

SERVICES FOR SCHOOLS

Hampshire County Council guidance for schools and other education providers

Promoting pupil attendance and recording absence

Section 6: effective practice document for school attendance procedures and admissions for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children

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Section 6: effective practice document for school attendance procedures and admissions for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children

Admissions

Rationale statement: To ensure that every school in Hampshire has sound practices related to the admissions and recording of pupil attendance for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) children.

Pre-admissions – for phased transition Early Years Foundation Stage, Key Stages 1-2, 2-3 and 4-5, or for school-to-school transfer

All schools should follow both county *Admissions guidance* and *Promoting pupil attendance and recording absence* at: www.hants.gov.uk/education/hias/learning-behaviour-attendance/atten-guidance/attendance-guidance-for-schools to ensure they comply with their statutory requirements.

Further to their statutory requirement, Hampshire County Council would recommend that all schools:

- 1 ensure staff receive training around the cultural history of the GRT communities. Hampshire's Traveller Achievement Service can provide such staff training. Please contact the Ethnic Minority and Achievement Service (EMTAS) for further information
- 2 ensure the school reception and school prospectus celebrates the cultural diversity of the school and is inclusive of GRT families. Schools will need to consider levels of literacy used and may develop web-based information, such as virtual tours of the schools or video clips welcoming new pupils and families to the school
- 3 ensure the school and its governing body promote accurate ascription for new pupils, providing support to families to identify the correct ethnic group. Effective practice around ascription will ensure:
 - the school census returns data and self-evaluation around the progress of GRT pupils is accurate (as is their statutory requirement to the DfE and local education authority under section 537A of the Education Act 1996)
 - the school is compliant with its duties under the Race Relations Amendment Act
 - the school has accurate data to access funding for particular ethnic groups

In addition, this will support the school in helping pupils to strengthen feelings of personal identity; increase self-esteem; support personalised learning and set appropriate targets for achievement, and support planning for a relevant cross-cultural curriculum.

NB: The report *Building futures: developing trust, a focus on provision for children from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller backgrounds in the Early Years Foundation Stage* (November 2009) stated that: “Children and families who are GRT of Irish heritage, particularly when they are settled and no longer travelling, are often invisible because most are white and their ethnicity not obvious, but they are recognised and protected under the Race Relations Amendment Act. School staff trained on the GRT culture and history will recognise typical GRT surnames to support conversations for pupil admission in GRT ascription. The member of staff who manages admissions of newly arrived pupils needs the skills and knowledge to explain the information collected on the admissions form, regardless of literacy levels or knowledge of English. For further training please contact EMAS for new arrival training sessions: www.hants.gov.uk/education/ema/ema-training/ema-training-admin.

- 4 create a specific pack of information for any Traveller child and family joining the school that signposts local support services for GRT families and sets out how the school can support a child to stay in touch with friends and access learning whilst *travelling*. GRT families often communicate virtually when travelling, as this allows them to *stay in touch*. Schools can utilise this to enable pupils to keep in touch with friends and access work through school portals and online learning whilst travelling.

A GRT child on roll

All schools should follow the County Council guidance, *Promoting pupil attendance and recording absence*, in order to ensure they comply with their statutory requirements and recommended practice.

In addition to this, we recommend the following procedures and good practice for any child ascribed or known to be of GRT heritage.

Attendance policy

Set out within the school attendance policy a specific section on attendance practice for GRT pupils. This should set out the law for parents, which recognises that:

- class sizes in reception or Key Stage 1 can be increased so that a place is provided for a GRT pupil to attend a local school near to where they are staying
- if the child is on roll, over six years old, has attended at least 200 sessions at school in each rolling 12 month period, then GRT families may take their children from school to travel. This does not automatically reduce the number of days that a GRT child is expected to attend school – where possible they should attend full time (380 sessions a year)¹
- parents/carers have to notify the school in advance of their intention to travel and confirm a return date. If the family travel annually, it would be effective practice for a school to record the dates of the travel patterns so as to inform the

¹ The law makes no reference to a physical dwelling in defining GRT children, so the permission to be absent from school to travel would apply to a GRT family living in a house that travels in the course of their trade or business (such as Showmen).

child's class teachers at the start of the year or term as appropriate. This would enable the teacher to adjust their planning for the child and may also support the school to make reasonable adjustments to calendared events, such as parents evening, open days and transition events, to enable the family to participate.

Monitoring and recording of pupil absence

Managing absence

- 1 **If a child on your roll is recognised as GRT (based on the legal definition defined in this document) and they request additional time from school, then the school can and should use the following codes:**
 - *T* code – on days when a GRT pupil is known to be out of the area travelling and is not in any other educational provision
 - *D* code (counts as not required to attend) where a GRT pupil is travelling and attending another school. The pupil has to be registered as on roll. This should be confirmed by the subsidiary school, making you the *home* school. If the child had been recorded as a *T*, this should be amended to a *D* code from the official start date at the new school. The child will now remain a *D* code on your register until the subsidiary school informs you they have left and are off roll, or until they return to you full time. You cannot remove the child from your roll unless the family or a local authority service, such as the Locality Team or Traveller Achievement Service, notify you they do not intend to return
 - code *B* (counts as present) where a GRT pupil is travelling and the child is a *guest pupil* on roll or is attending educational provision other than school.

If the child concerned is absent for any other reasons than time requested to travel, the school should (as for any other student) use the appropriate Department for Education (DfE) code for absence. If the reason for the absence is not known it must be recorded as unauthorised. Schools and authorities should use a full range of interventions and parental responsibility support measures for GRT families, as they would for any other family, but this should be in close liaison with Hampshire County Council's Ethnic Minority Achievement Service.

- 2 **If a child that is GRT is newly arrived on roll as you are the subsidiary school – they are travelling, and have a home school – you should:**
 - contact the *home* school to confirm the child is on roll and is understood to be travelling. Check that the home school has not (and will not) take them off roll but will code them *D* for the time the child is on your roll. As the subsidiary school you should code the child on your register as you would do for any other child; and you hold the responsibility for ensuring the child's attendance and education during that period. Subsidiary schools should:
 - maintain contact and share attendance certificates with the home school
 - communicate with the *home* school on what the child had been studying/learning before the point of travel and deliver a best fit curriculum offer for the child or children concerned

- establish if there are any siblings in other local schools and log this within SIMS. Consider running joint school meetings with the parents/carers to discuss support and/or the progress of all the siblings at one school base.

If the child stops attending the subsidiary school and the home school has not received them back, then as for any other child the school should try to ascertain the child's whereabouts and inform both the Locality Team and the *home* school that they are not attending. You should leave the child on roll for 20 sessions and after the 20 sessions, if you have been unable to locate the child and the child has not returned to the *home* school, you should report the child to the locality team manager as a *child missing education* (CME) and follow CME procedures. If the child has returned to the home school, ascertain the start date and remove the child from your roll.

- 3 If the child is admitted on school roll from a transfer from another school,** you should follow usual in-year admissions, ensuring you make contact with the previous school to ascertain the reasons for the transfer. If appropriate, contact EMAS for support with the initial parental and child meeting to discuss the new placement.

- 4 Child moving/coming off roll**

If a parent informs the school a child is transferring school or that parents have elected to home educate, follow both County Council *Admissions guidance* and *Elective home education guidance*. In addition to this, we recommend contacting Hampshire County Council's Ethnic Minority Achievement Service on:

Tel: 01256 330195.