



Stop and Search

Policy and Procedure 2025-26

Catering and Operations Manager

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Education Act 1996 gives the Principal and Chief Executive and staff authorised by the Principal and Chief Executive the power to search students and apprentices for any prohibited items where there are reasonable grounds for suspicion or belief that a student or apprentice is in possession of a prohibited item.
- 1.2 City of Wolverhampton College's highest priority is to create and promote a safe and secure environment for all.
- 1.3 To this end, the College adopts a 'zero tolerance' in relation to prohibited items. The College will instigate the Student Disciplinary Policy and Procedures where rules have been breached and will report incidents to the Police, where appropriate.
- 1.4 In the case of staff, this will be referred to the Capability and Disciplinary Policy and Procedures.
- 1.5 The purpose of this policy and procedure is to outline where, when and by whom an individual may be searched.

2. Definitions

- 2.1 A prohibited item is any item that a member of staff reasonably suspects has been or is likely to be used to commit an offence or cause personal injury.
- 2.2 Prohibited items identified by the College are:
 - An offensive weapon e.g. knife, gun
 - Illegal drugs
 - Legal substances subject to abuse, including legal highs, and prescription medicine used in a manner other than prescribed.
 - Alcohol
 - Fireworks
 - Online - sexual images of under 18s, non-consenting content, unlawful terrorist content etc.
 - Stolen items
 - Nitrous gas
- 2.3 An offensive weapon is anything made, adapted or intended for use as a weapon.
- 2.4 There is absolutely no situation in which the possession of such items will be considered safe and acceptable unless they are being used during a supervised lesson or by other authorised personnel during the course of their work.

3. Scope

- 3.1 The Stop and Search Policy and Procedure applies to all students, apprentices and staff, including anyone working on behalf of City of Wolverhampton College, including Governors, Volunteers, Agency staff and partnered organisations.

4. Responsibility and Conditions

- 4.1 Authorised staff who undertake a search according to the law and who follow their employer's guidelines are protected by the law.
- 4.2 Security staff and all members of the Senior and College Management Team are designated in stop and search techniques and are authorised by the Principal and Chief Executive to carry out these procedures. These staff members are known as authorised staff.
- 4.3 In most cases, Security staff will lead and complete a search with support from a leading manager(s) who may be involved in the incident or another member of the Security Team. In these instances, this may require an additional member staff to support, for example a female or male.
- 4.4 Two members of staff must always be present during a search. The person conducting the search must be of the same sex as the student being searched. However, the member of staff acting as a witness may be of the opposite sex. The only exception will be in emergency situations where the urgency of the search due to the risk of potential harm means that the opposite sex may need to conduct the search. A witness will always be present.
- 4.5 Whilst the law on the power to search does not explicitly prevent more than two persons being present during a search, only in exceptional circumstances should more staff be present than the two who must be present. For example, searching a student with particular Special Educational Needs (SEN) might be helped by support from a further adult with expertise on the student's needs or, where particular religious or cultural sensitivities might apply, an adult with knowledge of those aspects might help. Some searches might be helped by a parent/guardian's presence, where that is practicable.
- 4.6 During off-site educational visits where suspicion might arise, staff should normally rely on calling the Police, rather than seek to have a member of staff authorised to search on every visit.

5. Carrying out searches

- 5.1 Reasonable suspicion or belief (which allows a search to take place):
- 5.1.1 If authorised staff suspect a prohibited item is somewhere in the College or on an off-site educational visit, they can search any individual if they have reasonable grounds for suspecting that they have a prohibited item with them or in their possession.

- 5.1.2 This is a legal standard and not a subjective one; authorised staff must assess in each particular case, what constitutes reasonable grounds for suspicion or belief.
- 5.1.3 Suspicion or belief should be based on facts relevant to the likelihood of finding a prohibited item. Reasonable suspicion or belief will rarely be supported on the basis of personal factors alone, without reliable supporting intelligence or information about some specific behaviour by the individual to be searched.
- 5.1.4 To aid an appropriate search the following questions should be posed:
1. 'Do you consent to the search?'
 2. 'Will I find anything during the search that will harm me?'
 3. 'Will I find anything that does not belong to you?'
 4. 'Have you taken any substance that could put either you or me at risk?'
- 5.1.5 If the answer to question 1 is 'no' and there is reasonable suspicion or belief that the individual does have a prohibited item in their possession, they will be asked to immediately leave the College site.
- 5.1.5.1 Arrangements are to be made with the individual that on their return they will be asked to provide agreement that they consent to future searches where there is reasonable suspicion or belief that a prohibited item is within their possession.
- 5.1.5.2 If the individual refuses, the Student Disciplinary Policy and Procedure will be followed in the case of a student or apprentice. Refusal could lead to exclusion. In the case of a staff member, the Capability and Disciplinary Process will be followed.
- 5.1.6 If the answer to either/both of questions 2 and 3 is 'yes', or is suspected to be, the Police should be contacted.
- 5.1.7 Only if authorised staff are absolutely certain that they can carry out a search without putting themselves at risk should they proceed with the search. Where authorised staff decide it is not safe for them to search, but they still suspect a weapon is present, the Police should be called.
- 5.1.8 The College is not required by law to inform a parent/guardian before a search for those students or apprentices under 18, however, a parent/carer/employer should be informed if the Police are called.
- 5.1.9 Reasonable steps should be taken to preserve the dignity and privacy of any searched individual. Searching out of sight of others passing by – though privacy may not always be possible. Locations of searches should be considered in advance to minimise any risk to others.
- 5.1.10 Authorised staff should be sensitive to issues of race, culture or religion, e.g. where an individual is wearing a head covering, or other outer clothing that has religious or cultural associations.

