ACS INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

Living our Values

ACS Behaviour policy

ACS International Schools is committed to protecting personal data and aims to remain at all times fully compliant with data protection laws and guidance from the relevant regulators. ACS further commits to ensuring that the planning and writing of all policies and procedures that involve the handling of personal data are guided by the principle of privacy by design, and that individuals' rights to have their data safeguarded are a paramount consideration in ACS' pursuit of all its operational and strategic practices.

ACS is committed to a community in which everyone, whatever their race, gender, faith, identity or abilities, is safe, valued and able to flourish. Different cultures, life experiences and perspectives within our community help us to fulfil our purpose, realise our vision and exemplify our values.

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1. Legislation

This policy has been developed in accordance with the principles established by:

- Independent School Standards Regulations (April 2026)
- Behaviour in Schools: Advice for headteachers and school staff (February 2024)
- Searching, Screening and Confiscation: Advice for schools (July 2022)
- Education and Inspections Act, 2006

and with the guidance provided in (links to version current at time of publication):

- Keeping Children Safe in Education
- National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools
- Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation
- Restrictive interventions, including use of reasonable force, in schools
- The Equality Act
- Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions at School
- Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment Between Children in Schools and Colleges
- Sharing Nudes and Semi-Nudes: advice for education settings working with children and young people
- Voyeurism (Offenses) Act
- Mental Health and Behaviour in Schools
- Mobile Phones in Schools

2. Purpose

Student behaviour is a key contributor to student welfare and to ensuring school is a safe, welcoming and effective learning environment. The purpose of the ACS Behaviour Policy is:

- to express ACS's purpose, vision and values in managing student behaviour
- to promote individual and community wellbeing (both personal and academic)
- to provide clear and consistent guidance to all ACS community members about our high standards for student behaviour
- to support and maintain safe, welcoming and productive learning environments in which disciplinary consequences are proportionate, considered, supportive, and decided on a case-by-case basis.

3. Philosophy

3.1 Positive

ACS teaching and learning practices promote and support positive behavior. ACS seeks to cultivate an awareness in the mind of every student of the importance of respect for staff and fellow students.

ACS believes that all stakeholders in a school share a responsibility for developing learning environments that foster pro-social behaviour and a positive school climate. We expect most behaviour problems to be managed pre-emptively by classroom teachers and school staff through positive relationships and effective professional practice.

We acknowledge and promote positive behaviour through a range of informal strategies and organized pastoral care systems, including a badging programme which recognises students' personal growth and contributions to the community. Our goal is to help students develop critical self-management skills and intrinsic motivation to speak and act in line with our values. We favour natural and social reinforcement of behaviour in the context of meaningful relationships.

3.2 Educative

Positive and corrective feedback about student behaviour is an important part of personal and social development. Behaviour standards can and must be taught--actively through explicit curriculum, and passively through everyday interactions. Students need multiple opportunities to learn and grow, which sometime includes making mistakes or exercising poor judgment. Correcting misbehaviour early, managing minor problems, and ongoing recognition for good behaviour helps students develop appropriate speech and actions.

Disciplinary consequences establish clear boundaries, protect the rights and dignity of all members of the community, establish safe learning environments, and communicate the gravity of persistent or serious poor behaviour (including disruptive, bullying, dangerous, discriminatory, or illegal speech and actions).

3.3 Holistic

Student behaviour is an essential dimension in the broader context of school climate (the overall quality and character of school life). School climate is based on patterns of students', parents', and school personnel's experience of school life and reflects norms, goals, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching and learning practices, and organisational structures. A sustainable, positive school climate fosters youth development and learning necessary for a productive, contributing and satisfying life in a democratic society. An effective school climate is based on several key principles:

- Norms, values and expectations are articulated and discussed so that everyone feels socially, emotionally and physically safe.
- People are engaged and respected.
- Students, families and educators work together to develop, live and contribute to a shared school vision.
- Educators model and nurture attitudes that emphasise the benefits and satisfaction gained from learning.
- Each person contributes to the operations of the school and the care of the physical environment.

3.4 Restorative

Misbehaviour disrupts relationships and learning, often reducing the safe spaces required for students to develop personally and academically. Effective behaviour management focuses on building positive relationships that honour feelings, ensure psychological safety, and foster collaboration within our learning community.

Effective behaviour management includes de-escalation and reintegration, while respecting privacy and exercising compassion for everyone involved. We prioritise asset-based, bias-informed approaches as a part of contextual safeguarding that include community voice. Professional judgment, individualised response, proportional consequences, and collaborative partnerships with external agencies all support this restorative approach.

Restorative conversations involve understanding how behaviour impacts others and the school community adversely, the steps that students must take in future to ensure their conduct is appropriate, and how to remove barriers that the young person faces in meeting standards of acceptable behaviour. As part of a larger approach to behaviour management, effective restorative practices help resolve conflict, repairing damage, and ensure responsibility is taken by those who have caused harm.

3.5 Developmental

Specific expectations for ACS campuses and divisions, and disciplinary procedures that may be followed as a consequence of a student's breach of those expectations, are contained in divisional handbooks and published on Schoology. All divisional practices are compliant with this policy.

Misbehaviour or changes to behaviour can be an indication that a student is in need of help or protection from suffering, or being likely to suffer, significant harm. We evaluate students' behaviour in context and provide appropriate pastoral screening and safeguarding assessment as needed.

