard students and colleagues.

Searches

11. Colleagues have a statutory power under the **Schools (Specification and Disposal of Articles) Regulations 2012** to search students for the following items:

- Knives and weapons.
 - Alcohol.
 - Illegal Drugs.
 - Stolen Items.
 - Any articles that a colleague reasonable suspects have been or is likely to be used to commit an offence or cause personal injury to or damage to the property of any person including the student.
 - Tobacco and cigarette papers.
 - Fireworks; and
 - Pornographic images
12. Colleagues have a power under the PD policy to search for chewing gum, mobile phones, smart watches, air pods, e-cigarettes or vapes or other smoking paraphernalia when the student is in uniform.
13. Colleagues have a power under common law to search a student for any other item where the student agrees to the search. When using this power as opposed to those above, the colleagues conducting the search should ensure:
- The student understands the reason for the search.
 - How the search will be conducted; and
 - That the student agrees to the same.

Roles and Responsibilities in respect of Searches

Principals

14. Only the Academy Principal may conduct a search or authorise other colleagues to conduct a search.
15. The Academy Principal has a responsibility to:
- Oversee the Academy practice of searching to ensure it is safe, proportionate and appropriate which safeguards the welfare of students and colleagues.
 - Ensure sufficient colleagues are trained in how to lawfully and safely search a student who is not cooperative.
 - Ensure all colleagues understand their rights and the rights of the student who is being searched.
16. Where a colleague feels the need to complete a search as part of an investigation, they are to ensure all written statements are taken in line with the Trust's procedure.

Colleagues Conducting Searches

17. Colleagues conducting searches should ensure:
- They are authorised by the Academy Principal to conduct a search.
 - They consult with the Designated Safeguarding Lead ("DSL") linked to the students Year Group to gain understanding of any background information concerning the student which may affect how the search is conducted.

- The power under which they are conducting the search.
- They inform the DSL (Designated Safeguarding Lead) where any prohibited item is found or where a search has revealed a safeguarding risk through CPOMS.

DSL's

18. DSLs (Designated Safeguarding Lead) should:

- Make a report to Social Services where there is evidence because of a search that a student is at risk of harm
- Assess the incident against any wider safeguarding concerns

Considerations before conducting a Search

19. Colleagues should consider the following before conducting a search:

- Whether any CCTV (Closed Circuit Television) footage makes it clear that a search should take place.
- The age and needs of the student who is to be searched.
- The individual needs, learning difficulty or disability of a student and what reasonable adjustments need to be made to accommodate that.
- How urgent the need to search is including the risk to other students and colleagues; and
- Explain to the student why they are being searched, how and where the search will take place and give them the opportunity ask questions.

20. If the student is uncooperative this maybe because:

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

21. If they do not understand the instruction, colleagues should repeat the instruction and consider whether the student is under the influence of any substance which may inhibit their ability to understand the instruction.

22. If a student is unaware of what the search may involve or has had an earlier distressing experience, colleagues should make clear what is involved in **this** search.

23. If the colleagues still believe a search is necessary but it is not needed urgently, they should seek the advice of the Academy Principal, DSL or the Senior Leadership Team who has knowledge of the student.

24. If the student refuses to allow a search to take place, then at **NO** point should a colleague use physical contact. The student should be held in a safe place and always supervised. Contact must be made with the parent/carer asking that the student is collected from site as soon as possible. If the parent/carer is not responsive, then contact should be made with the Police and potentially social care where appropriate.

Searches of students with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

25. When conducting a search involving a student with SEND, colleagues must take additional care to ensure the process is lawful, respectful, and adapted to the student's individual needs. The following principles must be followed:

- **Reasonable Adjustments:** Colleagues must make reasonable adjustments in line with the Equality Act 2010. This includes considering sensory sensitivities, communication needs, and physical or cognitive impairments.
- **Consultation with SENCO:** Before conducting a search, colleagues should consult the Academy’s Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO) or a colleague familiar with the student’s needs to determine the most appropriate approach.
- **Understanding and Consent:** Colleagues must ensure the student understands the reason for the search, how it will be conducted, and what it involves. This may require simplified language, visual aids, or additional time.
- **Supportive Environment:** Searches should be conducted in a calm, private space with minimal sensory stimuli. A trusted adult known to the student should be present where possible.
- **Safeguarding Considerations:** If a student becomes distressed or uncooperative, colleagues must consider whether this is due to their SEND and respond with de-escalation strategies rather than disciplinary measures.
- **Recording and Review:** Any search involving a SEND student must be recorded on CPOMS, including details of the adjustments made and the rationale for the approach taken. The Academy Principal should review these cases to ensure consistency and fairness.

Search location

26. Searches should where possible take place away from other students and on Academy premises unless the search needs to take place on an Academy Trip. If it is a trip abroad, local law will apply and not this policy.
27. Unless urgent, the student and a witness should be present for the search.

Who may conduct the search?

28. **By law**, the colleagues conducting the search must be of the same sex as the student being searched and there should be a witness. This can be overridden if 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** it is not reasonably practical for the search to be carried out by colleagues of the same sex or in the presence of a witness.
29. Under **NO** circumstances should a colleague conduct a search without another colleague present.

