

Information for Schools with GRT Pupils:

Parents should define whether they are a Traveller when asked to provide their ethnic code. Again identity and ascription in schools is key. A school cannot give a family Traveller status unless the parent has identified himself/herself as such, Travellers are likely to have permanent homes. Travellers move around as part of their trade or business and the child usually travels with them.

When a family is travelling in connection with their trade or business the child is marked as 'T' (authorised absence) in the register. This means that the parent will need to advise the school of the exact reason for absence and the expected duration. They should be encouraged to access education whilst they are travelling and, if they attend educational provision through registration at another school or specialist provision, they can be marked as 'present at approved educational activity' (see dual registration and approved educational activity available on the EWS website).

If the parent indicates they are travelling (e.g. to see family, for a holiday or a family wedding) this does not meet the criteria for the 'T' code as it should be used (authorised or unauthorised holiday).

Children from Traveller families are subjected to the same rules as other children in terms of being required to attend school. However, there is a defence available to Traveller families if prosecuted for non-attendance provided that the child has attended a school for at least 200 sessions in the 12 months ending when legal proceedings are started. The use of 'T' code for more than 180 sessions could indicate that the pupil has failed to meet this requirement and they should be referred to EWS.

Attendance Information:

1. Pupils who are able to attend and choose not to: Are truants. They need to be followed up as a matter of urgency by the school attendance officers or the LA attendance service to ensure that a pattern of non-attendance does not become entrenched.

2. Pupils who have dropped out of school: Should be referred to the Children Missing in Education panel, which would consider strategies for re-integration or alternative placement.

3. Pupils who have permanently moved away from the area: Of the school are not truanting but may have to stay on roll until they appear on the roll of another school; this could take time due to family circumstances, how organised and proactive their access to *Traveller Education Support* or *Home Tutor* and the availability of suitable school places in the area to which they have moved.

4. Pupils who have temporarily moved away from the area: Their parents may enrol their children in another school, but want their original place to be kept open; in such a case *dual registration* is possible and attendances at one school can be counted by the other.

5. Pupils whose home circumstances make it difficult or impossible to attend regularly: These pupils require sensitive, multi-agency support to establish the circumstances to re-establish a positive attendance pattern. This group might include children who are caring for or supporting their parents in a culturally sanctioned and selfless way. This could be First Response and/or Early Help.

6. Genuinely nomadic: Pupils whose absences can be recorded with a 'T'. Their parents may defend themselves against prosecution if their children have attended 200 sessions in the previous twelve months.¹ Families should be encouraged to use Distance Learning Materials or register with e-lamp <http://www.natt.org.uk/elamp-initiatives>.

Identity and Ascription:

There are two ethnic categories that identify GRT children – Gypsy/Roma (**WROM**) and Traveller of Irish Heritage (**WIRT**).

Many families choose the equally accurate, but less contentious WBRI (White British), WIRI (White Irish), WEEU (White Eastern European), WEUR (White European) or WOTW (White Other).

This is a recognised national issue with fewer pupils ascribed to the two categories than GRT pupils known to support services for the GRT community.

The benefits of identification lay in general improvements to the education system; the direct benefits to individuals may be outweighed by the disadvantages of being “out” as target for racism.

Families are entitled to choose whatever category they feel appropriate, but it is important that schools make parents aware of the choice available to them, and explain that the purpose of the ethnic monitoring is to ensure that all children receive their full educational entitlement (also included in this is the right to travel and to justify the use of 'T' on school registrations).

The schools guidance can be particularly important where families are unfamiliar with the UK education system, have limited English or struggle with literacy.

A key question to ask: Does the welcoming process in schools encourage openness of identity and is there provision for families changing their ascription as their relationship with the school develops? (source: Foster and Walker, 2009).

Distance Learning for Traveller Children:

Distance learning programmes have been in place nationally for Circus children and families for some time now and much has been learned about how to manage this way of working successfully.

Distance Learning as practiced by most GRT support services starts from the assumption that children are both mobile and have regular school base that they will return to each year. A programme carries on in the travelling months follows on the heels of learning that takes place in the winter. When children return to school in the winter they should feel that they have not missed too much while they were away. The teaching staff should not have so much catch-up work to do. When these programmes are successfully managed, it is possible for school attendance to be maintained by awarding marks for 'education off site'.

Where children are moving from one site to another and are not mobile, it is better to consider 'dual registration' with the child enrolled in two schools who communicate

¹ A session is measured by roll which is taken twice daily, one in the morning and another in the afternoon. If a child has between 8 – 20 sessions of unauthorized absences the school can ask to issue a penalty notice (initial fine of £60 per parent / carer). If not paid within 21 days it will go up to £120 (per parent per child) and if not paid by the 28th day the parent / carer will get prosecuted for the offense of nonattendance. *Education Welfare Services* will be looking at school attendance percentages ranging from 85 - 90% as problematic and would start investigating the non-attendance.

with each other and share the teaching at different times of the year. Where children do not have a regular school base, this virtuous cycle is impossible to maintain because no individual has the oversight of the child's learning and progress. The child needs feedback about performance and the ability of work and the learning programme needs to be carefully structured. National Association of Teachers of Travellers (NATT) has recently introduced E-lamp programme, a B strand to provide for the needs of disaffected children who have a regular home base but who are not enrolled in school (the programme provides pupils with a laptop and access to online course for young people in years 10 and 11).

Parent Held Education Record: Is designed for pupils who travel between schools on a regular basis. It helps facilitate continuity of education by giving a teacher a quick and easy guide for beginning to address the pupil's needs by saving time of unnecessary assessment. By filling in the records everyday it helps give, teacher and pupil, a sense of achievement. (Printed copies of this book are available but many TESs have requested this invaluable resource to be available as a download for families and TESs to access). <http://www.natt.org.uk/elamp-initiatives>.

Attainment: Unpacking GRT Underachievement

- Disrupted educational experiences
- Different educational experiences
- Educational disadvantage of their parents
- Social and economic reasons
- Transportation issues
- Health reasons
- Cultural reasons
- Dispersed extended family demands
- Lack of cultural sensitivity within the education system
- Racism in employment sector
- Lack of role models
- EAL issues
- Accommodation Issues
- Refugee and asylum seeker issues

Ideas for GRT's in Schools:

- Parent Held Education Records
- GRT pupil art reflecting culture, life experiences, etc. to be displayed across the City during GRT History Month (June)
- GRT Representatives for Amnesty International Speakers in Schools Project