3.6. Fair and accessible

ACS provides appropriate behavioural support for students with special educational needs or disabilities. Where disciplinary consequences are considered appropriate responses to breaches of behaviour expectations, ACS will make reasonable adjustments for students with disabilities or special educational needs and will make non-discriminatory decisions. All students are expected to maintain the same standards of behaviour, and a student's SEN/D status does not preclude the possibility of their receiving disciplinary consequences.

SEN teachers, counsellors, and pastoral leaders design, share, and monitor Individual Behaviour Plans for students who require additional support.

3.7 Human flourishing, wellbeing, and mental health

School discipline must:

- respect different backgrounds and help foster positive relations/ intercultural understanding
- be maintained and administered fairly and consistently
- be fair to every student, and not be based on (or increase) stereotypes about people who have protected characteristics
- help every student feel they belong and can flourish.

Attitudes of kindness, gratitude, and compassion should be a focus for student reflection and growth about their behaviour as they mature. Self-awareness, emotional intelligence, and resilience are all shaped by a focus on positive behaviour.

Inappropriate behaviour can include subtle and sometimes unintentional discriminatory speech and actions (micro-agressions or incivilities). Self-awareness, education, listening, challenge, and active bystander engagement (allyship) are key strategies in developing a positive school climate.

Ongoing reflection on school disciplinary practices focuses on evaluating how well they increase students' competence, sense of belonging, and personal autonomy. Students' personal and academic wellbeing are supported when behaviour management focuses on building self-discipline, preventing misbehaviour, developing emotional intelligence, and meeting children and young people's needs rather than on punitive techniques for correcting misbehaviour. A positive school climate is critical for promoting social-emotional wellbeing and mental health.

4. Roles and Responsibilities

4.1 The ACS Board of Trustees

The ACS Board is responsible for monitoring this policy's effectiveness and holding the Chief Executive and Head of School to account for its implementation, and for ensuring that the policy does not discriminate on any grounds, including but not limited to disability, gender identity, race, religion or belief, or sexual orientation.

4.2 Head of School

The Head of School is responsible for the day-to-day implementation of the policy, and for advising on its review. The Head of School will ensure that the school environment encourages positive behaviour and that staff deal effectively with poor behaviour, and will monitor how staff implement this policy to ensure that it is applied with fairness and consistency.

4.3 Staff

Staff are responsible for:

- implementing the Behaviour Policy consistently
- modelling positive behaviour
- providing a personalised approach to the specific behavioural needs of particular students
- screening and referring students for serious behavioural challenges
- recording behaviour incidents.

ACS expects that most behaviour-related situations will be handled by the classroom teacher without the need for intervention by members of the school's Senior Leadership Team. However, the school's Senior Leadership Team will support staff in responding to behaviour incidents when needed.

ACS recognises that all adults, staff (including temporary staff), volunteers and administrators, have a full and active part to play in modelling and maintaining appropriate standards of discipline and behaviour in our school.

Teachers and school leaders in school routinely handle most minor behavioural problems. ACS will involve parents with more serious issues.

Teachers with responsibilities for students with special education needs and disabilities should contribute to the development of policies, practice guidelines and behaviour plans that impact their students.

4.4 Parents

Parents are expected to:

- Support their child in adhering to the requirements outlined in the relevant divisional handbook and supporting policies;
- Inform the school of any changes in circumstances that may affect their child's behaviour;
- Discuss any behavioural concerns with the class teacher promptly.

5. Behaviour Outside of School

ACS recognises that incidents that happen outside school can impact school climate and students' behaviour. Under Section 90 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006, teachers and other authorised staff members have the power to discipline students for misbehaving outside of the school premises to such an extent as is reasonable, as well as when the student is on school premises or elsewhere when the student is under the lawful control of the staff member.

Behaviour that could have repercussions for the orderly running of the school, or that poses a threat to another student or member of the public, or that could adversely affect the reputation of the school may be met with disciplinary consequences regardless of whether it took place on ACS premises or elsewhere, and regardless of whether the behaviour occurred within a school-sponsored activity.

Behaviour outside of school can include physical and electronic communications, digital activity, online interactions, social media engagements that reflect poor digital citizenship; illegal activity that threatens other students, staff or members of the public; or interactions which negatively impact the school or bring it into disrepute. Students are referred to the ACS **Acceptable Use Policy** (AUP) for more detailed descriptions of expected standards of online behaviour.

6. Attendance and Punctuality

Regular attendance at school is required by law. Attendance is taken twice daily in Early Childhood and Lower School, and at the beginning of each lesson in Upper School. Students who are discovered to be truanting or who are repeatedly late will face disciplinary consequences. Parents or carers will be contacted without undue delay to discuss possible reasons and school support systems that could help.

Attendance and punctuality are contributors to academic and personal success. ACS publishes an **Attendance Policy** that outlines attendance procedures and expectations. It is expected that students and their families will familiarize themselves with this policy and with the school's daily schedule.

7. Dress Code and Appearance

ACS does not have a school uniform. However, the school expects students to respect the need for appropriate attire to be worn at all times on school premises, when travelling to and from the school, and when on school approved visits off site. Students are not permitted to wear:

- clothing that carries offensive or suggestive images or messages contrary to ACS values, which may result in the wearer being instructed to change. For example, ACS students should not wear clothing that promotes alcohol, drugs, tobacco, inappropriate language, promiscuity, violence, contains explicit imagery, promotes discrimination or contains discriminatory language directed against people who belong to protected categories, or is otherwise offensive.
- clothing that is unfit to wear owing to its physical state.
- clothing that presents a hazard for example, footwear such as flip flops. Students should ensure that clothing, footwear, and piercings are appropriate for the activities they may be participating in, especially during visual arts, science lessons, physical education and sport.

