

Truancy

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Policy Statement

Summary West Yorkshire Police (WYP) is dedicated to ensuring all individuals are safeguarded and all risks are assessed to differentiate between the levels to ensure the correct level of investigation can take place. This policy details how the Force will respond to reports of children absent from school.

Scope This policy applies to all police officers and police staff.

Principles

General

- This policy must be read in conjunction with the Missing Persons policy, and this policy must be adhered to when deemed appropriate.
- Children who are absent from school are not necessarily always missing people who require police intervention. In most cases the child or young person will return to home or school within a short period of time or can easily be located with some basic enquiries.
- Where a person is reported to have left school premises without the permission of staff at that location, or failed to attend at school as planned, they will not be recorded as a missing person or require a police deployment unless either a) or b) applies:
 - a) It is considered that there is an immediate and real risk that the child will suffer significant harm or cause significant harm to another person if they are not found.
 - b) Where there is an agreement in place between the school and the police that the young person should be treated as missing immediately in all circumstances.
- An immediate and real risk is one that is present at that time and not a risk which may arise at some point in the future.
- The risk is not just of any harm. It must be of significant harm. Significant harm could be from violence or some other cause, such as sexual offending or self-harm.
- Whilst the police have a legal duty to act when there is an immediate, real and substantial risk that the child will suffer **serious** harm. The decision has been made that the force will also deploy where there is an immediate and real risk that the child will suffer **significant** harm which brings this policy in line with the Police's public duty (police core functions) and is in line with the national direction of missing people statutory guidance.

Assessing Risk

- The risk can arise due to risk posed to the young person by others, or a risk they pose to themselves such as self-harm or suicide.

- When assessing risk, account must be taken of all the circumstances. Those circumstances may include the young person's age, any other vulnerabilities or disabilities and their mental health.
 - Where concerns about the young person relate more to their long term behaviour, care or home environment it is unlikely that an 'immediate and real risk' will arise.
 - The information that establishes the risk may come from any source. Sources may include school staff, parents, and police information.
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Process

Principles

- Where school staff notify the police of a person having left or failed to attend school premises, they must be asked whether there is an **immediate and real risk** that the child will suffer **significant harm** and/or cause significant harm to any other person if they are not found. If school staff state there is such a risk:
 - The staff member must be asked to clarify the nature of that risk and detail why it is thought to exist;
 - The call handler must record the staff member's comments on the Storm log;

If the caller believes that there is an immediate and real risk but the call taker does not deem there to be, the reporting person must be told that no deployment will occur at this time until an Inspector has confirmed the risk, has agreed to deploy and the school has been re-contacted;
 - The staff member must be asked to supply any contact details and any other information in their possession that may help in locating the person;
 - The Storm log must be passed to the District Inspector for review;
 - If the Inspector agrees that there is an immediate and real risk, the school must be re-contacted and informed that the police will deploy;
 - If the Inspector does not agree that there is an immediate and real risk:
 - The Inspector must contact the reporting person to discuss the risks and try to find agreement on the risk level.
 - If no agreement on the risk level can be reached, the Inspector will have the final decision on police deployment and must ensure the school is aware of their decision.
 - **The Inspector must record the rationale for their decision on the Storm log using the National Decision Model. In making this assessment all available information must be considered, including a thorough check of West Yorkshire Police systems.**
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Recording

Principles

- If the incident falls outside of the above criteria it must be recorded as a 'Truant' incident and closed as "other agency dealing" pending further information that confirms them as missing.
 - If the incident falls within the above criteria, it must be recorded as a 'Missing Person' incident and dealt with in accordance with the Missing Persons policy.
 - The organisation reporting the incident must be told that no police deployment will occur and given a reference number in the event that further information becomes available.
 - They must be advised to re-contact the police if the circumstances change and the risk level increases sufficiently to justify police deployment.
 - They must also be advised that it is their responsibility to notify the parent/guardian of the young person.
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Key Points

- The call handler must make it absolutely clear that WYP intend to take no action unless the situation changes.
 - Should further information be received that impacts upon the risk then the incident is to be reviewed.
 - The overarching principle of there must be an "immediate and real risk..." is to be adhered to throughout the incident and any review in light of further information.
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Expectations

Principles

- The Police will investigate all cases falling within the definition of missing in accordance with the Police Missing Persons Policy and National Guidance. Where appropriate, the school will be expected to assist in finding the young person and to work co-operatively with police during any enquiry.
- Following any report of a missing person to police, the school must inform and update parent(s)/guardian(s) and other appropriate agencies.
- If the incident is logged as a truant and the caller has been advised that the police will not be deploying, then the caller must advise the parent(s)/guardian(s) of this when notifying them of the young person's absence.
- There is a need for all involved parties to co-operate fully and schools must work to achieve this.
- The school must make a record of all actions taken throughout the period a young person is recorded as missing in relation to their welfare, and fully update police on those actions at the appropriate time.

- On the young person's return and once debriefed, schools must review the risk assessment regarding the young person going missing in future, and must consider measures to prevent it from re-occurring. Identified threats and risks must be discussed with the young person's parents/carers/guardian and consideration must be given to a multi-agency strategy meeting regarding the young person if appropriate.
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**Partnership
Expectations**

- Some districts have arranged local protocols with schools to improve the quality of reporting of concern and missing person's incidents.
 - In order to be assured that a missing person is reported only in circumstances where a police response is required, the school should take steps to establish the level of risk and therefore the level of intervention by obtaining the appropriate information.
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Additional Information

Compliance

This policy complies with the following legislation, policy and guidance:

- Data Protection Act 2018
 - Missing Persons policy
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