

# ICS Safeguarding Newsletter 21

## Safeguarding in the 'in-between' moments: a half-term message for families

As we reach the end of the half term, I want to share something a little different for our weekly safeguarding focus.

When many people hear the word safeguarding, they understandably think of big, serious moments: worrying disclosures, major concerns, referrals, policies, procedures. Those are vital and they are part of our responsibility as a school.



But the truth is, the strongest safeguarding culture is often built in the smallest moments.

The moments 'in-between'.

- The way a child is greeted at the gate.
- The way we listen when someone is upset.
- The way we notice when a child is quieter than usual.
- The way we speak about others when they aren't there.
- The way we respond when someone makes a mistake.

Safeguarding is not just a system. It's a relationship. It's a climate. It's a thousand tiny messages that tell children: 'You are safe here. You matter here. We will notice you. We will help you.'

As we head into the mid-term break, I'd like to invite you to look at safeguarding through this 'outside the box' lens: safeguarding as everyday care and how, as families, you already do so much of it brilliantly.

### 1) The quiet superpower: noticing

One of the most protective things adults can do is notice.

Not 'notice' in a suspicious way, but in a calm, connected way. Children rarely announce clearly, 'I'm struggling.' More often, they show us.

You might notice:

- more irritability, tears, or frustration than usual
- withdrawal (less chatty, less playful, less engaged)
- changes to sleep or appetite
- sudden worries, clinginess, or avoidance
- big reactions to small things
- more screen time as a way to switch off



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None of these automatically mean something is wrong - children's behaviour shifts for lots of reasons, especially at the end of a busy half term, but noticing allows us to respond early, gently, and effectively. A helpful phrase I often recommend is: **"I've noticed... and I'm here."**

- "I've noticed you seem a bit quieter lately. I'm here."
- "I've noticed you've been getting cross more quickly. I'm here."
- "I've noticed you've been worrying at bedtime. I'm here."

It's simple. It's non-accusatory. And it keeps the door open.

## 2) The pause that protects: emotional safety at home

At the end of term, children are often full: full of learning, friendships, minor stresses, excitement, tiredness. That combination can spill out at home because home is where they feel safest.



If your child's emotions seem bigger than usual this week, you are not alone.

Something that can transform those moments is the adult 'pause' - a short pause before reacting. Safeguarding includes emotional safety, which means children learn:

**"My feelings are allowed, even if my behaviour needs guidance."**

A practical approach that many families find useful is:

### **Name it – Normalise it – Navigate it**

**Name it:** "That looks like frustration."

**Normalise it:** "It makes sense you feel that way, you've had a long week."

**Navigate it:** "Let's take a breath, then we'll solve it together."

This is not 'being soft', it's teaching children the life skill of regulation, and regulated children are safer children: safer online, safer with peers, safer in decision-making, safer in speaking up.

## 3) Safeguarding isn't only about preventing harm, it's also about building strength

We sometimes think safeguarding is only about identifying risk. But it is equally about building protective factors: confidence, belonging, resilience, help-seeking.

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Here are five protective messages children need to hear repeatedly (at school and at home):

- "You can talk to me about anything."
- "You won't get in trouble for telling the truth."
- "If someone makes you uncomfortable, you can say no and come to a trusted adult."
- "Your body and your feelings matter."
- "Even if you make a mistake, we will help you."

Those messages build the inner safety net children carry with them, including during school holidays.

## 4) The Half-Term 'Safeguarding Suitcase' (a family-friendly checklist)

If we were packing safeguarding into a suitcase for the break, what would we include? Here are a few light, practical items you can 'pack' at home:



### Pack 1: A daily connection moment (10 minutes)

Not a big conversation, just a predictable time of attention:

a short walk, a chat while cooking, sitting on the bed at bedtime, a quick game, a drive-time conversation.

**Connection is protective.** Children talk when they feel safe, and they feel safe when they feel heard.

### Pack 2: A "trusted adults" reminder

At the start of the break, casually ask:

"If you needed help and I wasn't around, who could you talk to?"

"Let's name three safe adults you could go to."

You can include extended family, neighbours, family friends, older cousins, coaches, or anyone you trust.

### Pack 3: One online safety reset

Half term often means more screen time, which is completely understandable, but routines help children stay safe.

You might choose just one reset:

- devices charge outside bedrooms

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- a clear 'screens off' time in the evening
- checking privacy settings together
- agreeing what to do if something worrying pops up (close it, screenshot it, tell an adult)
- a quick 'kindness online' reminder: If you wouldn't say it face-to-face, don't type it.

A tiny change, consistently applied, is far more effective than a big speech.

## Pack 4: A family code word

This is a brilliant safeguarding tool (and surprisingly empowering for children).

Agree on a code word or phrase that means: 'I need help / I feel uncomfortable / please come get me.'

It can be used in shops, at gatherings, during playdates - anywhere. It gives children an escape route without embarrassment.

## Pack 5: Permission to feel

Children can carry worries they don't fully understand. A simple permission statement can help:

- "It's okay to have mixed feelings."
- "It's okay to be tired and still excited."
- "It's okay to need space."

When children don't have to hide feelings, they are more likely to share concerns early.

## 5) A mini safeguarding challenge for the break

If your family enjoys a challenge, here are five small missions to try over half term, each quietly strengthens safety and wellbeing:

1. **The Kindness Spot:** Each person notices one act of kindness per day.
2. **The Brave Ask:** Encourage your child to ask for help once this week (even for something small).
3. **The Body Boundary Practice:** Role-play one sentence: 'No thanks, I don't like that.'
4. **The Feelings Word:** Everyone uses one new feelings word this week (e.g., disappointed, overwhelmed, hopeful, proud).
5. **The Safe Choice Moment:** Celebrate one safe decision your child makes - "I'm proud you listened to your instincts."

These build confidence and help-seeking, which are two of the strongest safeguarding foundations.

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## **A final note from me**

As always, please remember: if anything is worrying you — - no concern is too small to mention. We would always rather hear early and support calmly than have a family carrying something alone.

Thank you for your partnership this half term. Safeguarding works best when school and home are aligned: noticing, listening, responding, and building children's confidence to speak up.

I wish you a peaceful, restful half term break, and I look forward to seeing everyone return refreshed, ready, and safe.

*Kathryn Honey*

**Primary Headteacher and Designated Safeguarding Lead**

If you believe a child may be at risk, please contact the school safeguarding team promptly ([k.honey@ics.edu.jo](mailto:k.honey@ics.edu.jo))