Hats, hoods, bandanas, beanies, caps etc. can be worn inside the building for medical or religious reasons only.

Students should ensure that undergarments are not visible and should, therefore, dress accordingly. This includes having tops and bottoms that are an appropriate length and fit properly.

8. Bullying

*ACS publishes a separate **Anti-Bullying Policy**. Further details about anti-bullying strategies can be found in divisional handbooks.*

8.1 Philosophy

ACS believes that all children have a right to attend school and learn in a safe environment. Children should be free from harm by other children in school.

ACS welcomes people of all cultures from around the world to create a powerful shared experience that shapes the way we teach and learn, and that actively defines our international character. ACS strives to ensure that all students feel safe at school, and accepted into our school community. Our ethos is that everyone is safe, valued and able to fulfil their potential; bullying of any kind is regarded as a serious breach of our Behaviour Policy and will be treated as a disciplinary issue.

Respect is an integral part of the ACS curriculum. Students are taught according to ACS values, and the school takes seriously its duty to promote the fundamental British values that include mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs. It is made very clear to students what is expected of them in terms of respecting their peers, members of the public, and staff. Any intentional breach of this expectation will be dealt with as a disciplinary matter.

ACS does not distinguish between verbal and physical bullying, or between bullying in person or by electronic, online or written means. All bullying, whether directed at students, staff or parents, including abusive and harassing behaviour on social media, will be treated as a breach of ACS values and dealt with as a disciplinary matter.

8.2 The Equality Act 2010

Behaviour and/or the use of derogatory language that is racist, homophobic or intended to belittle, humiliate or single out others on the basis of their race, gender, disability or any protected characteristics recognised in the Equality Act 2010 will be treated as a serious breach of ACS values and behavioural expectations, including the ACS Human Flourishing Charter. Students will face disciplinary consequences and may be permanently excluded for such behaviour.

Under English law, behaviours committed against any person or group because of their disability, transgender identity, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation are hate crimes. Potential hate crimes taking place on ACS campuses or in places where ACS is responsible for supervision (such as sports trips, field trips/extra-curricular visits, and all; school-sponsored transport) may be reported to the police (in addition to the school's response). Such behaviours may include:

- threatening behaviour/assault
- damage to property (including hate graffiti)
- inciting others to commit hate crimes (coercion to become involved)
- online abuse
- harassment motivated by hate.

8.3 Child-on-child abuse

ACS recognises that students will on occasion behave in a way that causes concern to other students, or act in ways that cause harm to other students. Child-on-child abuse is addressed in ACS's **Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy** and in the **Child-on-Child Abuse – Prevention and Response Policy**, and is informed by Keeping Children Safe in Education.

ACS recognises that children can abuse their peers. Such abuse is regarded as unacceptable at ACS and will not be passed off as "banter" or "part of growing up". Some examples of forms of child-on-child abuse are outlined below. This outline is not intended to represent an exhaustive list, and future behaviour trends may inform the list's expansion or modification. In addition to disciplinary consequences that can include suspension and permanent exclusion, child-on-child abuse can be subject to criminal prosecution.

- verbal insults intended to intimidate others or make them feel worthless, and comments of a sexually explicit nature intended to insult or subjugate others
- bullying, as defined in the ACS anti-bullying policy
- coercion or intimidation, including financial harassment
- stalking or harassment
- Harmful Sexual Behaviour – children and young people presenting with sexual behaviours that are outside of developmentally 'normative' parameters and harmful to themselves and others.
- Serious Youth Violence – any offence of serious violence or weapon-enabled crime where the victim is aged 1-19 ('Youth Violence' is defined in the same way, but also includes assault with injury offence)
- initiation ceremonies, hazing or ritual misconduct.
- Youth Produced Sexual Images ("sexting" or sending/soliciting explicit photographs or messages often via social media or mobile devices)
- Upskirting (the act of taking a picture under a person's clothing without them knowing, with the intention of viewing their genitals or buttocks to obtain sexual gratification, or cause the victim humiliation, distress or alarm)
- Cyberflashing (sending an unsolicited sexual image to someone online, without their consent).
- Creation of inappropriate text and images with AI.

ACS notes that research indicates that young people rarely disclose child-on-child abuse and that if they do, it is likely to be to their friends. Therefore, ACS will also educate students in how to support their friends if they are concerned about them, that they should talk to a trusted adult in the school, and what services they can contact for further advice, including provision for reporting anonymously.

8.4 Sexual violence and harassment

ACS recognises that children and young people are capable of sexually abusing their peers. ACS is clear that sexual violence and sexual harassment is not acceptable, will never be tolerated and is not an inevitable part of growing up.

Children making a report of sexual violence or sexual harassment will be taken seriously, kept safe and be well supported. If the report includes an online element staff will be mindful of Searching, Screening and Confiscation: Advice for schools (July 2022). ACS will also guard the rights of reported persons and provide appropriate support to them and their families. Staff taking the report will inform the DSL or a Deputy DSL immediately in line with the procedures outlined in the Safeguarding and Child Protection policy.

8.5 Safeguarding separation

In alignment with the DfE's statutory Suspension and Permanent Exclusion Guidance (2026), ACS recognises the legal framework surrounding Safeguarding Separations.

Where an allegation of child-on-child abuse has been made or is under investigation, ACS recognises its primary duty to ensure all children learn in a safe environment. To this end, the Head of School may temporarily restrict a student from attending school premises specifically for safeguarding reasons. Safeguarding Separation is an operational, protective, and non-punitive measure implemented to manage risks, prevent further harm, and protect both the reporting student and the reported student.

