

HOLYHEAD SAFEGUARDING *NEWSLETTER*

September 2026 Edition



At Holyhead School we endeavour to provide a safe and welcoming environment where children are respected and valued. We believe that all children should feel safe and be able to approach someone if they have a concern. The safety and wellbeing of our students is the most important aspect of our work as a school. If you have any concerns about your child's wellbeing or safety, or want to report a concern about another child, please ask to speak to one of the Designated Safeguarding Team.

—Mrs D Denny Lead DSL. ddenny@holyhead.crst.org.uk

In this month's issue we look at:

- Back-to-school Transitions and Well-being
- Specific tips for Year 7 parents
- Helping your children stay safe
- Who to contact?

Who to contact if you are concerned about a student at Holyhead school:

Mrs D Denny Lead DSL ddenny@holyhead.crst.org.uk
 Mr D Beale Senior DDSL dbeale@holyhead.crst.org.uk
 Mr F Khan Head of 6th form fkhan@holyhead.crst.org.uk
 Mrs K Robinson SENCO/Mental Health Lead krobinson@holyhead.crst.org.uk
 Mr L Cain Head of Year 7 lcain@holyhead.crst.org.uk
 Mrs S Parker Head of Year 8 sparker@holyhead.crst.org.uk
 Mrs T Edwards Head of Year 9 tedwards@holyhead.crst.org.uk
 Mrs N Malcolm Head of Year 10 nmalcolm@holyhead.crst.org.uk
 Miss M Jeffers Head of Year 11 mieffers@holyhead.crst.org.uk
 Miss H Ulhaq Attendance concerns hulhaq@holyhead.crst.org.uk

Telephone the school on 0121 523 1960 to speak to any of the safeguarding team

Back-to-School Transitions & Well-being

Transitioning back to school in September can be a stressful time for secondary students. Changes in routines, new teachers, and moving up a year group can cause significant anxiety.



The core message for families is that **anxiety is normal, routines build security, and early support is available if a child is struggling to cope.**

Mr D Beale Senior DDSL dbeale@holyhead.crst.org.uk

Spotting the Signs of Transition Stress

Teenagers do not always say when they are feeling overwhelmed. Look out for these subtle changes in behavior at home:

- **Irritability:** Snapping at family members or sudden mood swings.
- **Sleep disruption:** Difficulty falling asleep, waking up in the night, or oversleeping.
- **Physical complaints:** Frequent morning stomach aches, headaches, or feeling sick.
- **Withdrawal:** Spending unusually long periods alone in their bedroom or avoiding talk about school

Practical Steps to Re-establish Routines

Moving from a relaxed summer schedule to a rigid school timetable requires physical and mental adjustment.

- **The Sleep Shift:** Move bedtimes forward by 15 minutes each night until they hit a healthy 8 to 9-hour window.
- **Screen-Free Wind Down:** Turn off phones, tablets, and gaming consoles at least one hour before sleep to improve rest quality.
- **Morning Run-Throughs:** Pack bags and lay out the uniform the night before to reduce morning panic and lateness.
- **Breakfast Fuel:** Ensure your child eats a balanced breakfast to help them maintain focus and manage emotional stress throughout the morning.

How to Talk to Your Teen About School Anxiety

Open communication helps young people process their fears before they turn into school avoidance.

- **Listen without fixing:** Let them vent their worries about new classes or friends without immediately trying to solve the

How Holyhead School Can Help

No student has to navigate the new term alone. We have a robust support system ready to assist.

- **Form Tutors:** The first point of contact for daily worries or settling-in issues.
- **Pastoral Leaders:** Staff members dedicated to managing year-group

problem.

- **Validate feelings:** Avoid saying "you'll be fine." Instead, try "it is completely normal to feel nervous about a big change."
- **Focus on control:** Help them identify what they *can* control, such as their preparation, rather than worrying about the unknown.

well-being and resolving social conflicts.

- **The Safeguarding Team:** Available for severe anxiety, mental health crises, or school refusal concerns.

Specific tips for year 7 parents

The jump from primary school to Holyhead School is a massive milestone. Year 7 students go from being the oldest, most familiar kids in a small school to the youngest in a very large, fast-paced environment.



The core message for Year 7 families is that building independent habits takes time, and the school is here to catch them if they stumble.

Mr L Cain Head of year 7 lcain@holyhead.crst.org.uk

Safe & Independent Travel

For many Year 7s, September is the first time they will travel to school without an adult. Handsworth and the surrounding Birmingham routes can be incredibly busy.

