

Police swoop on toy gun boy, 10

By Mark Blacklock

1 SCHOOLBOY James

Elsmore spent his pocket money on a toy gun – and triggered a full-scale armed alert.

James, 10, took the imitation rifle back to his uncle’s house, where he fired pellets at a wall. A neighbour saw the youngster spread flat, sniper-style, and he dialled 999 in a panic. When police were told a suspected gunman was on the loose, they sent an armed response unit to the house in

Weston-super-Mare, Somerset. They stormed into the home of the boy’s uncle Trevor Taylor, who coincidentally collects replica firearms and swords, only to find James clutching his toy.

2 “We heard a furious banging at the front door and when I opened it armed police were standing there,” said Mr Taylor. “For a moment I thought it was a joke - that someone was playing a trick on me. They said they had come about a gun. They burst in with their

‘It was really over the top and scary’



guns and totally overreacted to the situation. It was well over the top and very scary.”

3 James, from Birmingham, said: “I bought the gun from a market with my pocket money. What kind of 10-year-old would have a real gun?” The youngster, who had been visiting his uncle and aunt as a treat, was allowed to keep the 3ft-long toy gun and told that because he was under the age of criminal responsibility, he would not be charged. He is now back home with his mother Mandy in Birmingham.

4 A Somerset Police spokesman said: “To the untrained eye, an imitation firearm can appear to be the real thing. It has to be treated as such because the safety of the public and police officers is at stake. Naturally, this is 6. One way of dealing with this is to send firearms officers – and in this case there were reports of a male with a firearm. The message to parents is not to buy children toys that look like guns. And beware, there are also serious consequences for children carrying imitation firearms in the street.”

5 The Gun Control Network, which campaigns to have the import, manufacture and sale of imitation guns prohibited, said similar warnings have already been issued around the country.