A Safeguarding Separation is completely distinct from disciplinary consequences. It is a supportive safety mechanism managed by the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and Senior Leadership Team, not a punishment for misbehaviour. The implementation of a separation does not presume guilt or indicate a pre-determined outcome of any behavioral inquiry.

Total off-site separation is a last resort. Schools will first exhaust all reasonable options to physically separate the involved students on-site during the school day. Restricting a student from attending the premises entirely will only be actioned if on-site separation is deemed unmanageable or unsafe.

Safeguarding separations will be monitored and managed at all stages of the process through a combination of the following:

- Risk Assessment: The DSL or Deputy DSL will conduct an immediate contextual safeguarding assessment to determine the necessity and proportionality of the separation.
- Communication: Parents/carers of all students involved will be informed promptly of the operational changes, with a focus on transparency and maintaining the safety of the school environment.
- Support & Reintegration: Both parties will receive dedicated pastoral care and mental health support throughout the period of separation. Where appropriate, any long-term adjustment or subsequent reintegration plan will be handled with a restorative lens, aiming to repair damage and resolve conflict while respecting privacy.
- Recording: Safeguarding separations must be recorded in MyConcern as a safety measure, ensuring they are distinctly categorised away from punitive disciplinary entries held in other student information systems.

The Board of Trustees is required to routinely monitor, track, and review anonymised data regarding all safeguarding separation arrangements. This oversight ensures the mechanism is used appropriately and not as an informal, "backdoor" method to avoid formal exclusion processes.

9. Malicious allegations

9.1 Core Principles and Expectations

ACS expects all members of the school community to act honestly and respectfully. Making an allegation that is deliberately false and intended to cause harm to another person is unacceptable and constitutes a serious breach of the school's values and behaviour expectations.
We recognise that there is an important distinction between an allegation that is unsubstantiated, unfounded, mistaken, or made in good faith, and one that is found, following appropriate investigation, to have been deliberately fabricated or malicious. A lack of evidence does not, in itself, mean that an allegation was false or malicious.

9.2 Disciplinary Response

Where an allegation is found, following investigation, to have been deliberately invented or malicious, ACS will consider an appropriate and proportionate disciplinary response in line with this Behaviour Policy. This applies to both allegations against staff and allegations against students.

In determining any disciplinary response, the school will take account of the student's age, understanding, individual circumstances, any special educational needs or disabilities (SEND), and any relevant safeguarding considerations.

9.3 Safeguarding and Pastoral Support

In all cases where an allegation is determined to be unsubstantiated, unfounded, false, or malicious, the school (in collaboration with the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO), where relevant) will consider the underlying context.

ACS recognises that making a malicious allegation may itself indicate unmet needs or be a "cry for help" associated with emotional distress, trauma, coercion, mental health difficulties, or other safeguarding concerns. In such circumstances, the school will consider whether pastoral support, an internal assessment of need, or a referral to children's social care and external support services is appropriate alongside or instead of a behavioural response.

9.4 Support for the Accused

The school is committed to supporting all parties involved. We will explicitly consider and provide for the pastoral needs of staff and students accused of misconduct, as well as any others affected by the situation, including the broader school community.

10. Online Behaviour

*ACS publishes a separate **Online Safety Policy** which outlines the expected standards of behaviour of ACS students using online forums to communicate with peers and others.*

ACS uses filtering and monitoring procedures as outlined in Keeping Children Safe in Education. The ubiquity of 4G and 5G provision in the United Kingdom increases the importance of students' ability to recognise when their production and/or use of online content falls short of standards anchored in ACS values. ACS commits to continuing to educate students in respectful and courteous behaviour online, and expects equally high standards of behaviour in the digital and physical worlds.

In particular, the use of devices in online harassment and/or bullying (including Youth-Produced Sexual Imagery), the deliberate exposure of other students to inappropriate material and the use of devices to access content that is forbidden, inappropriate or blocked by ACS filtering will be deemed matters for disciplinary consequences. Students are referred to the ACS Acceptable Use Policy (AUP) for more detailed descriptions of expected standards of online behaviour.

Students' and ACS community members' attention is drawn to updates made to the ACS Online Safety Policy and Acceptable Use Policy, which outline the expected standards of behaviour of ACS students using online forums to communicate with peers and others. These include new expectations about the appropriate use of conferencing forums such as Zoom, as well as Learning Management Systems.

11. Mobile Phones (including Smart Technology)

*ACS publishes a separate **Mobile Phone Policy**. Further details about management of Mobile Phones and Smart Technology can be found in divisional handbooks.*

In line with Department for Education (DfE) guidance and Independent School Standards, ACS operates as a mobile phone-free environment during the school day. The aim of the mobile phone restriction is to enhance learning by eliminating digital distractions, promote student wellbeing through face-to-face interaction, and ensure robust safeguarding against cyberbullying and unauthorised recordings.

11.1 "Off and Away"

The default position across all ACS schools is that students are strictly prohibited from using mobile phones and smart technology (including smartwatches, smart glasses, tablets, and gaming devices) from the moment they arrive on site until they depart at the end of the school day. This restriction covers all lessons, lesson changeovers, breaktimes, lunchtimes, school clubs, and onsite extracurricular activities.

Upon entering school grounds, phones must be switched completely off (not on silent or vibrate). They must be stored out of sight in a secure locker, a lockable phone pouch (where provided), or at the bottom of the student's school bag. **If a device is visible anywhere on campus, even if it is not actively being used, it is subject to immediate confiscation.**

No student is permitted to wear earbuds or headphones while moving about the school. They may only be used inside classrooms if a teacher explicitly authorises them for educational purposes.

