

ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE

Students

Student Search and Seizure

STU #14

Revised: March 2026

Background

Section 197(f) of the Alberta Education Act (Act) requires the principal to maintain order and discipline in the school and on the school grounds and during activities sponsored or approved by the Board of Trustees of Christ The Redeemer Catholic Schools (the Board). Section 196(1)(f) of the Act requires a teacher to maintain, under the direction of the principal, order and discipline among students while they are in the school or on the school grounds and while they are attending or participating in activities sponsored or approved by the Board. From these provisions of the Act, administrators are authorized to conduct searches of students, their possessions, and school lockers in appropriate circumstances.

Procedures

When deciding upon a search of a student, their possessions, or their locker, the administrator must first decide whether the matter should be referred to the police or handled internally.

Searches Conducted by the Police

1. The police should be called immediately in regard to school-based incidents involving violence or threats to use violence. Examples would include:
 - 1.1. threats of serious physical injury
 - 1.2. physical assault causing bodily harm
 - 1.3. sexual assault
 - 1.4. possession or brandishing of a weapon
 - 1.5. robbery or extortion
 - 1.6. hate-motivated violence
 - 1.7. vandalism causing damage to school property or property located on school premises
 - 1.8. drug trafficking
2. If the police are called in, the administrator should cease their investigation until the police have completed theirs. The Superintendent or designate should be contacted immediately, and the student's parents or guardians should also be contacted immediately if possible. Once the police have completed, the administrator is free to complete their investigation for disciplinary purposes.
3. Police officers have the right to demand entry to school premises:
 - 3.1. When in active pursuit of a fleeing suspect;
 - 3.2. When in possession of a search warrant;
 - 3.3. For weapons and drug-related searches;
 - 3.4. To arrest an individual for an indictable offence;
 - 3.5. To save lives;
 - 3.6. In accordance with provincial statutes.

Police investigations on school premises outside of the above-described emergency-type situation should only be allowed with the consent of the parents or guardians of the student.

Personal Searches

1. When administrators are conducting non-criminal interviews with students, there is no legal requirement that students be read their rights, although students should understand the basis upon which the statements are being taken and how they will be used.
2. Personal searches of a student should only be conducted to seize prohibited objects or substances (unless there is a threat to the safety of the person or persons or the school premises) and if the principal suspects that the individual is in possession of an object or substance that is prohibited. The Superintendent or designate should be contacted immediately if any prohibited object or substance is discovered. Direction will then be provided by the Superintendent or designate regarding next steps and communication.
3. Personal searches should be conducted in a private manner and should never be undertaken by a member of the opposite sex.
4. All searches should be in the presence of one adult witness. Whenever possible, searches of a student's locker, desk, or other personal belongings should be conducted in the presence of the student.
5. The circumstances surrounding the search should be well documented. The documentation should specify:
 - 5.1. The circumstances giving rise to the search, including the date, time, and place of the investigation;
 - 5.2. The source of the information;
 - 5.3. The parties interviewed;
 - 5.4. Possible or actual witnesses;
 - 5.5. The details of any police involvement;
 - 5.6. Details regarding the notification of parents or guardians, where appropriate.

This documentation is subject to privacy regulations under the Protection of Privacy Act (POPA) and must be held on file for a period of at least one year.

6. Any contraband seized as a result of the search should be held and retained in a secure location until the investigation has concluded or turned over to the police should they become involved. Any illegal substance (e.g. drugs) must be turned over to the police. If the police do not wish to obtain the seized contraband, it shall be destroyed once the investigation is complete.

Locker Searches

1. All lockers are the property of CTR Catholic and may be searched with or without cause.