SEARCH & CONFISCATION POLICY

Reviewed:	June 2026
Next Review Due:	June 2027
Applies To:	Whole School Community
Owner:	Head of School
Approved By:	Board of Directors

Mission, Vision and Values

Mission
To inspire our children to reach their full potential by fostering curiosity and an interest in learning, awakening their minds and illuminating their world.

Vision
To create an affordable international secondary school with a high standard of education where children learn through practical and project-based work. To develop our students' moral and intellectual capacity, and to encourage creativity and adaptability.

Aim
An education that is broad, balanced and challenging, with an emphasis on developing strong connections to our host country, Uganda.

Values
Desire for lifelong learning; an ability to adapt; be innovative and reflective thinkers; open minded, and empathetic while achieving high academic success according to individual potential.

Contents

1. Introduction

2. Definitions

3. Roles & Authorisation

4. Screening Procedures

5. Search Expectations

6. Reasonable Grounds for a Search

7. Thresholds for Search

8. Digital Devices

9. Conducting a Search

    9.1 Before the Search

    9.2 Search Process

10. Refusal to Cooperate

11. Confiscation & Disposals

12. Recording, Reporting & Parent Communication

13. Safeguarding, Equality & SEND

14. Training & Monitoring

15. Complaints

16. Policy Review and Approval

17. Distribution and Access

18. Related Policies

Appendix 1 - 7Hills Search Log

Appendix 2 - Search Poster

Appendix 3 – Confiscation Receipt

Appendix 4 - Parent Notification: Student Search Outcome

1. Introduction

This policy set out how 7Hills International School (7Hills) prevents, searches for and confiscates prohibited items to keep students and staff safe. It applies to all students on school premises, transport and off-site school activities.

2. Definitions

- **Search:** a more intrusive examination of a student's outer clothing, pockets or possessions where there are reasonable grounds to suspect that prohibited items may be present.
- **Screening:** a preventative inspection of bags, lockers or other school property carried out to maintain school safety and security. Screening does not normally involve searching a student's person.
- **Prohibited item:** knives/weapons; alcohol; illegal drugs; stolen items; any article likely to be used to commit an offence or cause injury/damage; tobacco, cigarette papers and vapes; fireworks; pornographic images; any item banned in school rules (e.g., aerosol sprays).

3. Roles & Authorisation

- The Head of School (HoS) maintains a list of authorised staff (e.g. Operations Coordinator, Behaviour Coordinator, Deputy Head, Exams Officer, etc.). Only these staff may lead a search.
- A second adult acts as witness. Same-sex searcher/witness will be used wherever practicable; exceptions apply only to urgent risk of serious harm.
- The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) is notified of all searches for prohibited items or where safeguarding concerns arise.

Note: In situations where waiting would create an immediate risk of serious harm, authorised staff may proceed without prior Head of School approval provided they inform the Head of School and DSL immediately afterwards.

4. Screening Procedures

Screening is a preventative measure used by the school to help maintain a safe learning environment. Unlike a search, screening does not require reasonable suspicion that a student is in possession of a prohibited item. Screening may be undertaken where it is considered necessary to support the safety, security and wellbeing of the school community. Screening at 7Hills may include:

- visual inspection of bags or personal belongings;
- requests for students to open bags or lockers for inspection;
- checks of lockers, desks or other school property;
- security checks before or after educational visits, school events or examinations;
- targeted screening where there are reasonable concerns about student safety or prohibited items being brought onto campus.

Screening will always be carried out respectfully, proportionately and with due regard for students' dignity and privacy. Wherever reasonably practicable, students will be present during the inspection of their belongings or allocated locker.

Routine screening may be authorised by the Head of School or a delegated member of the Senior Leadership Team. Targeted screening may also be authorised where there are reasonable grounds to believe that prohibited items may be present or where there is a legitimate safeguarding or security concern.

Where screening identifies a prohibited item or gives reasonable grounds to suspect that a student is in possession of a prohibited item, the procedures set out in the Searching section of these guidelines will apply.

All significant screening activities resulting in the discovery of prohibited items will be recorded and parents informed where appropriate.

5. Search Expectations

- Student welfare and dignity are paramount; searches are proportionate, necessary and respectful.
- We seek voluntary cooperation first; reasonable force is a last resort and only for prohibited items where allowed by law.
- Searches are authorised by the Head of School (HoS) and conducted by a delegated senior member of staff and recorded centrally.
- Equality, SEND and safeguarding considerations are built into every stage; reasonable adjustments are made where required.