The school's phone-free culture extends to school trips, though management protocols may differ based on the activity's risk profile.

11.2 Exceptions & Reasonable Adjustments

To remain compliant with the Equality Act 2010, certain exceptions are permitted by prior arrangement:

- Medical Needs & SEND: Students requiring devices to monitor health conditions (e.g., blood glucose levels) or as a necessary auxiliary aid for Special Educational Needs may use them as outlined in their Individual Healthcare Plans.
- Young Carers: Confirmed young carers may access their phones at the Divisional Office through prior arrangement.
- Grades 11 and 12: Senior students may be permitted to use phones strictly within designated zones, provided they are never seen or used in areas frequented by younger students.
- Boarding Students: Boarding students at ACS Cobham may use devices in accordance with the Boarding Students Handbook.

11.3 Enforcement, Confiscation, and Searches

Breaches of this policy will be dealt with directly under this policy. Details of searching and confioscation protocols and procedures are outline in section 13 of this policy.

12. Drugs, Alcohol and Misuse of Substances

ACS does not tolerate drug use of any sort on school property or during off-site school activities. Any students found to be in possession of drugs, or supplying or taking drugs, including solvents and any other substance that can be misused or is harmful, will face disciplinary consequences. **Carrying, supplying, or taking prescription drugs illegitimately could result in permanent exclusion.**

Preventing the abuse of drugs, including alcohol, and similar harmful substances falls under the school's duty o care, and is a safeguarding issue. For that reason, misuse of such substances by ACS students that happens off site but that could be connected with ACS may also be considered under this policy and may become liable for disciplinary consequences including suspension or permanent exclusion from the school.

Some over-the-counter drugs can be harmful if misused. We advise that students should not carry these in school. Families of students who require medication should confer with the school nurse.

ACS understands that it may be necessary for some students to take medication during the school day. Parents should make the school aware of this in writing as soon as their child starts taking the medication. Further details of ACS' support for students on medication is outlined in the Medical policies (collection).

Consuming, carrying or supplying alcohol is strictly prohibited. Any student involved in any alcohol-related activity will face disciplinary consequences and may be permanently excluded.

ACS's rules on drugs, alcohol and the misuse of substances apply to students during their travel time to and from school, extra-curricular visits and school trips. Students should bear in mind that their behaviour in public is associated with the school and its reputation, and they should conduct themselves appropriately.

ACS will screen and search for, and when appropriate, confiscate prohibited and illegal items recording searches in MyConcern and notifying parents as required. We will exercise these powers in a safe, calm, and supportive environment. Searching and/or confiscation will be done in accordance with the guidelines set out in Searching, screening and confiscation: Advice for Schools (2022). Further details can be found in **section 11** of this policy.

13. Searching and Confiscation

*ACS publishes separate **Searching and testing for drugs and other illegal substances guidance** which outlines ACS schools' searching and testing procedures so that Heads of School and other staff have the confidence to use them if necessary.*

ACS's first priority is to ensure that students are in a safe and secure environment when they are in our care, and any items that may jeopardise the safety of other students or themselves will confiscated without notice. Ensuring staff and students feel safe and secure in school is vital to establishing calm and supportive environments conducive to learning. Using searching and testing powers appropriately is an important way to ensure student and staff welfare is protected and helps establish an environment where everyone is safe.

13.1 The Legal Framework

Following guidance set out in The Education and Inspections Act 2006, and Sharing Nudes and Semi-Nudes: advice for education settings working with children and young people (2024) ACS staff are authorised to use confiscation as a disciplinary sanction if it is lawful. This means that staff may confiscate or seize items in the possession of students that are illegal, or banned by the school. Searching and/or confiscation will be done in accordance with the guidelines set out in Searching, screening and confiscation: Advice for schools (2022).

13.1.1 Statutory prohibited items

In the UK, a teacher, or someone who has lawful control of the child, can search a student with their permission to look for any item that the school's rules say must not be brought into the school. Heads of School and other members of staff authorised by them have the power to search a student without the student's consent if they suspect they are in possession of "prohibited items".

Prohibited items that can be searched for without consent under The Schools (Specification and Disposal of Articles) Regulations 2012 include:

- knives or weapons
- alcohol
- illegal drugs
- "legal highs"
- stolen items
- tobacco and cigarette papers
- fireworks
- pornographic or abusive material or technology enabling access to this material
- any article that the member of staff reasonably suspects has been, or is likely to be, used to commit an offence, or to cause personal injury or damage to property.

13.1.2 Searchable items banned by ACS

In accordance with DfE guidance, the school has designated the following further items as banned. Authorised staff retain the right to search for these items if there are reasonable grounds for suspicion:

- Alternative nicotine products (ANPs) - inhaled products: such as E-cigarettes, Vapes (including nicotine-free, disposable, reusable vapes, refill liquids, and any associated vaping paraphernalia or pods) and heated tobacco products
- Alternative nicotine products (ANPs) - chewed, oral and ingested products: such as nicotine pouches, traditional oral tobacco (snuffs, snus or chewing tobacco) and edibles (medicinal gums, lozenges, and oral strips)
- Mobile Phones and Smart Technologies (including smartwatches, tablets, wireless earbuds, or any other personal electronic devices capable of connecting to the internet or mobile networks).

13.2 Criminal activity

The police may be notified (under UK law, and in accordance with our Safeguarding and Child Protection policy) if any student is suspected of engaging in criminal activity. In such cases, the police will decide what course of legal action, if any, should be taken and this decision is out of the scope of influence of ACS schools.

