



Safeguarding Solutions

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Issue 30

A newsletter archive is available at
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Previous themes 'In the Spotlight' include:-

- Online Child Sexual Abuse
- Low level concerns and allegations
- Domestic abuse
- Radicalisation and Prevent
- Private-fostering

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Searching, Screening and Confiscating

***Scenario:** A child arrives in school smelling strongly of cannabis. You suspect they may have drugs in their possession. How confident are you about how to respond to this scenario?*

Do you need consent to search a pupil/student and/or their possessions?

School staff can search a pupil/student for any item if the pupil/student agrees. The ability to consent may be influenced by the child's age or other factors.

Head teachers and staff authorised by them have a statutory power to search pupils/students or their possessions, without consent, where they have reasonable grounds for suspecting that the pupil/student may have a prohibited item.

The member of staff conducting the search may not require the pupil to remove any clothing other than outer clothing (clothing that is not worn next to the skin or immediately over a garment that is being worn as underwear).

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

There is no obligation on schools to inform or seek consent from parents/carers before undertaking a search which complies with the legal requirements.

What are reasonable grounds for suspicion?

Members of staff must decide in each case what constitutes reasonable grounds for suspicion. For example, they may have heard other pupils talking about the item or notice a pupil behaving in a suspicious manner. The school can rely on CCTV footage to help reach their decision.

'Child Q'

You may have read recently about 'Child Q' who was strip searched by police officers whilst at school, after the school reported concerns to the police that she smelt of cannabis and may be carrying drugs. The search, which involved the exposure of Child Q's intimate body parts, took place without an Appropriate Adult present and with the knowledge that 'Child Q' was menstruating.

Haringey Safeguarding Children Partnership have published a child safeguarding practice review into this incident. You can find the full report [here](#).

Points for the Safeguarding Team to consider

- Are staff aware of the guidance around searching, screening and confiscation? How confident are they when discussing the scenario at the start of this newsletter?
- Do staff know what constitutes a 'prohibited item'?
- Is there reference to the [guidance on searching, screening and confiscation](#) in school policies?
- How are the views of the pupil/student gathered before, during and after any searches that do take place?
- Are you knowledgeable about and confident to enact local escalation and case resolution processes? Do you feel able to challenge other professionals when necessary?
- Do you understand the role of an [Appropriate Adult](#)?
- Are staff confident to respond if the scenario involved suspicions about inappropriate content on a pupil's/student's mobile device? *There's useful guidance about this on page 13 of the DfE Searching, Screening and Confiscation guidance.*

And if you are a governor reading this.....

Do you think that there is a robust response from your school when responding to an incident where a pupil or student may be in possession of a prohibited item? How do you know?

Here are some questions you might like to reflect on:-

- Do school policies include reference to the DfE guidance 'Searching, Screening and Confiscation' (June 2018)?
- Do staff understand the guidance around this?
- Is there clear guidance for pupils/students about safe use of mobile devices and the internet?
- Are senior members of staff, including the safeguarding team equipped to effectively challenge other professionals, where there is the view that actions are not in the best interests of the pupil/student?

Keeping 'In Touch'

Here's my list of recommended podcasts and resources:-

SecEd Podcast: Trauma and adverse childhood experiences

The latest SecEd podcast looks at how secondary schools can support vulnerable students who are living with trauma and considers common challenges, how to respond & offer useful advice & tips for school staff.

[Listen here](#)

Childline campaign - 'We all feel it'

Childline have launched a new campaign to encourage young people to speak out about and seek help for mental health issues. It particularly focuses on the experience of boys and there are resources to use, including a video aimed at boys, discussing emotions.

[Find resources here](#)

Ofsted podcasts: Discussing topical issues

Listen to the latest podcast about school exclusions and alternative provision.

[Listen here](#)

Have a lovely Easter break when it finally arrives....these have certainly been some of the toughest weeks so far. I hope you manage to get a well-earned break and re-charge your batteries!