

Police chief's message to parents amid concerns over anti-social behaviour in East Lothian

Parents of older children in East Lothian have been urged to ensure they know where they are during the summer holiday by the local police chief, amid concerns over anti-social behaviour in the county.

Chief Inspector Ben Leathes has issued a letter to parents of secondary school pupils across the county asking them to be vigilant.

The letter, which is also signed by Scottish Fire's local area liaison officer Steven Tilton and East Lothian Council's Kenneth Black, says a series of recent incidents have raised concerns as the school close for the summer break.

It says: "At times last year various issues of anti-social behaviour developed around the county which were linked to young people behaving irresponsibly through the school holidays.

"We appreciate the overwhelming majority of young people behave in a respectful and law-abiding manner however, unfortunately there were a minority who were involved in criminal and antisocial behaviour which portrayed a negative image of the areas concerned and caused suffering and

inconvenience for people who live and work there.

“East Lothian Police, Council, Fire and Rescue Service and wider partners want to ensure that this does not happen and that the county is a safe and enjoyable area for all to use during the summer.

“We are therefore encouraging all those who have young people to ensure they behave responsibly by checking where they are going and what they are doing and more especially that they are not in possession of alcohol.”

Chief Inspector Leathes first mentioned the plans to send out the letter at a meeting of East Lothian Police, Fire and Community Safety committee last week.

He told the meeting that additional police patrols and mobile CCTV was being brought in over the summer with a focus on Musselburgh where there had been issues with young people including three boys aged 13 and 14 involved in fire-raising and shoplifting at the local supermarket.

In Haddington social media was filled with reports of problems involving a group of teenager, mainly girls, in the town's shops and High Street last week.

One irate member of a Facebook page posted photographs of youngsters who were alleged to have been shop lifting and hurling ‘foul-mouthed’ abuse at people at the local Tesco store.

Others reported incidents at other shops in the centre of town claiming police had been looking for a gang of girls.

The letter to parents asks them to share its content with their children.

It says: “Our aim is to make East Lothian as attractive and safe to both residents and visitors and we ask you to share the contents of this letter with your child / young person to

ensure they are not involved in any antisocial or criminal behaviour, highlighting their own personal responsibility for their actions.

“We do again acknowledge that the majority of young people behave responsibly, respecting the community and environment and it is hoped by having this conversation you can reinforce the importance of being a responsible young citizen, keeping yourself safe and respecting others.”

By Marie Sharp Local Democracy Reporter