

Children for whom school has no point

Many children do not go to school either because their parents want them at home as carers for siblings, or simply because their parents cannot be bothered to send them. Thousands more are not registered at any school at all, because of their families' unstable lives.

Underlying this dreadful situation there are two central truths. First of all, the problem of children not going to school often has more to do with their parents than with the children themselves. Secondly, once children go to school, we need to make sure that the experience is a positive one so that they want to keep on going.

In Britain, the Ministry of Education has introduced a complex package of sticks and carrots to persuade schools to bring truants' and excluded children back into the classroom. It is paying grants so that a thousand schools can set up special units to help these children. Schools receive the grant if they bring a target number of children back to school; if they do not meet the target, the grant is withdrawn. Parents are the subject of this campaign, too: the Home Office has introduced fines for parents who fail to send their children to school, and has given the police power to pick up truants on the streets.

'truant = a child who does not go to school when he or she should.

1. Answer the following questions using your words. (2 points: 1 point each)

- a) Why do many parents not send their children to school?
- b) How are the authorities trying to solve this problem?

2. Are the following statements true (T) or false (F)? (1 point: 0.5 each)

- a) The problem of truancy is mainly a matter of obedience.
- b) it is very hard to persuade children that if they go to school, they will be able to get a job.

3. Find a word or phrase in the text which, in context, is similar in meaning to: (1 point: 0.5 each)

- a) someone who looks after a relative at home
- b) turbulent

4. Choose, a, b, or c, in each question below. Only one choice is correct. (2 points: 0.5 each)

1. According to the text, there are thousands of children who ...

- a) *stay at home doing the housework.*
- b) *live in stable families_*
- c) *are not registered at any school.*

2. Part of the problem is ...

- a) *that people feel very emotional.*
- b) *that there are not enough police to pick up truants on the streets.*
- c) *that these children think education is a waste of time.*