The police investigation will take primacy until such time as they decide there is insufficient evidence to obtain a conviction at court, whereupon they will conclude their investigation and allow ACS to continue with their processes and procedures in accordance with this policy.

13.3 Searches

Where possible, any search must be carried out by a member of staff of the same sex as the student being searched and witnessed by a second member of staff.

The staff member conducting the search must record all searches in MyConcern and inform the parents or guardians of the student concerned that a search has been conducted.

The power to search enables a personal search, involving removal of outer clothing and searching of pockets; **intimate searches are not permitted.**

Strip searches on school premises can only be carried out by police officers under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (PACE) Code A and in accordance with the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (PACE) Code C.12. While the decision to undertake the strip search itself and its conduct are police matters, school staff retain a duty of care to the student(s) involved and should advocate for student wellbeing at all times. **In all but the most extreme circumstances, ACS considers that school should not be the location for strip searches.**

13.4 Mobile phones (including smart technology)

Only the Head of School, Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), Deputy DSL, or a senior member of staff authorised by the Head of School may authorise a search of a student's mobile phone. Where possible, the search will be conducted in the presence of a second member of staff who will act as a witness and record keeper.

The Education Act 2011 allows for staff seizing an electronic device to examine any data or files on the device if they have reason to believe the data may represent a risk of harm to the device holder or to others or that it may cause disruption to the smooth running of the school. These data or files may be handed to an appropriate agency before returning the item.

ACS publishes a separate Mobile Phone Policy. Further details about use of mobile phones and smart technology can also be found in divisional handbooks.

13.5 Smoking (including the use if e-cigarettes and vapes)

It should be noted that vaping products are treated as smoking products under English law. It is illegal for persons under 18 years of age to purchase or use smoking products. Any cigarettes or other tobacco products including e-cigarettes confiscated in school will be destroyed.

13.6 Confiscation and disposal

Vapes and E-Cigarettes will be immediately confiscated and disposed of safely using electronic waste protocols. To protect pupil health and comply with Trading Standards, vapes will **not** be returned to pupils or parents.

Mobile Phones and Smart Technologies will be confiscated in line with the school's mobile phone policy. Depending on the severity of the breach, devices may be held until the end of the school day, or required to be collected by a parent/carer.

Where appropriate, a device may be confiscated and retained pending investigation. The device will be stored securely and access restricted to authorised staff. Where there is reason to believe that the device contains evidence of criminal activity, serious safeguarding concerns, or illegal content, the device may be handed to the police. School staff will not intentionally delete, alter, or interfere with potential evidence.

In line with state legislation, school staff are legally protected from liability for any loss or damage to confiscated devices, provided the confiscation was lawful, proportionate, and carried out in accordance with this policy.

14. Disciplinary Consequences

Section 91 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 introduced a statutory power for teachers and certain other staff to discipline students. In cases where disciplinary consequences are appropriate, ACS may use the following measures:

- meeting with principal, Head of School or similar school staff implementing school discipline, to which parents may be invited
- discipline entry in school records (which may include a formal letter)
- temporary removal from timetabled learning (in-school suspension) during school time
- agreement to a behaviour plan with staged consequences
- behaviour monitoring/observation status
- withdrawal of privileges (social suspension)
- suspension from school for a given period
- permanent exclusion from ACS Schools.

The above list is not exhaustive and is provided as a guide only. Consequences are adapted according to the seriousness and frequency of the behaviour; school leaders assign disciplinary consequences fairly on a case-by-case basis, taking into account the context, history, and individual circumstances of each response.

In the event of a suspension from school, a comprehensive Suspension Risk Assessment will be completed to evaluate the impact on the student, outline arrangements for education during the suspension, and detail any support measures for a successful return to school.

ACS will maintain a record of disciplinary actions in its School Information System(s).

In addition to informal behavioural awards and ongoing positive reinforcement, teachers and school leaders also record commendable behaviour in the Student Information System, categorised by ACS's vision for education that seeks to develop confident individuals, caring contributors and effective learners.

Procedures to be followed in the event of a formal disciplinary meeting are set out in Appendix 1.

15. Use of restrictive interventions, including the use of reasonable force

15.1 Corporal punishment

Corporal punishment is strictly prohibited within ACS, and neither its use nor threats of its use are permitted. Additionally, students must never be restrained in any manner that could compromise their airway, breathing, or circulation; for instance, restraining by covering the nose or mouth or applying pressure to the neck or abdomen is unacceptable.

15.2 When to use restrictive intervention

Section 93 of The Education and Inspections Act 2006 enables school staff to use appropriate force, including physical restraint, as is reasonable in the circumstances to prevent or stop a student from doing, or continuing to do, any of the following:

- Causing injury to themselves or others
- Committing a criminal offence
- Damaging property
- Causing disorder among students at the school whether during a teaching session or otherwise

ACS does not encourage the use of force or restrictive intervention except in the most necessary circumstances. ACS considers damage to property or causing disorder to be insufficient grounds to justify the use of force or restrictive intervention. There is no fixed definition of when it is reasonable to use force or restrictive intervention – each situation must be judged by the person in charge at the time. Any force used must be the minimum needed to achieve the intended outcome and always for the shortest time possible.

All teaching staff at ACS have the authority to use force or restrictive intervention when reasonable, and this extends to any other person whom the Head of School has delegated this responsibility to, for example residential Boarding staff.

Staff can also use this authority when they are lawfully in charge of students but off the school premises (for example, on a school trip).

15.3 Categories of restrictive intervention

Staff should always utilise a range of graduated behavioural approaches to support students. Staff should always prioritise prevention, and de-escalation, as restrictive interventions can have significant impacts and should only be used when lawful, necessary, and proportionate to keep community members safe.

