

Truancy - Guidance for schools

What is Truancy?

Truancy is a term that is often used to describe a situation when a pupil is missing from school without the proper authorisation. It has been known for some parents to condone the truancy of their child. All cases of known truancy will be recorded by the school as 'unauthorised absence'.

By law, all children who are registered at school must attend regularly. Elective Home-Educated children do not have to attend school.

Truancy is not normally something that should be dealt with as a missing person investigation; reporting all such cases would put an impossible burden on the Police Service. Consideration should be given to the circumstances to determine if there are any indications that such an investigation is warranted.

Police definitions:

Missing

"Anyone whose whereabouts cannot be established and where the circumstances are out of character or the context suggests the person may be subject of crime or at risk of harm to themselves or another."

Absent

"A person not at a place where they are expected or required to be and there is no apparent risk."

The 'absent' category should comprise cases in which people are not presently where they are supposed to be and there is no apparent risk. 'Absent' cases should not be ignored, and must be monitored over periods of time with consideration given to escalating to 'missing' if there is a change to the circumstances that has increased the level of risk.

The following set of questions can be used to help risk assess whether the person is missing or absent:

1. What is the specific concern in this instance?
2. What has been done so far to trace this individual?
3. Is this significantly out of character?
4. Are there any specific medical needs?
5. Are they likely to be subjected to crime?
6. Are they likely to be the victim of abuse?
7. Are they currently at risk of Sexual Exploitation?
8. Are they likely to attempt suicide?
9. Do they pose a danger to other people?
10. Is there any other information relevant to their absence?

Note: This policy does not specifically cover incidents of abduction, which is a criminal offence and which should be reported immediately to the police. When this is suspected, a strategy meeting must be called immediately, to include legal representation, to decide whether an application should be made for a Recovery Order under Section 50 of the Children Act 1989.

Post Registration Truancy

