

Boy suspended for gun threat

Intercepted by police at school

By Shaun Sutner
TELEGRAM & GAZETTE STAFF

WEST BOYLSTON — An eighth-grader at West Boylston Middle/High School has been suspended for threatening to bring a gun to school.

Acting on information relayed to them by a school official who had received a tip from a parent, police officers intercepted the 12-year-old boy — whose name is being withheld because he is a juvenile — after he stepped off a school bus just before 7:30 a.m. last Wednesday.

While the boy did not have a gun on his person or in his book bag, he told officers who interviewed him that he could get one and was distraught over his girlfriend breaking up with him because of her belief that he was taking drugs, according to the police report on the incident.

The boy also told several friends the night before that his father has a metal BB pistol that looks real. And though school officials said he had no access to a gun, he had shown the BB gun to his friends before and told them he could get a real gun, the police report said.

After the Wednesday incident, the father voluntarily surrendered the BB gun, which he had kept in a locked case. The silver BB handgun is now in the police station evidence room.

School Superintendent Thomas Kane said the student was suspended for five days and has undergone a psychological evaluation and referred to the state Department of Social Services and Department of Youth Services. School officials are also working with the police to obtain services for the youth and his family, the superintendent said.

“He was not a threat to himself or anyone else,” Mr. Kane

said. “No one was in danger. No weapon was brought to school.

“He was a kid with some emotional issues, a mixed-up kid,” Mr. Kane said. “He made a threat that he had no capability of following up on.”

School officials on Wednesday sent home a short note to parents saying there was a “potentially hazardous situation” but no one had been at danger, and urging parents or students to come forward if they had any information.

Coincidentally, two days before the incident, police and school administrators had practiced a “lockdown” at the 690-student school, which has a middle school enrollment of 290. In a lockdown, all classroom and building exit doors are locked to ensure security, and lockers can be searched.

Police Chief Dennis W. Minnich said that if officers had not been able to stop the student before he entered the school last week, a lockdown would have been needed.

Meanwhile, a detective and an officer interviewed the boy and his father at the police station and released them without charges.

Police said they had been to the family’s home several times before the incident for reports of domestic disturbances.

Sgt. James Bartlett said the DSS had already been involved with the family.

Last week, police called the agency again and while the DSS declined to take any immediate action, officials said they would follow up, according to the police report.

The boy is scheduled to return to school tomorrow, the superintendent said.

Contact Shaun Sutner by e-mail at ssutner@telegram.com.