



Prohibited Items Policy

1. Purpose

At Abbot's Lea School, we are committed to maintaining a safe, supportive and respectful learning environment for all students, staff and visitors.

This policy sets out a list of prohibited items and protocols the school will use if any such items are discovered. This includes staff searching students and their possessions, confiscating and disposing of any such items, as well as the school's actions in light of the law and statutory guidance.

This policy is based upon the Department for Education (DfE) guidance *Searching, Screening and Confiscation: Advice for Schools* ([Searching, screening and confiscation in schools - GOV.UK](#)) and *Mobile phones in schools* ([Mobile phones in schools - GOV.UK](#))

2. Scope

This policy applies to all students of Abbot's Lea School.

3. Principles

Abbot's Lea School recognises that:

- Students have a right to feel safe
- Staff have a duty to protect students from harm
- Some students with SEND may require additional support to understand school rules and expectations
- Any search must be lawful, necessary, proportionate and conducted with dignity
- Any search should form part of a wider safeguarding and behaviour response rather than a standalone disciplinary action
- The school will always seek to balance safety with the rights, needs and vulnerabilities of individual students.

4. Prohibited Items

The Headteacher and authorised staff may search for the following prohibited items (as per DfE guidance):

Statutory Prohibited Items

- Knives or weapons
- Alcohol
- Illegal drugs
- Stolen items
- Tobacco and cigarette papers
- Vapes and e-cigarettes
- Fireworks
- Pornographic images
- Any article that is reasonably suspected of having been used, or likely to be used:
 - to commit an offence
 - to cause personal injury
 - to damage property

School-Prohibited Items

In addition, Abbot's Lea School prohibits students from bringing:

- Energy drinks
- Excessive amounts of unhealthy food
- Laser pens
- Lighters or matches
- Drug paraphernalia
- Aerosols
- Items associated with gang affiliation
- Unsafe tools or equipment
- Items designed to imitate weapons
- Mobile phones (please see section 5 below)
- Any item likely to disrupt learning, compromise safety or undermine good order
- Excessive number of personalised belonging (please see section 6 below)
- Clothing that does not meet required uniform (please see School Uniform Policy:
<https://www.abbotsleaschool.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2026/05/School-Uniform-Policy-2026.pdf>)

5. Mobiles phones and other internet-enabled devices

Abbot's Lea School recognises that many students use mobile phones whilst travelling to and from school, particularly when using independent or supported transport arrangements. Mobile phones can provide reassurance for families and support students' independence. However, to maintain a safe, focused and respectful learning environment, the following expectations apply:

Expectations for Students

- Upon entering the school site through the school gates, mobile phones must be **switched off completely** (not placed on silent mode or aeroplane mode).
- On arrival at their place of study, students must hand their mobile phone to the designated member of staff for safe storage
- Mobile phones will be securely stored during the school day in accordance with school procedures
- School will not accept any liability for loss or damage
- Mobile phones will be returned to students at the end of the school day
- Students may switch their mobile phones back on only after they have left the school premises and passed through the school gates

Unauthorised Use of Mobile Phones

A student will be considered to be in breach of this policy if they:

- Use a mobile phone anywhere on the school site without permission
- Refuse to hand over a mobile phone when requested by staff
- Bring additional "distraction phones" to hand over
- Pretend to not have a phone with them when they do

6. Excessive personal belongings

Abbot's Lea School encourages students to bring only those items that are necessary for their learning, wellbeing and travel arrangements. Bringing excessive amounts of personal belongings into school can create practical difficulties, increase the risk of loss or damage, and in some cases affect a student's ability to engage fully in learning activities.

Examples of excessive personal items may include, but are not limited to:

- Large numbers of toys, collectables or comfort items
- Multiple bags of personal possessions
- Unnecessary electronic devices
- Large quantities of stationery, books or miscellaneous belongings not required for the school day
- Items intended for trading, selling or distributing to other students

The school recognises that some students may develop attachments to certain possessions that help them to feel safe and regulated. Staff will therefore approach such situations with sensitivity and seek to understand the reason why a student wishes to bring particular items into school.

Where a student regularly brings excessive personal belongings to school, staff may:

- Work with the student to establish clear expectations regarding what is needed each day
- Communicate with families to develop a consistent approach between home and school
- Agree reasonable limits on the number or type of items brought into school
- Provide support through therapeutic strategies where appropriate
- Temporarily hold items securely until the end of the school day if they are causing disruption or preventing engagement in learning

The school's aim is not to penalise students for bringing personal possessions, but to support them in developing independence, organisation and readiness for learning while ensuring that classrooms remain safe, calm and purposeful environments.