6. Reasonable Grounds for a Search

A search may only be conducted where there are reasonable grounds to believe that a student is in possession of a prohibited or banned item. Reasonable grounds are based on objective facts, observations or reliable information, rather than assumptions, stereotypes or personal opinion. Reasonable grounds may include, but are not limited to:

- A member of staff witnessing behaviour that suggests a student may be concealing a prohibited item.
- Reliable information provided by another student, member of staff, parent or other credible source.
- CCTV footage or other evidence indicating that a student may be in possession of a prohibited item.
- The smell of alcohol, illegal drugs or other prohibited substances.
- A visible bulge or object concealed within clothing or belongings that gives reasonable cause for concern.
- Information obtained through social media or other digital communications that reasonably indicates possession of a prohibited item.
- A student being observed handling, exchanging or attempting to conceal a prohibited item.

- Information received from the police or another external agency.

The examples above are not exhaustive. Each decision to conduct a search will be based on the individual circumstances of the incident and the professional judgement of the authorised member of staff.

Staff must be able to explain and justify the reasons for any search undertaken. The grounds for the search will be recorded in the school's Search Log as part of the formal record of the incident.

7. Thresholds for Search

- **With consent:** any item may be searched if the student agrees, after the process is explained.
- **Without consent:** an authorised member of staff may search for prohibited items where there are reasonable grounds to suspect that a student is in possession of such an item.
- **Strip search:** not permitted by school staff in any circumstances. If police conduct one, the school retains a duty of care and will inform parents as soon as practicable (unless immediate risk prevents prior contact).

8. Digital Devices

The school recognises that mobile phones, tablets, laptops and other electronic devices may contain evidence relevant to a safeguarding concern, serious breach of school rules or a criminal offence. Any decision to search or view digital content must be lawful, necessary, proportionate and carried out with due regard for the student's privacy and wellbeing.

Digital devices will not normally be searched. However, where there are reasonable grounds to believe that a device contains evidence relating to:

- a safeguarding concern;
- bullying, harassment or online abuse;
- the possession or distribution of inappropriate or harmful material;
- serious disruption to the school;
- academic malpractice;
- or a suspected criminal offence,

the Head of School or the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) may authorise a limited search of the device. Wherever reasonably practicable:

- the student will be informed of the reason for viewing the device;
- the search will be carried out by the Head of School, DSL or another authorised senior member of staff;
- a second member of staff will be present throughout the process; and
- only content directly relevant to the concern will be viewed.

Staff must not conduct unnecessary or extensive searches of personal data, photographs, messages or applications unrelated to the matter being investigated.

Where digital evidence may relate to a criminal offence, staff should avoid deleting, altering or forwarding material unnecessarily. The device should be secured and preserved in its original condition and, where appropriate, handed to the police to ensure that potential evidence is not compromised.

Parents or guardians will normally be informed whenever a student's digital device has been searched or its contents viewed. The only exception will be where immediate notification could place a student or another person at greater risk of harm, or where the school has been advised otherwise by the police or another safeguarding agency.

All searches of digital devices will be recorded in the school's Search Log, including the reason for the search, who authorised it, who conducted it, the outcome and any subsequent safeguarding or disciplinary actions.

9. Conducting a Search

9.1 Before the Search

Before conducting any search, the authorised member of staff must ensure that the search is lawful, necessary and proportionate to the circumstances. Wherever possible, the student should be treated with dignity and respect throughout the process. Before the search begins, the member of staff will:

- Explain the reason for the search and the grounds on which it is being conducted.
- Explain what item or items are being searched for.
- Explain where the search will take place and who will be present.
- Explain how the search will be carried out and what the student will be asked to do.
- Give the student the opportunity to ask questions or seek clarification.
- Seek the student's cooperation before proceeding, unless immediate action is required to prevent serious harm or where the search is authorised without consent in accordance with these guidelines.

Staff should consider the student's age, maturity, communication needs, English language proficiency, SEND, disability and any known safeguarding concerns before conducting the search. Reasonable adjustments should be made wherever appropriate to ensure the student understands the process and is treated fairly.

The member of staff should reassure the student that the purpose of the search is to maintain the safety and wellbeing of the school community and that the search will be conducted respectfully, confidentially and only to the extent necessary.

9.2 Search Process

1. Assess urgency and risk; move to a private location with a witness; offer the student the chance to hand over the item voluntarily.

2. Explain what is being sought and why; request consent where appropriate; consider SEND, EAL and cultural needs.

3. Limit to outer clothing only; ask the student to empty pockets; search bags/lockers/desks in the student's presence. For lockers/desks, obtain consent where possible; if refused and the threshold is met for prohibited items, a search may proceed under authorisation.

4. Use of force is only to search for prohibited items when necessary and proportionate to prevent harm, damage or disorder.

