



## Sandwell Local Policing Unit

### Message to Pupils, Parents & Carers

### Following Recent Hoax Bomb Calls

(Issued 1<sup>st</sup> February 2016)

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#### Dear Pupil, Parent or Carer

Over the past two weeks there have been a series of hoax bomb calls to schools across the country, including schools in Sandwell.

Some of the calls are clearly linked to each other. Others are 'copycat' calls.

Many of the calls has caused significant disruption to school life, upset to school staff and understandable concern to pupils, their parents and carers.

West Midlands Police treats such matters very seriously and we are committed to working with schools and local councils to ensure the safety of all students and to minimise disruption to students' learning. We have taken the following action:

- We have assessed every bomb threat. Our highly experienced officers review intelligence and work with counter-terrorism experts, who have an in depth knowledge of such incidents, to quickly assess whether a threat is real or not. We are satisfied that there is no credible threat posed to student safety - all of the calls have been malicious designed to cause fear and disruption.
- We have begun a major criminal investigation. Making a hoax bomb threat is a serious crime punishable by up to seven years imprisonment. We are working with police forces across the country to find the person or people responsible. A number of arrests within the West Midlands have already been made.
- We are keeping local schools and Sandwell Council updated and have issued guidance reminding them about what do in the event of a bomb threat. This guidance is in addition to existing safety plans held by schools which are well-rehearsed and are designed to manage a range of situations. Schools remain some of the safest and most secure public spaces. Staff are highly trained and the wellbeing of students is their top priority.

As a pupil, parent or carer we understand your concerns. There is a real threat from global terrorism and it is important that we are alert but not alarmed. To help us we ask the following from you:

- **If you have any specific questions regarding your school's safety plans or the site's security please speak to school staff.**
- **As a student if you see something unusual or out-of-place within your school tell a member of staff immediately.**

- As a parent or carer if your school makes a decision to temporarily suspend lessons while safety checks are carried out please do not attend the campus to remove your child unless you are asked to do so and do not phone the emergency services to ask for updates on your child – this delays genuine people in need from getting help. Schools will keep you informed and they will always arrange care for students who are unable to return home or whose parents/carers are unable to collect them.
- Please do not attend and remove your child from a school that has not been affected by an alert – this results in missed learning opportunities.
- Finally, please speak to your child about the consequences of making hoax calls. What may appear to them as a '*joke*' could result in a serious criminal conviction which will have long-lasting implications for their future.

Should you have any information about those responsible for making bomb threats call police on 101 or the independent charity Crimestoppers anonymously on 0800 555 111.

You can find out more about how schools, the council and you can prepare for emergencies here: [www.gov.uk/local-planning-emergency-major-incident](http://www.gov.uk/local-planning-emergency-major-incident)



**Chief Superintendent Matthew Ward**

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