5.1.11 Where a Sikh Kirpan is found, authorised staff should refer to the Wearing of the Sikh Kirpan Guidelines.

5.2 Extent of Search – Clothes and Possessions

5.2.1 The power to search on suspicion enables a personal search. This involves removal of outer clothing, searching of pockets and additional items such as handbags, sport bags, ruck sacks etc.

5.2.2 If patting down or the scanning identifies an object in, for example, a trouser pocket, the individual should be asked to bring out and show the object. If this is refused, authorised staff can search the pocket. A pocket should not be searched if the authorised staff believes that this action may escalate the situation. In this case, the Police should be called.

5.2.3 Authorised staff can require the individual to remove outer clothing (e.g. a coat, jacket or pullover) if it is necessary for the search. If the individual refuses and staff still suspect a prohibited item is being carried, the Police should be called.

5.2.4 The individual will be expected to open and empty the contents of any bag that is requested as part of the search. If the individual refuses and staff still suspect a prohibited item is being carried, the Police should be called.

5.2.5 Authorised staff have the power to use a handheld scanner which will detect metallic objects without touching the individual.

5.2.6 Authorised staff can stop the search at any point and request the Police be called. Individuals resisting a police search is a criminal offence.

5.3 Extent of Search – Lockers

5.3.1 Under common law powers, authorised staff are able to search lockers and similar storage facilities for any item provided the individual agrees.

5.3.2 If no consent is given, a search without consent can continue, but only where authorised staff have a reasonable belief that the individual is in possession of a prohibited item.

5.4 Extent of Search – Electronic Devices

5.4.1 Where authorised staff find an electronic device, where there is concern of inappropriate content, such as terrorist content, under-aged sexual images, non-consenting images, consent will be asked to access and search the device. If the individual refuses and staff still suspect a device contains inappropriate device, the Police should be called.

5.4.2 If inappropriate content is found, the Police will be called.

6. After a search

- 6.1 If a prohibited item is discovered and there is immediate risk to others, the Police (999) should be immediately contacted by Security staff. If required, appropriate crisis management procedures should be activated.
- 6.2 If a prohibited item is discovered and there is no risk to others, the Police (101) are to be contacted by Security staff for next steps. Further guidance from the Police may include:
- Further guidance of action
 - Safe disposal at a College site. This should only be completed by Security, following appropriate procedures. All details to be logged onto the Incident Log
 - Transfer and deposit to a named Police Station by Security, following appropriate procedures. All details to be logged on the Incident Log.
- 6.3 No prohibited item is to be left on College premises for no longer than 48 hours. If stored on site, it must be in a College safe and controlled by Security staff. All details to be logged on to the Incident Log.
- 6.4 All searches, regardless of if a prohibited item is discovered, should be recorded and sufficiently stored and logged onto the Incident Log by Security staff. Details should cover:
- Name, date of birth, gender, ethnicity etc.
 - Grounds of suspicion
 - Date, time, and place
 - Who searched.
 - Who else was present.
 - What, if any, reasonable force was used, and if so why
 - How the search began and progressed
 - The individual response and how staff managed them (e.g., steps taken to calm the individual)
 - Outcomes and follow-up actions
 - Police details such as reference/log number, where prohibited items have been found.
 - A parent/carer contact if the student/apprentice is under 18, where prohibited items have been found.
 - An employer in the case of an apprentice, where prohibited items have been found.
- 6.5 All contact with the Police is to be logged by Security staff with reference/log numbers. The individual should be advised of all contact and outcomes.

7. Security Screening

- 7.1 In line with the policy and procedures outlined above there may be times throughout the year that a security screening may take place in locations around the College.

- 7.2 Participants in the screening will be chosen at random. The process of random selection could change between screenings however must be available on request.
- 7.3 Authorised staff will use a handheld scanner during screenings which will detect metallic objects without touching the individual.
- 7.4 If the handheld scanner identifies something of suspicion on the individual, they will be asked to leave the scanning area for a search to be completed. From this point forward items 5.1.4 to 5.1.5.2 from this policy are adhered to.