7. Exceptions and agreed adjustments

Abbot's Lea School recognises that, in some circumstances, a student may need to possess or use an item that would otherwise be restricted under this policy. Examples may include, but are not limited to:

- Mobile phones used to monitor or manage a medical condition (for example, in conjunction with a Continuous Glucose Monitor (CGM) or insulin pump)
- Electronic devices required as part of a student's communication or assistive technology package
- Medical equipment prescribed by a healthcare professional
- Other items identified as necessary through an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP), Healthcare Plan, Risk Assessment or other professional recommendation

Any exception to this policy must be supported by a written agreement and may only be authorised by the Headteacher or a nominated senior leader acting on the Headteacher's behalf.

The written agreement will clearly set out:

- The item(s) covered by the exception
- The purpose for which the item is required
- When and where the item may be used
- Any supervision or safeguarding arrangements
- The responsibilities of the student, family and school
- Review arrangements and timescales

Where an exception is granted, students must comply with the agreed conditions of use. Failure to do so may result in the agreement being reviewed or withdrawn. The school reserves the right to amend or revoke any exception where there are concerns relating to safety, safeguarding, wellbeing or disruption to learning.

8. Authority to search for prohibited items

Staff may search a student or their possessions:

With Consent

Any member of staff may search a student or their belongings if the student agrees.

Where appropriate, staff will:

- Explain the reason for the search.
- Seek cooperation from the student.
- Use de-escalation strategies.
- Consider the student's communication needs and understanding.

Without Consent

The Headteacher and authorised members of staff may search a student or their possessions without consent where there are reasonable grounds for suspecting that the student may possess:

- A statutory prohibited item.
- Any item banned by the school rules and identified within this policy as searchable.

Staff must be able to articulate the reasons for their suspicion.

9. Conducting a Search

Whenever possible:

- The dignity and welfare of the student will be protected at all times
- Searches will take place in a private location away from other students
- Searches will be conducted by a member of staff of the same sex as the student
- Another member of staff will act as a witness

Staff may search:

- Bags
- Lockers
- Desks
- Coats
- Personal belongings

Staff may require students to:

- Turn out pockets
- Open bags
- Remove outer clothing such as coats, jackets, hats, gloves and footwear

Staff must not require a student to remove clothing other than outer clothing.

A strip search can only be undertaken by police officers and must follow statutory procedures. School staff will never conduct a strip search.

10. Screening

The school reserves the right to use screening procedures where deemed necessary to maintain safety.

Screening may include:

- Visual inspections
- Bag checks
- Use of screening equipment where appropriate (e.g. Wanding)

Students will be informed of school expectations regarding screening arrangements

11. Additional Considerations for Students with SEND

As a specialist SEND school, Abbot's Lea School recognises that students may:

- Experience anxiety about searches
- Have communication difficulties
- Misunderstand instructions
- Respond unpredictably under stress

Prior to conducting a search staff should consider:

- The student's age and developmental stage
- Communication needs
- Known trauma history
- Behaviour support plans
- Safeguarding concerns

Reasonable adjustments should be made where required.

A trusted adult may be present where this supports the student and does not compromise safety

12. Use of Force

Reasonable force may only be used where permitted by law and where absolutely necessary to:

- Prevent injury
- Prevent serious damage to property
- Prevent a student from causing harm
- Conduct a lawful search when a student is actively resisting and there is a genuine safety concern

Any use of force must be:

- Necessary
- Proportionate
- Recorded
- Reported to senior leaders and families

13. Confiscation of Items

Staff may confiscate:

- Any prohibited item
- Any item harmful to safety
- Any item that disrupts learning
- Any item that breaches school rules

Items may be retained, returned to families, passed to police or safely disposed of depending on the nature of the item.

14. Drugs, Weapons and Illegal Items

The following items will normally be handed to the police:

- Illegal drugs
- Suspected illegal drugs
- Offensive weapons
- Knives
- Firearms or imitation firearms
- Stolen property where appropriate

The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) must be informed immediately.

Families will normally be informed unless doing so would place a child at risk of harm.

15. Safeguarding

Finding a prohibited item may indicate that a student is:

- At risk of exploitation
- Involved in county lines activity
- Experiencing neglect
- Vulnerable to criminal or sexual exploitation
- Suffering emotional distress

All searches and confiscations must therefore be considered through a safeguarding lens.

16. Monitoring and Review

The Senior Leadership Team will monitor:

- Number of searches conducted
- Outcomes of searches
- Equality impacts
- Safeguarding implications

This policy will be reviewed annually or sooner if statutory guidance changes.

Appendix:

Mobile phone and internet-enabled devices protocol