The extent of the search

30. A colleague may search:

- A student's outer clothing¹;
- Pockets.
- Possessions e.g., their bag.
- Desks; or
- Lockers

31. A metal detector may be used to help with a search.

Strip searches

32. Colleagues **MUST NOT** conduct a strip search. They have no power to do so.

33. Before calling Police into the Academy, Principals should consider:

- Whether a search by police is necessary.
- The risk of a search against the risk of not recovering a prohibited item.
- That less invasive approaches have been exhausted.

34. In line with the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel guidance and the IOPC recommendations the following best practices must be observed when a strip search is considered or conducted:

- **Safeguarding First:** The welfare and dignity of the child must be the primary consideration. Strip searches should only be used when absolutely necessary and proportionate to the risk posed.
- **Parental Involvement:** Parents/carers should be informed prior to the search wherever possible. If not feasible, they must be informed immediately afterwards.
- **Appropriate Adult:** An appropriate adult must be present during the search. If the child declines this and the adult agrees, this must be documented.
- **Same-Sex Officer Requirement:** The police officer conducting the search must be of the same sex as the child. No opposite-sex individuals should be present or able to observe the search.
- **Safeguarding Referral:** Any strip search involving a child must trigger a mandatory safeguarding referral to the local authority.
- **Post-Search Support:** The Academy must initiate a safeguarding response to support the child, and any colleagues involved. This includes emotional support and a review of the incident to identify systemic issues.
- **Data Recording and Review:** All strip searches must be recorded in detail and reported to the Chair of the RMA Board and the Safeguarding Trustee.

Reference: This policy aligns with the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel's June 2025 guidance and the IOPC's 2024 recommendations to improve child strip search practices

35. Strip searches will be distressing for all involved. A police officer may only conduct the same if:

¹ Outer clothing means any item not wholly worn next to the skin or immediately over a garment that is being worn as underwear.

- it is necessary to remove an item relating to a criminal offence; and
- the police officer reasonably considers the item has been concealed.

Following a strip search

36. If an item is found, Academy Principals and Senior Leadership Team should consider the impact on the student and the wider issues it raises for the Academy and all its students.

Searches of Electronic devices

37. If colleagues believes that a student’s electronic devices including **mobile phones could hold information linked to the investigation, they can ask that the student shows the evidence on their device.**
38. The colleagues must then alert On Call or the Senior Leadership Team (“SLT”) if there is any evidence of concern. The colleagues On Call or the SLT Team member can then take a photo/video on a Trust device if they hold files or data which relate to an offence or may cause harm to another person to keep the evidence, E.g., abusive messages or evidence relating to criminal behaviour, except for any indecent images or pornography. If any such files or data is found, colleagues should consider the proper safeguarding response.
39. Colleagues must not access, share, or store any content beyond what is necessary for safeguarding or evidentiary purposes.
40. If colleagues find an indecent image of a child, they should not intentionally view the same, nor copy, print, share, store or save such an image. The device should be confiscated, and the matter referred to the DSL. Further advice can be found in [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#) and [Sharing nudes and semi-nudes: advice for educations settings working with children and young people](#).
41. If an item relates to a specific offence, the device should be delivered to the Police as soon as possible.

Following all searches

42. Whether a search results in an item being found, the Academy should consider whether the reasons for the search, the search itself or the outcome of the search gives cause to the student suffering or is likely to suffer harm, and/or whether any specific support is needed. Colleagues should follow the Trust’s safeguarding and child protection policy and speak to the Academy DSL.
43. If a student is found to be in possession of a prohibited item, the student should be sanctioned in line with the PD policy.
44. All searches for a prohibited item and/or a police search should be recorded on CPOMS. Colleagues should consider whether a search for an item banned under PD such as air pods or a mobile phone should be recorded.
45. The CPOMS record should include:
- Date, time and location of the search.

- Name of the student(s) searched.
 - Who conducted the search, and any others present.
 - What was being searched for.
 - The reason(s) for the search.
 - What items, if any, were found; and
 - What follow-up action was taken because of the search.
46. If an Academy Principal concludes that a high number of searches are being undertaken, they should consider if they fall on a particular group of students and what actions can be taken to prevent this.

Informing Parents/carers and Governance

47. Parents/carers should **always** be informed where a search has taken place for a prohibited item including anything that has been confiscated and the sanction imposed under the PD policy. Parents/carers do not need to be informed prior unless there is a need to conduct a strip search by the Police.
48. In respect of searches for items banned under the PD policy, Academies should consider whether it is proper to inform parents where a banned item has been recovered and the sanction imposed for this.
49. The Local Review Board should be informed at the earliest opportunity if a prohibited item is found during a search including the item confiscated and the sanction imposed under the PD policy.
50. The Chair of the RMAT Board and the Safeguarding Trustee should be informed if an RMAT student is made subject to a strip search as soon as possible.