In all cases, staff must consider necessity, proportionality, and the student's welfare, and must stop or change approach if an intervention increases risk or distress. A full list of considerations can be found in Appendix B of this policy.

The Department for Education (DfE) guidance for all schools in England, Restrictive interventions, including use of reasonable force, in schools, advises that adults in schools consider the following elements in determining if the use or restrictive intervention is appropriate:

- Is it necessary?
- Is it proportionate?
- Have you considered the student's welfare?

The main categories of restrictive interventions staff should understand are:

- Non-physical support strategies: such as de-escalation, communication, environmental adjustments, or distraction, which should normally be tried first.
- Reasonable force: physical intervention should be used only in limited circumstances, for example to prevent injury, criminal acts, and must be the minimum necessary for the shortest time.
- Restraint: actions that limit or immobilise movement, with or without physical contact.
- Seclusion: confining a student away from others to prevent harm, used only as a safety measure and not as punishment, with continuous supervision.

15.3.1 Seclusion

Seclusion is defined specifically as a non-disciplinary safety measure used only where a student is experiencing acute emotional or behavioural dysregulation and poses a risk of harm. Seclusion must not be used as a punishment and is subject to mandatory recording and parental reporting duties.

Seclusion must be used only as a proportionate response to an immediate and significant risk of harm, and only once all reasonable preventative and de-escalation strategies have been attempted. Any space used for seclusion must not be intimidating and students in seclusion must be continuously supervised by staff. Students should be able to leave a seclusion space as soon as the risk has reduced; it should not be used to keep students apart from others for extended periods.

A suitable, supervised room will be used in such circumstances where it is necessary for a student to relocate temporarily away from their usual classroom.

Where students must be kept apart over longer periods or across the school day for ongoing safety, protection, or contextual safeguarding reasons (for example, a Safeguarding Separation), staff must not utilise disciplinary or seclusion protocols. Instead, such cases must be referred immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) to be managed under the non-punitive, risk-assessed framework outlined in section 8.5 (Safeguarding Separations) of this policy.

15.4 Records of restrictive intervention

Following a restrictive intervention, students and staff should receive medical evaluations and treatment for any injuries when appropriate. The nurse will record any injuries in PowerSchool, and this information will also be included in the child's MyConcern Log and Staff 's CONFIDE Log.

Staff must record interventions in person, entering details into the log of physical restraint incidents ("Bound and Numbered Book") and also MyConcern (for students) or Confide (for staff). These records should be completed promptly and always on the same day.

A Senior Leader should conduct a follow-up discussion with both the staff member and the student involved, to clarify the circumstances of the incident, address the underlying causes, restore relationships, and promote ongoing improvement. It is advisable for this process to be facilitated by a staff member who was not directly involved in the incident.

The Senior Leader will use this information to promptly assess the incident after it occurs, aiming to understand the reasons behind the use of restrictive intervention, its effects on both students and staff, any observable patterns or trends, and ways to prevent future use of such interventions—such as updating or creating a behaviour support plan for the student

Ongoing monitoring of the wellbeing of the student and staff member should occur, and additional support should be provided where needed. Students who witnessed the incident may also need support.

ACS will provide written notification of documented incidents to parents or carers as soon as practicable, typically on the same day the intervention occurred. The communication may include a discussion of any identified behavioural triggers for the student, the de-escalation techniques employed, and recommendations for future approaches. This reporting requirement is statutory and must be adhered to without exception.

15.5 Monitoring incidents of restrictive intervention

ACS is committed to ensuring that any use of restrictive intervention or reasonable force is lawful, proportionate, necessary, and used only as a last resort. Robust monitoring and analysis of incidents is essential to safeguard students, promote positive behaviour, and ensure accountability. Where concerns are identified, action plans will be implemented and monitored.

Heads of School will review data termly to:

- identify patterns, triggers, and repeated incidents
- evaluate the effectiveness of behaviour support plans
- identify training and development needs
- monitor proportionality, particularly for vulnerable students, including those with SEND
- reduce reliance on restrictive practices through preventative approaches

The ACS Board of Trustees receive Bi-annual anonymised reports and will:

- review trends and challenge leaders where concerns or disproportionality are identified
- seek assurance that statutory guidance and school policy are being followed
- ensure findings inform policy, training, and safeguarding practice

15.6 Students with SEND

ACS recognises that students with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND), including those with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs), may be more vulnerable to emotional dysregulation and may communicate distress through behaviour. Restrictive interventions must never be used as a substitute for appropriate SEND provision, differentiation or pastoral support. For students with identified SEND, behaviour support strategies, risk assessments and any potential use of restrictive intervention must be:

- clearly documented within the student's Individual Learning Plan (ILP) or EHCP (where applicable).
- informed by appropriate professional advice where relevant.
- regularly reviewed in partnership with parents/carers.

Reasonable adjustments will be made to minimise the likelihood of restrictive intervention being required. These will be listed in the ILP and could include:

- sensory adaptations.
- communication supports.
- predictable routines.
- proactive regulation strategies.

Following any significant incident involving a student with SEND, the school will review whether:

- reasonable adjustments were sufficient and appropriately implemented.
- the student's ILP requires amendment.
- additional professional assessment or support is needed.

16. Monitoring and evaluating behaviour

ACS collects data on the following:

- behavioural incidents (PowerSchool Behaviour log) and Individual Behaviour Plans
- persistent absence, suspensions, and exclusions
- incidents of searching, screening, and confiscation
- perceptions and experiences of school culture (anonymised surveys) from students, staff, and parents.

