

Searching a Student Policy

Purpose

This policy is designed to outline the procedures, rights, and responsibilities related to searching students and their possessions while on a YBS course. The aim is to ensure that searches are conducted lawfully, respectfully, and transparently, while safeguarding the safety and wellbeing of all students and staff members.

Legal Framework

Under UK law, a pupil's possessions may be searched if there are reasonable grounds for suspicion that they may be in possession of items that are prohibited, dangerous, or harmful. These grounds include concerns about weapons, drugs, alcohol, stolen property, or other materials prohibited by the organisation's rules.

Scope of Policy

This policy applies to all students and staff at YBS and covers any situation where a search is deemed necessary, whether it occurs on-site or during YBS-organised events or activities.

Key Legal Considerations

- A pupil's possessions can only be searched if there are reasonable grounds to believe they have prohibited items.
- A search should be conducted by a member of staff who is of the same sex as the student being searched, and in the presence of another staff member, preferably of the same sex as the pupil.
- Searches will always be conducted with respect for the student's privacy and dignity.
- If a student is under suspicion for carrying illegal items (e.g., drugs or weapons), and they refuse to consent to a search, staff may involve the police.

When Can a Search be Conducted? A search may be initiated if:

- There are reasonable grounds to suspect that the student has a prohibited item in their possession.
- A member of staff reasonably believes the search is necessary for the safety of students and staff.

- The item(s) being searched for are potentially harmful, illegal, or in violation of YBS policies.

What Can Be Searched?

- **Personal possessions:** Bags, coats, and other personal belongings.
- **Boarding house lockers:** If the student has been informed that their locker is subject to search under YBS rules.
- **Clothing:** Outer clothing such as jackets, hats, or coats.
- **Electronic devices:** If they are believed to contain prohibited materials (e.g., drugs or explicit content).
- **Personal effects:** Any other items or materials that may be reasonably suspected to be harmful or prohibited.

Staff Involved in a Search

- **Designated Staff:** Searches will only be conducted by staff who are authorised and trained to perform searches. This may include teachers, senior leadership staff, or security personnel.
- **Witness:** A search will always involve at least one other staff member as a witness to ensure fairness and transparency. Ideally, the witness should be of the same sex as the student being searched.
- **Same-Sex Staff:** The person conducting the search must be of the same sex as the student whenever possible. In situations where this is not possible, a same-sex member of staff will be asked to attend the search as a witness.
- **Other Considerations:** If the search involves any invasive measures or sensitive areas of the body, this must be done by a qualified medical professional or with the involvement of the police, and only in extreme circumstances.

The Search Process

1. **Initial Discussion:** Before carrying out a search, staff should explain the reasons for the search to the student. The student should be informed that they have the right to refuse, but refusal may result in further consequences, such as contacting parents, legal authorities, or involvement of police if appropriate.
2. **Consent:** While YBS can conduct a search without consent in certain situations, every effort should be made to obtain consent from the student before proceeding. If the

student refuses, the school will proceed with the search based on reasonable grounds for suspicion.

3. **Conducting the Search:** The search should be carried out in a private area, ensuring that it is not conducted in front of other students or staff members. The search should be discreet and conducted in a manner that respects the student's privacy and dignity.
4. **Item Seizure:** Any item found during the search that is prohibited or illegal may be confiscated by the staff member conducting the search. If the item is considered illegal (e.g., drugs or a weapon), the staff member may contact the police.

What Happens if an Item is Found?

- If the staff member finds an item that is prohibited by the school's rules, they have the authority to seize the item. This may include weapons, drugs, alcohol, or stolen goods.
- If an illegal item (such as controlled substances or weapons) is found, YBS will take appropriate action, which may involve informing the police, contacting the student's parents or guardians, and taking disciplinary action in line with the YBS behaviour policy.

Record Keeping and Reporting

- Every search will be documented, including the date, time, location, staff involved, the student's response, and the outcome of the search. The reason for the search and the items found (if any) should be clearly recorded.
- A report of the search should be submitted to the YBS Artistic Director and YBS Board. If any illegal items are found, the police must be informed immediately.
- The student's parents or guardians will be informed of the search and any outcomes, especially if a prohibited or illegal item was found.

Students' Rights During a Search

- **Right to be Informed:** Students should be told why the search is being conducted and what items are being searched for.
- **Right to Refuse:** Students may refuse to cooperate with the search, but this may result in disciplinary actions, such as involving parents or legal authorities.
- **Right to Privacy and Dignity:** Searches should be conducted in a way that respects the student's privacy and dignity, and care should be taken to avoid unnecessary embarrassment or distress.

Communication with Parents/Guardians

- Parents or guardians will be notified of the search and any items found if they are considered significant or illegal. This includes circumstances where a student is found with prohibited or illegal items.
- In cases where the search reveals serious misconduct or illegal activities, the school will work closely with parents and guardians to address the issue and determine the next steps.

This policy will be reviewed annually to ensure that it aligns with legal requirements and best practices.

Approved by the Board of Trustees, 26 January 2026

Date of next review, January 2027