

ICS Safeguarding Newsletter 14

Keeping safe during the dark winter nights

As winter settles in and daylight hours become shorter, many of our students arrive at school or leave for home when it is still dark. While our school community remains a very safe environment, reduced light can affect visibility, confidence, and children's awareness of their surroundings. This makes winter an important time for us—as parents, carers, and educators—to work together to reinforce safe behaviours.

This month's safeguarding focus is on **helping children stay safe during the dark winter evenings**, particularly as all of our students travel either by car or on the school bus.

Why darkness changes children's perception of safety

Younger children may feel less secure walking through dimly lit areas, while older students may be less alert at the end of a long school day. Darkness naturally reduces visibility for drivers and students, and it can make already-busy areas such as car parks feel more chaotic.

By talking to children about what to expect and how to stay aware, we can build their confidence and reduce the likelihood of accidents or unsafe situations.

Helping children stay visible and aware

You can support your child by encouraging some simple habits:

- Add a **reflective keychain, badge, or tag** to their backpack for better visibility in the car/ bus park.
- Remind them to walk carefully between buildings and pick-up points when it's dark.
- Ask older students to **avoid wearing both earphones** when walking across the school grounds so they can hear vehicles, staff instructions, and other students.

These small actions make a big difference to overall safety.

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Safe collection and drop-off: guidance for parents

Most safety concerns during winter arise in car parks, simply because these spaces become harder to navigate in the dark. Parents can help by modelling safe routines and reinforcing them at home.

For younger children (EY & Primary)

- Ensure the adult collecting your child is familiar to the school, and knows where the collection points are.
- Walk with your child through parking areas—avoid letting them run ahead or walk unaccompanied.
- If your child uses the school bus, please remind them to:
 - Sit properly throughout the journey
 - Listen to the bus monitor's directions
 - Walk directly to the bus or to you, using well-lit areas

For older students (Year 7–13)

Although our older students are more independent, they still benefit from structure:

- Encourage them to walk with a friend across the school grounds where possible.
- Remind them to stay in **well-lit, supervised areas** before getting into the car or boarding the bus.
- If they use a mobile phone at pick-up time, encourage them to pause walking while using it—particularly around moving cars.

These routines promote independence while keeping safety at the forefront.

More time indoors means more time online

Dark evenings often mean children spend more time on devices. This is a good opportunity to:

- Check privacy settings and ensure location sharing is disabled

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- Talk about who they interact with online and whether these people are known to them
- Establish evening routines, such as device-free family time or putting phones away before bed
- Encourage your child to tell you if something online makes them feel uncomfortable or worried

A calm conversation about online behaviours can be one of the most effective preventative measures.

Teaching children to trust their instincts

One of the most important safeguarding principles we teach in school is: **If something doesn't feel right, tell a trusted adult.**

Whether a child is walking to the car, waiting near the bus, or spending time online, they should know:

- It is okay to move away from something that feels unsafe
- It is okay to ask for help
- It is always okay to tell a parent or teacher, even if they're not sure it's "serious"

These conversations help children build the confidence to speak up - an essential part of safeguarding.

How parents and school work together during winter

Your partnership is central to the safety and wellbeing of all students. You can support winter safety by:

- Using well-lit areas for pick-up and reporting any lighting concerns to school leadership
- Making sure your child knows who is collecting them
- Discussing safe behaviour in car parks and bus zones
- Updating the school with any changes to emergency contact details
- Speaking to us if your child expresses a worry about travelling or pick-up routines

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At school, our safeguarding and pastoral teams continue to supervise high-traffic areas, train staff, and ensure students know who their trusted adults are.

A final message for our families

Winter is a season full of warmth, family gatherings, and celebrations - but it also requires extra awareness around safety. By reinforcing simple habits and having open conversations at home, parents and guardians play a vital role in helping children navigate the darker months with confidence.

Thank you for your ongoing partnership in keeping every student safe, supported, and cared for.

If you ever have concerns about your child's safety - on school transport, at pick-up, or online - please reach out. We are here to help.