The data is analysed biannually by school leaders, group management, and Trustees as part of the biannual group safeguarding report. The data will be analysed from a variety of perspectives including:

- at school level
- by age group and/or division
- at the level of individual members of staff
- by time of day/week/academic year
- by protected characteristic.

The schools use the results of this analysis to make sure it is meeting its duties under the Equality Act 2010. If any trends or disparities between groups of pupils are identified by this analysis, the school will review its policies to address apparent inequity.

17. Links to other ACS Policies

This policy is associated with and should be read in conjunction with the following ACS policies:

- Acceptable Use Policy
- Anti-bullying Policy
- Attendance Policy
- Child-on-Child Abuse Prevention and Response Policy
- Complaints Policy
- Exclusion Policy
- First Aid & Administration of Medicines Policy (part of the Medical Policies Collection)
- Human Flourishing Charter
- Mobile Phone policy
- Online Safety Policy
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Special Education Needs and Disabilities Policy
- Student Mental Health Policy

School divisions maintain Handbooks with further details about disciplinary procedures, which are annually acknowledged by parents and students.

Appendix A

Procedures to be Followed During Disciplinary Process

ACS hopes and expects that consequences for student breaches of the Behaviour Policy will prompt reflection and learning on the part of the student and will lead to a positive outcome wherever possible.

Unfortunately, there are times when a breach of the Behaviour Policy, and of the values it represents, is either part of a continued pattern of behaviour or is a single instance of sufficient magnitude to lead to a severe disciplinary consequence. In these cases, ACS will strive to conduct proceedings in a fair manner that allows all sides to state a case and to be heard, and the facts to be considered in a fair and impartial manner.

Most unacceptable behaviour will be handled by principals, assistant principals, or authorised staff members acting on the principal's behalf. More serious breaches may be handled by Heads of School or Deputy Heads of School where applicable. It is these breaches that the procedures described in this appendix will usually apply.

Inquiry: Where a breach in expectations of behaviour is deemed by the divisional principal to merit handling by the Head of School (either because of its seriousness, the repeated nature of the breach, the observation that previous means of addressing the situation have not been successful, or any other reason), there will follow an inquiry into the incident by the Head of School or by an appointee of the Head of School's choosing.

Formal disciplinary meeting: The allegation will be described/outlined to the student in a formal disciplinary meeting chaired by the Head of School, or someone authorised to act with similar authority.

Allegations will be outlined in language the student can understand, and interpreters will be arranged if required.

The student may be accompanied by a parent or school staff member at any formal disciplinary meeting where the possible consequence is a suspension or permanent exclusion.

Appeal: Families will have the right of appeal if the disciplinary consequence in question resulted in

- suspension of more than three days
- prevention of the student from sitting a public examination
- permanent exclusion.

The appeal will be heard by a review panel appointed by the Chief Executive. Review panels will be made up of no fewer than three members, none of whom will have been involved in earlier stages of the same incident, and at least one of whom will be a person who is not a current ACS staff member or Trustee.

The purpose of the appeals procedure is to ensure fairness by determining if ACS followed relevant policies, and that school leaders acted in line with accepted professional standards. The appeal is the final procedure offered by ACS within the scope of this policy.

The parents, legal guardians or whoever is named in the relevant admissions contract must advise the school if they wish to invoke their right of appeal **within seven** days of the Head of School's decision, in writing.

For clarity:

- The admissions contract and its Terms and Conditions constitute the legal agreement between ACS and parents whose children are enrolled at ACS schools
- Each ACS school and division publishes further guidance in handbooks that detail behaviour and consequences which fall within the scope of this policy.

ACS publishes a separate policy on (permanent) exclusion from school

Appendix B

Elements to take into account when determining the necessity for restrictive intervention

Is it necessary?

- Staff should consider whether there are other more effective, less restrictive ways to manage a situation.
- Staff should assess whether a restrictive intervention is likely to successfully reduce the relevant risks, or whether its use would escalate the situation further or cause more harm than the behaviour itself.
- Where possible, staff should communicate with other staff members to understand any broader risks in the environment.

Is it proportionate?

- Staff should use the least amount of force or least restrictive intervention necessary for the least amount of time required to reduce the relevant risks.
- If the intervention itself is escalating the situation, staff should reconsider their approach and attempt an alternative strategy.
- Staff should consider the personal circumstances of the student such as medical conditions, special educational needs or other vulnerabilities, their characteristics such as age and size, and must consider relevant equality implications under the Equality Act 2010.

Have you considered the student's welfare?

- Staff should consider the impact on the student's overall welfare, balanced against any actions taken. For example, students who have experienced an adverse life event, with diagnosed or undiagnosed medical conditions or sensory impairments,
- past trauma or neglect, communication difficulties, or other needs, may find the use of restrictive interventions particularly distressing.
- Staff should seek to maintain respect for a student's dignity. This may include, where possible, considering the location and environment where any intervention is used, such as in front of their peers.
- Where possible, staff should clearly and calmly communicate to the student what is happening, why, and explain what the student needs to do.
- For students with difficulties with speech, language and communication, or with English as an additional language, verbal and/or non-verbal strategies should be used to ensure the student understands what is happening and has adequate time to process information and respond.
- Staff should seek to understand how the student is feeling and use this information to determine whether the restrictive intervention should be, or continue to be, applied, reduced or stopped.

This list of factors is not exhaustive, and staff should also consider other relevant considerations. The use of physical intervention should, however, be avoided wherever possible and always used as a last resort, with the minimum force and for the shortest time needed.