13th November 2026

Dear C11 learners and families

Many of you will shortly be learning to drive. This is one of the highlights of everyone's early adulthood, but also comes with significant risks. For example, driving in a car with your peers from the ages of 17-23 is statistically as dangerous as drink driving, due to the impact of peer influence on your decision making and risk-taking behaviour. Carrying just one friend under the age of 21 increases a young driver's risk of death per mile driven by 44% compared to driving alone.

A child in our school community, Joe Gray, was in a significant car crash over the last half term. Luckily, everyone involved is now safe and recovering. He has asked to share his story with you in the hope that it might help keep one person safe in the future.

Best wishes

Mr Smith
Assistant Headteacher, Designated Safeguarding Lead



I always thought the assembly's on driving safety were just something to scare us when we start driving, but my recent experience has changed my mind.

During half term, my friend was driving. It all happened so fast and my friend, being a new driver with no experience, didn't know how to handle it. The shock of the incident will never leave me and I hope no one else has to go through anything similar.

My friend had just passed his test 3 days prior to the crash. There were 4 of us in the car. It was all so unexpected - one minute we were listening to music and driving about, and it all changed in a split second. We had just come from Halstead through Earls Colne towards Coggeshall when we came off the road. I was preparing for the worst in the split seconds we had until first impact. We firstly hit the verge on the opposite side of the road where the car then jumped into the ditch hitting a tree. On second impact the car crumpled, the roof caved in wrapping

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around the driver and passengers head. Unfortunately the force from the crash was so major that the dashboard crushed the drivers leg leaving him pinned and stuck in the car with broken femurs. One other passenger sustained other major injuries but myself and another friend walked away amazingly unharmed. The driver is now safe and recovering after some major surgery.

The major thing that saved all our lives that night was our seatbelts. The force of the crash at 60MPH to a dead stop meant we weighed over 2,000KG on impact and that went through the car and our bodies. My friend sitting next to me had asked me when we left Halstead, "should I put my seatbelt on?" Thankfully my answer was yes! Seatbelts clearly save lives.

I'm not writing this to scare anyone, but most of us will be driving soon and driving home together from parties, picking people up etc. Seeing my friends injured and hurt scared me more than the crash itself, as no one wants to see their friends or anyone in agony. I hope that just one person reading this might make a different decision or drive more carefully in the future, to then hopefully not have to experience what I experienced.

Thank you,
Joe Gray