5. Cease the search if risk escalates; seek SLT/DSL support or police assistance.

10. Refusal to Cooperate

The school will always seek a student's voluntary cooperation before conducting a search. A student's refusal to cooperate does not automatically prevent a search from taking place, but it will require the authorised member of staff to carefully consider the circumstances before proceeding.

If a student refuses to cooperate, the authorised member of staff will:

- Remain calm and continue to use appropriate de-escalation strategies.
- Seek to understand the reason for the student's refusal, recognising that the refusal may be linked to anxiety, misunderstanding, previous experiences, SEND, communication needs or safeguarding concerns.
- Explain the purpose of the search again and provide the student with a further opportunity to cooperate voluntarily.
- Consult the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) where the student's behaviour or the circumstances of the incident indicate a potential safeguarding concern.
- Consider whether the grounds for the search remain sufficient and whether proceeding is necessary, lawful and proportionate.
- Determine whether the use of reasonable force is justified and proportionate, taking into account the nature of the suspected item, the level of immediate risk and the safety of all those involved, and only where permitted by law.
- Ensure the student remains appropriately supervised while a decision is made and until the situation has been safely resolved.

A refusal to cooperate may result in consequences in accordance with the school's Behaviour Policy. However, staff will always consider the individual circumstances of the student and ensure that any response is fair, proportionate and consistent with the school's safeguarding responsibilities.

11. Confiscation & Disposals

- Authorised staff may confiscate any item that poses risk, is prohibited, or is evidence of an offence.
- Suspected illegal drugs, knives/weapons, extreme pornography or stolen property will be handed over to the police.
- Alcohol, tobacco/vapes, fireworks and aerosols (safe disposal), etc. will be disposed of by the Operations Coordinator.
- All other items will be retained for parent collection or returned at end of day as appropriate.
- All staff have the power to confiscate other items of student property which they deem to be undesirable in their lesson.
- Confiscated items which have not been collected after six months will be disposed of under the direction of the Principal.
- 7Hills staff are obliged to take reasonable care of confiscated property, in which case no liability will attach to the school for any loss or damage.

12. Recording, Reporting & Parent Communication

- All searches for prohibited/banned items are recorded using the online Search Log Form within 24 hours. https://forms.gle/6TTRTcLY461N5DnUA
- Parents are informed as soon as practicable of any search and its outcome.
- The DSL reviews search records for safeguarding patterns. The HoS provides a termly anonymized report to the Board.

13. Safeguarding, Equality & SEND

Searching and confiscation are not solely behaviour management processes. In some circumstances, they may indicate that a student is experiencing, or is at risk of, significant harm, exploitation or other safeguarding concerns. Staff must therefore approach all searches through both a behaviour and safeguarding lens.

The discovery of a prohibited item, or the circumstances leading to a search, may indicate concerns including, but not limited to:

- child criminal exploitation;
- gang association or involvement in serious violence;
- exploitation by peers or adults;
- possession of items linked to self-harm;
- physical, emotional or sexual abuse;
- substance misuse;
- coercion or intimidation by others.

Where a search identifies, or reasonably suggests, a safeguarding concern, the authorised member of staff must notify the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) immediately. The DSL will assess the

circumstances and determine any appropriate safeguarding response, including referrals to external agencies where necessary, in accordance with the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.
Throughout the search process, staff must consider the student's age, maturity, gender, cultural background, communication needs, SEND, disability and mental health. Reasonable adjustments should be made wherever appropriate to ensure that searches are conducted fairly, sensitively and proportionately.

Information obtained through a search will be shared only with those who need to know in order to safeguard the student, investigate the matter appropriately or fulfil the school's legal responsibilities.

14. Training & Monitoring

Authorised staff receive training in conflict management and safer searching. Practice is reviewed annually.

15. Complaints

Concerns are managed under the school's Complaints Policy.

16. Policy Review and Approval

This policy will be reviewed annually or as required to reflect changes in legislation, CIS standards, or school practice.

17. Distribution and Access

This policy is available to all staff, students, and parents via the school website and on the school Google drive. Printed copies can be requested from the school reception.

18. Related Policies

- Behaviour Policy
- Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy
- Visitor Management Policy
- Health & Safety Policy
- Online Safety Policy
- Data Protection Policy

Appendix 1 - 7Hills Search Log

Date/Time	Staff Involved	Witness	Grounds for Search	Items Searched	Outcome	Confiscated Items	Parent Informed	DSL Informed	Follow Up

Appendix 2 - Search Poster



Appendix 3 – Confiscation Receipt

Confiscation Receipt & Chain of Custody

Student name / Class	
Date & time of confiscation	
Item(s) description	
Reason for confiscation	
Sealed container ID / storage location	
Disposal route (returned/destroyed/police) + date	
Staff (name/sign)	
Parent/Collector (name/sign)	