

Traveller School Attendance Guidance

Education Inclusion Service
Traveller School Attendance
Guidance

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Cyngor Bwrdeisdref Sirol

Blaenau Gwent

County Borough Council

Introduction.

A number of different groups are covered by the generic term Traveller – Roma, English and Welsh Gypsies, Irish and Scottish Travellers', Showmen (fairground people) and Circus people, Bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and New Travellers'.

The Education Act 1996 and the Education (Pupil Registration) (Wales) Regulations 2010 make statutory provision for all of these groups.

Children of Traveller groups, whose families do not travel are expected to register at a school and attend as normal. They are subject to the same rules as other children in terms of the requirement to attend school regularly once registered at school.

However, many Traveller families will travel for work purposes. Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council has issued this guidance to support schools with clarity around attendance and registration of Traveller pupils.

School attendance regulations.

Section 444(6) Education Act 1996, gives parents a defence in which they cannot be found guilty of a school attendance offence, provided that the child is of no fixed abode and:

- (a) parents are engaged in a trade or business of such a nature as to require them to travel from place to place, and
- (b) the child has attended at a school as a registered pupil as regularly as the nature of that trade or business permits, and
- (c) if the child has attained the age of six, that he or she has made at least 200 attendances during the period of 12 months ending with the date on which the proceedings were instituted.

Registration Codes.

The Education (Pupil Registration) (Wales) Regulations 2010 provide the following registration guidance.

When should the T code be used?

On days when a pupil from a Gypsy, Roma or Traveller (GRT) family is known to be out of the area for work purposes and is not in educational provision, schools can use the T code to record the absence.

Parents should make sure they let the school know in advance when they are going to be travelling and when they expect to return. This enables the child's attendance and absence to be recorded accurately, their safety and well-being to be monitored and appropriate distance learning work to be set by the school.

The term 'travelling' means travelling as part of the parents' trade or business that requires them to travel from place to place. It does not mean travelling as part of a holiday.

The T code can only be used if the child is travelling for work purposes with their parents, not with any other relatives.

The use of the T code to authorise a pupil's absence is at the discretion of the headteacher.

The school and the GT Officer must make every attempt to encourage Traveller parents to come back for a week in May for children to sit their national tests.

D code

The law allows for dual registration of pupils at more than one school. To help ensure continuity of education for GRT children it is expected that the child(ren) should attend school elsewhere when their family is travelling. Where a GRT pupil is travelling and attending another school the pupil should be dual-registered using D code. The child remains on the D code until the subsidiary school informs the base school they have left and are off roll, or until they return to the school full time.

C code

Only exceptional circumstances warrant an authorised leave of absence. Schools should consider each application individually taking into account the specific facts and circumstances and relevant background context behind the request.

O code

Where GRT children are registered pupils at a school and are known to be residing at a site (official or otherwise) or in a house and are not attending school, the absence must be investigated in precisely the same way as that for any other pupil. If the reason for the absence is not known, it must be recorded as unauthorised.

Apart from travelling for work purposes, Gypsies and Travellers participate in events and occasions that are of particular significance to them, e.g. Appleby show/horse fairs. Extended family and religious events such as weddings and christenings or economic gatherings such as horse fairs will draw together extended family groups and reinforce communal identity. Gypsies and Travellers put high value on extended family responsibilities so families may move to care for sick relative or a bereaved family member.

If a school approves leave of absence, the school needs to make it clear the days that are authorised and from what time that approval takes place.

What actions should school undertake when a GRT child does not return to school after travelling?

If a child/ young person does not return to their base school after travelling the school should:

- Make regular attempts, beginning on the first day of any unexplained absence to contact the pupil's parents either by telephone or text messaging. Every effort to locate and contact the family must be taken.
- Contact the GRT access and attendance officers who will make every effort to visit the family and ascertain when the child will be returning to school (contact details below).

- Contact any other school where the pupil or their siblings are known to attend while they were away.
- For pupils known to be at risk or where safeguarding is a concern the school should contact social care.
- If despite these efforts the pupil's absence continues and his/her whereabouts remains unknown where a pupil has not returned to school for ten days after an authorised absence or is absent from school without authorisation for twenty consecutive school days' school must contact the Education Welfare Service in line with the CME Policy.

Distance learning and parent held education records.

When it is known that a family is going travelling the school should supply a Parent Held Education record, to the family. Parent held records can be downloaded from the National Association of Teachers for Travellers website at <http://www.natt.org.uk/parent-held-education-record-book>

The school should complete the relevant sections before handing it to the family. This record enables swift transfer of important information, including base school contact details, between dual registered educational settings. It can also serve as a record when children are travelling with distance learning materials.

Clarifying Guidance

Schools must not remove Traveller children from the school register when they are travelling for occupational purposes and have stated their intention to return. It is good practice for schools with registered Traveller pupils to ensure that the guidance in this document is written into the school's attendance policy and that the guidance is explained to parents. Schools may differentiate Traveller absence statistics for school attendance evaluation purposes in the school's self-evaluation form.

Estyn

Estyn should not criticise schools for absences of Traveller children, providing the school can demonstrate that it:

- has used the registration codes correctly
- is strategic and proactive in communicating with Traveller parents about their travelling patterns on a regular basis
- is strategic and proactive in ensuring excellent attendance when the children are not travelling
- provides distance learning materials in accordance with good practice
- provides Travelling families with the parent held education record before they travel
- includes specific guidance for Travellers in the school's attendance policy and ensures the policy is accessible to parents
- evaluates its provision for narrowing the gap in attendance for Traveller children in the school self-evaluation form
- evaluates its provision for narrowing achievement gaps for Traveller children in the school self-evaluation form