

Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) Children in Hampshire Schools

Overview

Traveller is an umbrella term which covers a number of different cultures and groups including:

- Gypsy/Romany
- Roma
- Scottish/Welsh Traveller
- Irish Traveller
- Showman
- New Traveller
- Bargee/Boatman

Languages

Travellers may speak various languages and English is often their second language.

Gypsies speak Romany, Irish Travellers speak Cant and Gamon. Spellings vary as these are oral languages without a formal written convention. Many Romany words have been adopted into colloquial use including:

- Kushti – Good
- Chavvi - Child

Roma speak Romanes, a written language with regional variations, as well as the language of their country of origin.

Ascription

Pupils' ethnicity is recorded at their parent's discretion but vague or inaccurate ascription can mean that pupils may not receive their full entitlement to support. If a GRT pupil lives in a house they are still a Traveller, though it is quite easy for them to remain invisible if they ascribe as White British (WBRI). If you think a pupil is a Traveller, it is important to have a conversation with the parents and pupil to try and address this. Showman often ascribe as WBRI as they are not an ethnic group but still have an entitlement to support.

Contact EMTAS for advice on ascription and download the [parents' ascription leaflet](#) from the EMTAS website for more information.

Attendance

It is important to monitor the attendance of GRT pupils closely to ensure attendance does not impact on progress and attainment. Only use the T code inline with the Education Act 1995 to mark GRT pupils absent when they are travelling with their parents for work purposes. Have high expectations with regards attendance but maintain a flexible approach for pupils who are travelling for long periods during the school year and provide support to help them reintegrate on their return.

EMTAS leaflet on [GRT Attendance](#).

See latest [County Guidance on Attendance](#).
[EMTAS study into the use of the T Code](#).

Distance Learning

Many GRT pupils, especially Showmen pupils, travel for work purposes and may be absent from school for long periods of time.

Early communication and planning with GRT pupil, parents and staff is vital before the travelling season begins in order for GRT pupils to have access to distance learning materials to support their learning whilst travelling.

Careful planning and support may also be needed to support their return.

[EMTAS Distance Learning Guidance](#).

Transition

If necessary, assist GRT parents with applications for a school place and consider deadlines if GRT parents are travelling when the application round is open. Some parents at the end of KS2 may choose to educate their child at home and may not understand the implications and responsibilities upon them with regards EHE (Elective Home Education).

EMTAS offer a transition support programme for GRT pupils moving into Year R, between KS1 and KS2 and between KS2 and KS3. See the [EMTAS website](#) for more information about transition.

[GRT Transition, supporting the journey through education](#).

Elective Home Education (EHE)

For cultural reasons some GRT parents elect to educate their children at home so that they can learn crafts and skills associated with their culture. Sometimes GRT parents and pupils have concerns about KS3 and the curriculum that they will be exposed to and this can also precipitate EHE.

If you are aware of GRT pupils who are considering EHE or whose siblings have left school to EHE, make time to speak with the pupils and families to see if you can identify the issues or concerns which are leading them to consider EHE. There may be steps you can take to reassure parents and pupils and assist retention.

Contact EMTAS and HCC [Education & Inclusion Service](#) for more information.

Culturally Relevant Curriculum

It is important to have high expectations of GRT pupils and inspire them to achieve. GRT pupils engage better in learning that contributes to their sense of community identity and it is good practice to ensure there are opportunities across the curriculum to incorporate GRT culture and history.

June is Gypsy Roma Traveller History Month (GRTHM), an excellent opportunity to celebrate diversity. Be aware of the needs of the child and when highlighting GRT issues avoid spotlighting GRT pupils without their consent.



Homework

GRT parents may sometimes say that their children do not need to complete homework as they will be learning about their culture when they are at home. Some GRT parents believe that schools provide their children literacy, numeracy and ICT skills but that the vocational skills necessary for a secure financial future are provided by family at home. GRT parents may also find it difficult to support their children due to their own literacy levels and the home environment may not have the space or resources, lacking pens, paper or even an area of the home in which to work. This can cause problems if pupils are sanctioned for non-completion of homework tasks.

If homework is not completed, speak to the GRT pupil and parents and look at how the situation can be effectively resolved. Is there a homework club at school that pupils can attend? Some GRT pupils are not able to stay after school because of jobs and responsibilities at home but may appreciate the opportunity to receive homework support during their lunch break.

Relationships and Sex Education (RSE)

Most GRT families deal with RSE and any sex-related issues within their own communities and may not allow their children to attend lessons that focus on RSE. It is important to discuss RSE with parents so they are clear about what is involved. Note that parents may keep their children off school when these lessons take place so be clear that children must attend school on those days when RSE is being taught but that they may be excused RSE lessons.

EMTAS has teaching resources to support GRT pupils and families to access RSE in schools. Please see the EMTAS website for information and the EMTAS Moodle for a [blog](#) written by two GRT experts on teaching GRT pupils RSE in culturally acceptable ways.

Developing Home-School Links

GRT parents may be unfamiliar with aspects of the education system even though they live in the UK. Members of GRT communities may not have had a positive experience at school and may therefore be reluctant to come into school or be worried that their child will experience the same prejudice as they did. It is good practice to have a named member of staff designated for GRT pupils with whom GRT pupils and parents can discuss issues that arise. GRT parents may not be aware of issues to do with attendance, when to apply for school places or how to access free school meals; the GRT lead can proactively approach parents to make sure they don't miss these things.

Ensure clear communication that helps GRT parents feel valued and listened to and make expectations explicit and transparent so that GRT parents are aware of expectations placed on them and their children.

Where there are difficulties, EMTAS staff can support schools to work with GRT parents on these and other issues.

Behaviour and Racist Incidents

Make sure GRT parents are clear on school behaviour policy and ensure it is discussed.

It is important to investigate causes of behaviour incidents – eg GRT pupil hitting out as they have been called a racist name – the racist term 'Pikey' is extremely offensive to Travellers and is recognised as [race hate speech](#). If racist language is used it should be recorded as a racist incident and its use can lead to prosecution.

Ensure any incident is dealt with fully and fairly and GRT parents are kept informed throughout the process. Transparency about investigations and outcomes will ensure that trust is maintained. GRT parents are highly sensitive about racism and will want to be assured that appropriate actions/sanctions have been undertaken. Bullying is the main cause cited by parents when pupils are removed from school to home educate.

Training, Support and Resources

EMTAS offers whole school training to raise awareness of GRT cultures and best practice when working with GRT pupils and families to achieve successful outcomes. Training includes attendance, attainment and achievement. We also provide bespoke training packages for school Governors, GRT Leads, Support Staff and SENDCos.

ELSA support is available for GRT pupils from our qualified and experienced ELSA as a component of a pupil's entitlement for support sessions. Please contact us for further information about this.

[ELSA Phoneline.](#)

EMTAS has compiled a list of [FAQs and further advice on working with GRT.](#)

[GRT Phoneline.](#)

Please see our website for more information or contact us to discuss your needs.

GRT Excellence Award

This is an online self-evaluation tool supporting schools to develop and embed best practice and provision for GRT pupils and communities.

See [EMTAS website](#) for more information.

EMTAS Traveller Achievement Team

EMTAS has a team of Traveller Teaching Assistants who can provide support to pupils in school as well as an Education Advisor and Specialist Teacher Advisors who can provide advice and guidance to school staff and support with liaison for GRT pupils and parents.

The [EMTAS website](#) provides guidance, information and the opportunity for schools to make referrals for GRT pupils to be assessed for support.

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