Field Trip to the Police Station

Most kids look forward to field trips as a change from the day-to-day class work that usually happens at school. Going to the police station teaches kids about the justice system, and reinforces topics they are learning about at school.

Planning
Planning is important for ensuring that a police station field trip goes smoothly. Call the station and set up a date and time to bring kids to the station. This way, the station is expecting you, and someone will be available to show your group around, as well as to answer questions and help kids learn about the police station. Let the station know how many people will attend the field trip, what you hope to see and hear, and how much time you have for the trip. This allows the station to prepare for your visit.

Preparing Kids
Police stations are often a busy place, with criminals passing through at all times. This can be scary for some children, particularly younger ones. Talk to kids about this before the field trip, to prepare them for the sight of the officer's weapons and that an officer might bring in a criminal during the tour. It is also a good idea to warn kids that if an emergency happens, the station may get busy and loud and the officer performing the tour may have to leave, ending the field trip early.

What You'll See and Do
Each police station is different, and tours may vary from station to station. In general, however, you will see how the station is set up and where the officers carry out specific tasks. The tour may lead you through the dispatch center, showing kids how the station handles emergency calls. The kids might get to see offices, holding cells and fingerprinting centers. They may get to see where the station takes mug shots, and where officers store their equipment such as bulletproof vests or weapons, when they are not in use. Some stations might let kids see cruisers or motorcycles and learn how the sirens work and where criminals sit when being transported.

What Kids Learn
One of the primary things kids learn on a police station field trip is personal safety. They will learn how to call 911 in an emergency, ways to protect themselves and how to avoid dangerous situations. Kids also learn what happens when a person is arrested, how police equipment works and how it helps officers do their job. They learn about the duties of a police officer, including those when he is on patrol and when he is at the station. Field trips
are also an effective way to reinforce book learning and help kids remember important information.

**As an alternative, bring the police to you!**

Arrange for a detective to visit your classroom or library group. Give the same care to planning for your visitor that you would give to transporting children, which means set up a date, time, and place. Either speak directly with the detective of your choice or find out who will be coming. Let the officer know how many will be in the group and their ages. Discuss what you hope to see and hear, and how much time is needed. Inform people in the building of your plans so they will not be surprised to see an officer arrive. Prepare children before the officer arrives, discussing behavioral expectations and appropriate questions and comments.