- **Practice the route:** Walk or take the bus together on a weekend to map out safe crossing points and bus stops.
- **The "Phone Down" rule:** Remind your child to keep their phone in their bag and airpods out while crossing busy roads like Holyhead Road.
- **Emergency backup plan:** Make sure your child knows what to do if a bus is late, if they lose their bus pass, or if their phone

Managing the Mobile Phone Explosion

Starting secondary school often triggers a demand for a smartphone. This opens up a brand new world of safeguarding risks.

- **Strict school rules:** Remind your child that phones must be turned off and kept away during the school day at Holyhead.
- **The Year 7 WhatsApp rush:** New class group chats form instantly in September. Monitor these closely, as they frequently lead to late-night spamming, exclusion, or accidental bullying.
- **Keep tech out of bedrooms:** Charging phones downstairs overnight stops late-night scrolling and protects their

battery dies.

sleep.

Staying Organised to Reduce Panic

Anxiety in Year 7 often comes from a fear of getting things wrong, losing equipment, or getting lost.

- **Color-code the timetable:** Print out their timetable and highlight different subjects so they can see their day at a glance.
- **The night-before routine:** Do not let them pack their bag in the morning. Check planners and pack bags together every single night before bed.
- **Label everything:** Uniforms, PE kits, and water bottles look identical. Clear labels prevent lost property stress.

Making New Friends & Social Pressure

Your child might go from having a tight-knit group of friends to knowing absolutely no one in their form class.

- **Give it time:** Reassure them that friendships change constantly in the first term. They do not need a "best friend" by week two.
- **Encourage extracurriculars:** Urge them to join a Holyhead after-school club or sports team. It is the easiest way to find peers with the same interests.
- **Watch for "people-pleasing":** Talk to them about peer pressure. Remind them they do not have to change how they act just to fit in with older students.

Helping your children stay safe

When students transition to secondary school, their world expands beyond the school gates. Contextual safeguarding means looking at the risks young people face in the wider community—such as on public transport, in local parks, and around the streets of Handsworth and Birmingham.



The core message for families is to **stay hyper-vigilant about travel routes, spot the early signs of exploitation, and talk openly about community pressures.**

Mrs D Denny Lead DSL. ddenny@holyhead.crst.org.uk

Safe Travel & Street Awareness

As dark nights draw closer and students travel more independently, personal safety on

County Lines & Exploitation Awareness

Criminal gangs in Birmingham often use the start of the academic year to target vulnerable

Birmingham's transport networks is a top priority.

- **Bus safety:** Remind students to sit on the lower deck near the driver if they ever feel unsafe on the bus, and to report incidents to West Midlands Police via the **See Something, Say Something** text service (60163).
- **Stay alert:** Advise your child to keep expensive items, like smartphones and wireless earbuds, tucked away out of sight while walking along busy routes like Holyhead Road.
- **Safety in numbers:** Encourage students to walk home in pairs or groups rather than taking isolated shortcuts or walking through alleyways alone.

secondary school students. They exploit young people to transport drugs or cash (a process known as County Lines).

- **The grooming process:** Gangs rarely start with threats. They usually begin by offering gifts, buying takeaway food, vapes, or offering easy cash to build trust.
- **Signs to watch for:** Be alert to sudden changes in your child's behavior, such as returning home late without excuse, possession of a second "burner" phone, unexplained cash, or wearing expensive new clothes you did not buy.
- **Free support:** If you are worried your child is being targeted, you can get confidential advice from the national charity The Children's Society or Birmingham Children's Trust.

Underage Vaping & Illegal Products

The use of illegal vapes remains a significant concern across Birmingham. Shops and online sellers often market these addictive products directly to teenagers using bright colours and sweet flavours.

- **Hidden designs:** Modern vapes are often designed to look like everyday school items, such as highlighters, USB pens, or digital watches, making them easy to hide in school bags.
- **Spiked vapes:** Local police forces have issued warnings about vapes being spiked with dangerous chemicals, including synthetic cannabinoids (known as "Spice") or high levels of unregulated nicotine.
- **Health and law:** Remind your child that it is illegal for anyone under 18 to buy vapes, and using them can cause long-term damage to developing teenage lungs and brains

Who to Contact (Holyhead Team & Local Services)

Always put contact information clearly right at the beginning or end of your newsletter so parents can scan it quickly.

- **Holyhead School Safeguarding Team:** Remind parents they can call the main office on **0121 523 1960** and ask for the Designated Safeguarding Team.
- **The Holyhead Helpline:** Remind students they can report any worries directly through the link in their student portal.
- **Out-of-hours Birmingham help:** Include the [Birmingham Children's Trust \(CASS\)](#) emergency number (**0121 303 1888**) for worries that happen over weekends or evenings