

# Maiden Beech Academy

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May 21<sup>st</sup> 2021

Dear parents and carers,

## **IMPORTANT: Safeguarding children**

I hope you are all well and safe.

Last week, I wrote to you about a reported incident in Haselbury Plucknett. We were informed that three adult males approached some of our younger children in the vicinity of Swan Hill and New Close. The children involved said that they were spoken to, offered sweets, and the individuals involved may have been photographing them with their phones. The men were driving a black VW Transporter van. Thanks to the help and support of Mrs Higginbotham, Head teacher of Haselbury First School, we have been able to provide details of the vehicle to Police, who are conducting an investigation.

Coincidentally, we have also received reports this week of two adults in a white transit van behaving suspiciously; an adult male called out to a group of children walking home from school on Lyme Road/Hermitage Street, offering them a lift. A van fitting the description was also seen in Memorial Avenue/Furland Road. We have also been made aware that a white van was observed driving up and down Flax Way, opposite Ashlands First School, which attracted attention from residents, who reported their concerns to Mrs Ball, Head teacher of Ashlands. Again, the Police have been informed of these incidents and are adopting a proactive approach.

Yesterday, I led a virtual assembly that focussed on 'stranger danger' and keeping safe, particularly on the journey to and from school. The key messages, which would be good if you could reinforce regularly at home, are:

- A stranger (defined as someone the children or their family do not know) can present as friendly and approachable.
- 'Safer strangers' (the Police, medical professionals, school staff etc.) are trustworthy and can be approached for help and support. It was pointed out to the children that such individuals will normally have a photo ID badge.
- 'Safer buildings' – such as schools, shops (banks, building societies, post offices), Police station, medical centres etc. are places where children can go safely if they are worried or concerned.
- Children should know or have with them the telephone/mobile number of a parent or carer OR learn the contact number by heart, so he or she can share it with a safe adult.
- Tell a parent or a member of staff at school if any adult makes you feel scared, worried or uncomfortable.
- Never go anywhere on your own with a stranger.
- Never get in a car with a stranger.
- If a stranger offers you a gift/present say no very loudly.
- If someone scares/threatens you go to a safe building, or tell a safe/trusted adult. Follow the rule: **Yell. Run. Tell.**
- If a stranger asks you to keep something secret, tell your parent or a trusted adult.



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE



CHARTER STANDARD SCHOOLS



I also shared the following advice on walking to and from school or to and from the bus stop to home:

- Walk in a group rather than on your own
- Go straight home unless other arrangements have been agreed by your parents/carers
- Discuss you're the route you will take and agree this with your parents/carers – stick to this routine.

The purpose of this letter is not to cause you or your children any unnecessary worry or distress, but to be open about our concerns with the aim of ensuring all children in our community are safe. I have sent a copy of the letter to our partner first schools and to Wadham School, and I am happy for it to be shared on social media with the aim of raising awareness.

Have a lovely weekend – sadly, it looks like it is going to be wet and windy again!

Best wishes

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of the initials 'C.M.' followed by a long, sweeping horizontal line that tapers to the right.

Mr Carl Winch

Head teacher