

CHILD MISSING FROM TRAVELLER SITE

A 10 year old boy has gone missing from the Traveller campsite on the Lower Broughty Road, Broughty Ferry. Michael O'Donnel left his family's caravan last night to go to the local chip shop and was not seen again. When he did not return after forty five minutes his parents - Mary and Patrick O'Donnel - set out in search of him, but could find no trace of their son.

Mr Will Breen, owner of the Happy Haddock Chippie, said the boy did indeed arrive at his chip shop about 6 o'clock, played on a video game while waiting for his order, and left a short time later. An extensive search by the campsite families revealed no trace of Michael. The police were called by Mr Breen.

Michael's mother stated he was a cheerful boy who never bothered anyone. He enjoyed staying at the Broughty Road campsite and was making friends at Craigirbarns Primary School, which he and his younger sister had just started attending. She said he was not the sort of boy to wander off with a stranger.

In a statement, Detective Sergeant Angus McDermott of Police Scotland said that extensive house-to-house enquiries are now being conducted in the area, and a full police search is in progress. He advised local parents not to panic. McDermott refused to speculate whether this incident was linked to the disappearance of two homeless youths from near the Isla Street Shelter in Dundee 12 days

ago.

Parents in the area are very alarmed by Michael's disappearance. Some declared that they would not let their children out alone after dark. The headmaster of Craigiebarns Primary School said that several parents were insisting that their children be kept in school until they could collect them or be accompanied home by teachers. He regretted that he did not have enough staff to accomplish this.

Mr Breen of the Happy Haddock Chippie recalled some local teenagers following Michael down the street, but doesn't think they were out to cause trouble. The parents of these local boys (names withheld) are also adamant they their children had nothing to do with the disappearance. "They are not the sort of boys to hurt anyone," said one father. "The gypsy kid probably just ran away from home or something. I'm sure he'll turn up in a day or two."

There have been as series of incidents in and around the Traveller site since the families arrived there three months ago. Local residents are not happy to see them camp there and have been pressuring the Council to evict them. The police have no evidence that Michael's disappearance is related to these incidents, but stated they are not ruling out any line of enquiry at this stage.

Anne Prentiss