

Are you a parent or carer to a child in school?

If you are a parent, guardian or carer to a child in school, Cambridgeshire Constabulary are appealing for your help ahead of the school holidays.

During the school summer break, it is common for us to see an increase in hoax calls where children and young people are identified as being responsible.

Whilst we appreciate that the majority of children enjoy time off school being safe and responsible, some think that prank calling the police on the emergency line is a harmless joke. This is not the case.

Hoax calls are treated very seriously and those responsible are warned that misuse of the emergency line can cost lives. If our 999 operators are busy dealing with a hoax caller, they could be prevented from answering a genuine call, which in some instances could be a life-or-death situation. Hoax calls cost lives and are a waste of valuable resources.

Not only that, but it is an offence to make a malicious or hoax call to the emergency services. Hoax callers could face a maximum penalty of up to six months in prison or a fine of £5,000. All calls to the emergency services are recorded and we can always trace the number, even if the call is made from a withheld number.

We ask that ahead of the summer break, you take the time to educate your children about the dangers of hoax calling, and the consequences of doing so.

It's important to:

- Educate children about the consequences of their actions, making sure they understand making hoax calls to the police is dangerous, unacceptable and could lead to hefty fines and even prison time. Explain to that if they make hoax calls they are endangering other people's lives.
- Explain and show them how to call the police if they do genuinely need assistance. A child knowing when and how to contact the police can also save lives. Remind them about the difference between using 999 for emergencies, and 101 for non-emergencies, and ensure they understand what is classified as an 'emergency'.
- Further explain what you should do if you do genuinely call 999 by mistake (speak to an operator if they call you back and explain that the call was an accident – if they do not do this, it will be assumed that there is an emergency and the operator will spend time trying to ensure your safety).

- Encourage children to report people if they do make hoax calls to the police. They can do this by speaking to a web chat operator on our website (just click the green chat icon in the corner of the screen to start a chat).
- Encourage and help children to plan fun and productive activities on set days during the school holidays to avoid boredom which in some cases can lead to antisocial behaviour / hoax calls. See below for a list of activities available to do across the county.
- Ensure you know where your children are going to be, what they are doing, and make sure they understand what you expect of them during the school holidays.

Thank-you in advance for your help.

Kind regards.