



Parent/ Guardian

Devon & Cornwall Constabulary
Middlemoor Headquarters
Exeter
Devon
EX2 7HQ

Monday 3rd September 2018

Dear Parent/ Guardian,

I am an acting Police Sergeant, working within the Neighbourhood Team in Exeter. I am writing to inform you of a training package I have recently delivered at your child's school. The training surrounds powers that teachers have to search students within their school for certain prohibited items. Prohibited items are:

- Knives or weapons
- Alcohol
- Illegal Drugs
- Stolen Items
- Tobacco and cigarette papers
- Fireworks
- Pornographic images

Teacher's power to search is a statutory power under S550ZA of the Education Act 1996. A search can be conducted without the student's consent, where a teacher has reasonable grounds to suspect that the student has a prohibited item in their possession.

Members of staff can use such force as is reasonable given the circumstances when conducting a search for prohibited items. This will be assessed dynamically on a search by search basis. In all likelihood, Police will be called to assist in this event, in order to oversee or in certain cases conduct the search.

Prohibited items seized during the course of a search can be disposed of by the school as they deem appropriate, whether they are supplied to the Police or otherwise dealt with. Items will not be returned to the pupil.

Schools are not required to inform parents/ guardians before a search takes place, and do not need to seek consent to search a child. There is no legal requirement to make or keep a record of a search. Schools should inform parents/ guardians where alcohol, illegal drugs or potentially harmful substances are found, though there is no legal requirement to do so. Complaints about screening or searching should be dealt with through the normal school complaints procedure.

This is not new legislation, and the training is intended to ensure that our schools are up to date with their powers of search. This training is being delivered to every High School in Exeter. This is particularly relevant as there has been a noticeable rise in the use of recreational drugs by young people within our city, and also nationally. There has been a proactive response to this by both Police and the schools, who are working together to ensure the safety of our students. The powers to search are not used lightly, and does not grant schools the power to search students at random. If students are not bringing prohibited items into school then they do not need to be concerned.

Yours sincerely,

**A/PS 5294 BEARDS
HEAVITREE ROAD POLICE STATION
EXETER**