

# Trusted Adults and the Power of Listening

### ‘Trusted Adults’ – The people children can turn to

Every child – from our youngest in Early Years to our oldest students preparing for university – needs trusted adults in their lives. A trusted adult is someone who makes a child feel safe, listened to, and respected. This might be a parent, grandparent, teacher, teaching assistant, or coach. Trusted adults don’t always have all the answers, but they show they care and will help find support when needed.

At school, we talk with students about identifying their ‘trusted adults’ they can go to if something is worrying them. For younger children, this might be represented with pictures or drawings; for older students, it can mean recognising who they feel emotionally safe talking to.

The message we want every child to know is simple:

*‘If something doesn’t feel right – talk to a trusted adult. We are here to help.*

Families can help by asking at home:

**‘Who are the adults you trust to talk to when you’re worried?’**

This keeps the idea of safe, open communication alive in everyday conversations.

### Listening vs Hearing – Why it matters

We often say we are ‘listening,’ but are we really *hearing* what children are trying to tell us? Listening – truly listening – means giving our full attention, without judgement or interruption. For children, being listened to shows that their feelings are valid and that their voice matters.

At school, staff are trained to recognise not only what children say, but also *how* they say it – through words, body language, and behaviour. A child may not always have the vocabulary to describe what’s wrong, especially our youngest learners, but they will communicate in other ways if we pay close attention.

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For parents, active listening can look like:

- **Stopping what you're doing** when a child wants to talk.
- **Making eye contact** and showing calm body language.
- **Reflecting back** what they've said ('That sounds like it made you upset').
- **Avoiding rushing in with solutions** — sometimes they just need you to understand first.

When children experience true listening, they feel valued and safe. That feeling builds the trust that makes safeguarding possible.

## Signs that something might be wrong

Children don't always tell us directly when they're struggling, but their behaviour often gives clues. Every child is different, but here are some signs to look out for that may suggest a child is worried, anxious, or in difficulty:

### For younger children (ages 3–10):

- Changes in sleeping or eating patterns.
- Withdrawing from play or becoming unusually clingy.
- Big emotional reactions to small things.
- Talking about 'secrets' or fears they can't explain.
- Regression in behaviour (e.g., bedwetting, tantrums).

### For older children and teens:

- Sudden changes in mood, attitude, or friendship groups.
- Becoming isolated or spending excessive time alone.
- Drop in academic performance or attendance.
- Expressions of hopelessness or self-blame.
- Changes in appearance, dress, or online activity.

While none of these signs automatically mean something is wrong, they can indicate that a child needs time, support, and care. If you notice something, start with gentle curiosity — ask open questions like '*You seem a bit quieter than usual — is everything okay?*'

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And remember: it's better to check and be wrong than to miss an opportunity to help.

## How to approach concerns and support your child

When you're worried about your child, it's natural to want to fix things right away — but sometimes the most powerful support starts with calm reassurance and time.

Here's how to begin a caring conversation:

1. **Choose the right moment** — a calm, private time without distractions.
2. **Start gently** — 'I've noticed you've seemed a bit upset lately. I'm here if you want to talk.'
3. **Listen without judgement** — avoid reacting with anger or shock, even if what they share worries you.
4. **Reassure them** — let them know they've done the right thing by talking.
5. **Seek support** — if you're unsure what to do next, contact a trusted member of staff, the school's safeguarding team ([k.honey@ics.edu.jo](mailto:k.honey@ics.edu.jo)), or another professional who can guide you.

At ICS, our safeguarding team is always here to listen, advise, and act if needed. Children's safety and wellbeing are at the heart of everything we do — and that begins with listening and trust.

## Final Thought

When adults take the time to listen — really listen — we build bridges of trust. Whether a child is three or eighteen, they need to know:

***'You matter. What you say matters. And there is always someone who will listen.'***

Together, home and school create the network of trusted adults every young person needs to thrive.