Screening

51. Screening can supply reassurance to parents, colleagues and students that an Academy is taking steps to create a calm, safe and supportive environment. The Trust PD policy and the Trust's Health and Safety obligations enable it to put in place screening.
52. Screening can include walk through or handheld metal detectors with reasonable adjustments for disabled students.
53. If a student refuses to be screened, colleagues should consider the appropriateness of a search.

Confiscation

54. **Section 91 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006** enables colleagues to confiscate, keep or dispose of student's property prohibited under the PD policy and the law protects colleagues from liability for doing so where they have acted lawfully.
55. Mobile phones, smart watches and/or Air pods which are confiscated will be returned at 2.30pm the following Friday or after a student has finished any added period of learning or detention, whichever is later.
56. Any colleagues can confiscate any item in line with the PD Policy that they have reasonable grounds for suspecting that it:

- Poses a risk to colleagues or students.
- Is prohibited such as a bladed article or found in the PD policy for which a search can be made such as a mobile phone, smart watch or air pods; or
- Is evidence in relation to an offence

Prohibited or illegal items

57. **Confiscated drugs** should be delivered to the police as soon as possible.
58. **Other substances** should be passed to the Police or disposed of if they are believed to be harmful.
59. **Alcohol, tobacco, cigarette papers or fireworks** should be disposed of and not returned to a student.
60. **Pornographic images** should be disposed of/removed unless possession of the image is an offence in which case it should be passed to the Police. Colleagues should **not** intentionally view an indecent image of a child (also known as nude or semi-nude images). Colleagues **must never** copy, print, share, store or save such images.
61. **Stolen items** should be delivered to the Police or returned to their rightful owner or disposed of. To decide their action, colleagues should consider:
- The value of the item, low value items may not call for Police involvement, e.g., a Pencil case.
 - Whether the item is prohibited by law or under the PD policy.
 - Where returning an item my place any person at risk of harm; and
 - Whether the item can be disposed of safely.
62. Any **Weapons or items which are evidence of a suspected offence** should be passed to the Police.
63. In deciding what to do with **Items banned under the PD policy**, colleagues should consider:
- The value of the item.
 - Whether it is proper to return it to the student or a parent.
 - Whether the item is likely to continue to disrupt the learning, calm, safe, supportive nature of the Academy.

References

64. This policy is based on the [DfE \(Department for Education\) advice for schools on searching, screening and confiscation](#) and should be read in conjunction with the Trust's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, Positive Handling Policy and Positive Discipline Policy.

Complaints

65. Any complaints in respect of searching, screening and confiscation should be pursued through the Trust's complaints procedure.

Monitoring

66. The COO will check the relevant legislation, guidelines, and information forthcoming from the relevant statutory bodies for any recommendation or changes. Where a gap, potential inequality or shortfall in performance is found within the policy, the Head of Governance and Compliance will tell the Board of Trustees of any changes that are needed, and a proposal will be sent to the Trust Board within a suitable timescale. There will be a full review of the policy by the Head of Governance and Compliance prior to the stated review date where recommendations will be made for consideration by the Trust Board.

Diversity

67. RMA is committed to a policy of celebrating diversity, promoting equality of opportunity, providing an inclusive workplace, and ending any unfair treatment or unlawful discrimination. This overriding aim applies to all policies and procedures relating to colleagues and students. The Trust will always follow the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and associated guidance produced by the Department for Education.

Appendix 1 Equality Impact Assessment

Date: August 2025

Title of Policy: Search, Screening and Confiscation Policy

Purpose of Policy: To ensure that all searches, screening, and confiscation procedures are conducted lawfully, proportionately, and with due regard to safeguarding and equality obligations.

Relevance to Equality, Diversity, Cohesion and Integration

Question	Yes	Details
Is there an existing or likely differential impact for different equality characteristics?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	SEND students, students with cultural or religious sensitivities, and those from minoritised backgrounds may be disproportionately affected.
Have there been or are likely to be public concerns about the policy?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Strip searches and searches of SEND students have raised national safeguarding concerns.
Could the policy affect how services are organised or accessed?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	It affects safeguarding, disciplinary, and parental engagement processes.
Could the policy affect workforce or employment practices?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Colleague training and responsibilities are impacted.
Does the policy help to end unlawful discrimination, advance equality, or foster good relations?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Yes, through clear guidance, reasonable adjustments, and safeguarding protocols.

Impact Considerations:

The policy applies to all students and colleagues across RMA Academies. Affected groups include Students with SEND, those with religious or cultural sensitivities and colleagues involved in searches. Equality data will be monitored via CPOMS, HR records and safeguarding reports.

The following gaps were identified in the previous version of the policy:

- Need for clearer guidance on reasonable adjustments for SEND students.
- Monitoring of search data to identify disproportionality.

The latest amendments to the policy have meant that:

- Reasonable adjustments can be consistently applied.
- Strip searches are subject to rigorous safeguarding oversight.
- Search data will be monitored for patterns of disproportionality.

This policy supports the Trust's commitment to equality and safeguarding under the Equality Act 2010.

- Adam Marham – COO – August 2025