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Schools detail steps on security, health and emergency response Beyond classrooms, a safety check

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Calcutta: How safe are children inside school? Two city schools have sought to reassure parents by spelling out the safeguards in place—one through a detailed circular on campus safety and the other through a meeting held after a child was bitten by a snake.

The Newtown School sent the circular to parents last Wednesday, outlining measures covering physical security, health and wellness, emotional and pastoral support, transport, campus operations and maintenance.

The Heritage School, meanwhile, invited parents of students from Kindergarten to Class XII to explain the steps taken after the snakebite incident and address their concerns about campus safety.

The Newtown circular provided an overview of the safety systems and support structures in place, as well as channels through which students and parents can raise concerns.

"We recognise that for a parent, questions about a child's safety and well-being are deeply personal. You may naturally want to know who is looking after your child, whom your child can approach when something does not feel right, how concerns are addressed and how the school prepares for and responds to situations that may arise. We believe parents should have greater visibility of these arrangements," principal Satabdi Bhattachar-



Parents attend the safety awareness session at The Heritage School

jee wrote to parents.

Physical safety and security measures include CCTV surveillance, infirmary support, pest and snake control, and safe transport and dispersal.

Emotional support, approachable adults, parent engagement, and digital and cyber safety awareness are among the measures aimed at students' emotional and mental well-being.

The school has more than 850 CCTV cameras covering entrances and exits, corridors and common areas, staircases, outdoor and sports areas. It also has 82 housekeeping and maintenance personnel across its campuses, the circular said.

Emergency medical readiness beyond the infirmary includes an ambulance on campus, priority admission at hospitals and keeping parents informed at every step, it said.

"Every bus is equipped with a GPS tracking system, and the live location of the vehicle is available on the parents' app. Every bus has CCTV cameras, a first-aid kit, a fire extinguisher and an emergency exit," the school said.

The school has drawn up policies on child protection and POCsO, anti-bullying, social media, transport, and health and infirmary.

"The CCTV footage has to be retrieved almost every alternate day to resolve some

issues or clarify doubts of parents," said Sunil Agarwal, founder-director of The Newtown School.

Conversations with parents made it clear that their biggest concern was the safety of their children on campus.

"We thought we were obligated to share a detailed document with the parents for the sake of transparency," Agarwal said.

The school, however, also recognises that no set of measures can make a campus completely foolproof.

"Safety is an ongoing process rather than an absolute condition. No school environment or indeed any environment involving children can

be entirely free from unforeseen events or risk," the document says.

The Heritage School recently invited parents of students from Kindergarten to Class XII to brief them on the measures taken after a child suffered a snakebite.

Through a PowerPoint presentation, the school informed parents about inspections and safety checks conducted around the campus, pruning of trees and clearing of bushes. It also conducted a wildlife safety and emergency awareness session for students from Class III onwards.

An official of the state's Wild Animal Rescue & Transit Facility Centre, who had inspected both The Heritage School and Mitra Institution, where a Class I boy was bitten by a snake, had said it was important to ensure that tree branches did not touch window openings because snakes could potentially move through gaps during the monsoon.

"This was a confidence-building exercise, and we wanted to inform parents of the measures that we have taken in the school," said Seema Sapru, principal of The Heritage School.

The discussion at the school went beyond the snakebite incident, with parents raising concerns about buses and washrooms.

The school authorities sought to address the parents' doubts and clarify their concerns, an official said.