

Houlton School
Signal Drive, Houlton,
RUGBY, Warwickshire, CV23 1ED

01788 593 300
hello@houltonschool.org.uk
houltonschool.org.uk

Michael McCulley
Principal

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Company number 07515832

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Dear Houlton family

Staying alert – recent reported interactions with strangers in the Rugby Area

The Local Authority and Policing Partnership has made me aware of two incidents involving pupils from other secondary schools being approached by strangers recently. Therefore, as we approach the end of term and the summer break, I wanted to write and remind you of the advice in relation to pupils keeping themselves safe and to ask you to have a chat with your child to ensure they know what to do if they are approached by someone they do not know.

As made clear by Warwickshire Safeguarding Partnership, we do not wish to alarm children unnecessarily, so the *Taking Care Scheme* makes clear that **sometimes** a stranger is the only person who can help us and is a far safer option than not talking to anyone if we find ourselves in need of help, e.g. a child lost in a shop is far safer to tell a stranger they are lost than to wander off looking for the person from whom they have been separated. Therefore, discussing with children how to 'risk assess' and who is more likely to be a trusted adult (such as a mother with a pram or small children, or someone who works in a shop with an ID badge) is good practice rather than a blanket 'stranger danger' policy.

However, we do need to clarify the stranger issue as there may, of course, be situations where we may want to warn children for their own safety e.g.

- not to get in a car with **anyone** (not just someone they don't know) unless their parent/guardian knows who/where/when etc. and has given permission.
- not leaving school with someone other than who they were expecting unless their parent/guardian knows who/where/when etc. and has given permission and they have checked with a school staff member.
- not to walk off with **anyone** (not just someone they don't know) unless their parent/guardian knows who/where/when etc. and has given permission.
- if someone tries to grab them it is okay to break all the rules of politeness to others e.g. scream, kick, punch etc. Whatever they need to do to draw attention to themselves and alert others to the fact they are in danger.

Please reinforce these safety messages to the children regularly without giving them the idea that all strangers are 'bad'.

Should you require any further information or support regarding pupils' safety at Houlton, please contact **Miss Buckenham, Vice Principal** and Designated Safeguarding Lead in the first instance.

Yours faithfully



Michael McCulley
Principal