

4 September 2024

Message from West Midlands Police

Dear Parents/Guardians

If you have a child that is going back to school or travelling on their own for the first time in the coming days, we know how daunting that can be.

To help you equip them as best you can for this next stage, we've put together some advice for both yourselves and your children. It's important to prioritise safety and have a conversation with your child about how to protect their valuables and travel safely to and from school.

Here are some tips to help keep your child safe:

1. Discuss safe routes and travel plans

Plan the route: Walk or drive the route with your child this weekend before school starts. Point out safe places they can go if they need help.

Buddy system: Encourage your child to walk to and from school with a friend or a group whenever possible.

Avoid shortcuts: Teach them to avoid shortcuts through alleys, parks, or isolated areas.

Public transportation: If they take the bus or train, remind them to stay in well-lit areas and to avoid distractions like using their phone or listening to music with both earbuds in. Do they know a back-up route in case their usual bus or train is cancelled?

2. Talk to them about what to do in an emergency:

Stranger danger: Remind your child never to talk to or accept lifts from strangers. Have a code word that only you and they know, which someone can use if you need to send someone else to pick them up.

Emergency Contacts: Make sure your child knows how to reach you and another trusted adult in case of an emergency.

3. Secure their valuables:

Label personal items: Clearly label backpacks, lunch boxes, and other items with your child's name. This can deter thieves and help recover lost items.

Limit valuables: Encourage your child not to bring valuable items or large amounts of money to school.

Switch on phone location: For children travelling alone we recommend location sharing with Life360
Life360 | Family Tracking App | Location Sharing & Family Safety

4. Get to know their new school:

Meet the staff: Familiarise yourself and your child with their teachers, pastoral team, and school security staff. This helps build a sense of community and security. Every secondary school in the West Midlands has an assigned police schools officer.

5. Report Concerns:

If your child mentions anything suspicious or concerning, take it seriously and report it to the school or to us.

6. Online Safety

Using social media mindfully: Remind your child not to share their school routine or location online. Ensure their social media accounts are private and monitored.

Cyberbullying awareness: Talk to your child about cyberbullying and encourage them to report any online harassment. You can report hate crime at our third party reporting centres here [How to report hate crime | West Midlands Police](#)

7. Communicate regularly

Check-ins: Get a good routine going for checking in after school, whether by a phone call, text, or a quick conversation when they get home.

Stay open: Keep an open line of communication with your child about their day-to-day experiences, any concerns they may have, and what to do if they feel unsafe.

Talking to your child this weekend, and throughout the year, can help ensure your child has a safe and successful school year. We know sometimes it can be difficult to talk so make sure you set aside enough time, or use videos or news stories to start the conversation.

Our school's officers have produced a short film to help young people stay safe as they move from primary school to secondary school. You can view it here <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YMPirhJCwqE>

The video gives crime prevention advice and tips to young people about safer travel, saying 'no' to vapes, and who they can talk to if you are upset or worried about something.



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PSCO Matt and Adam are just two of many officers that support secondary and primary schools to give talks and interventions around crime regularly across the West Midlands. They understand that moving to secondary school can be an anxious but exciting time for young people and parents so we hope this video will help reduce any worries you may have.

We hope you've found this useful.

Yours faithfully



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