

**Developing a Rights Respecting Service
that advocates for the Rights of the Child**

**Provision of Distance Learning for
Gypsy, Roma & Traveller Children**

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For more information please visit:

www.hants.gov.uk/emtas

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Provision of Distance Learning for Gypsy, Roma, Traveller Children

Guidance

Many Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) pupils, particularly those from the Fairground/Showman community, travel for significant periods of the school year. For Fairground/Showman families, the travelling season usually starts around Easter and ends around November. This means that pupils from Fairground/Showman communities have limited time in school. It should be noted that not all families have the same travelling pattern so individual pupil's situations can vary.

The aim of this guidance is to provide information for schools and settings to help ensure Distance Learning Packs (DLPs) are regularly and routinely used to support pupils to continue their education whilst travelling.

Distance Learning Overview

Distance learning involves a school setting suitable work for a pupil to complete whilst they are away from school. The work can be on a Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) which the pupil accesses online or if this is not available by sending hard copies on paper. Having completed the work, the pupil submits it or sends it back to school in the post and the school sends a new pack. Sometimes, the work might be sent to the pupil week by week; in other circumstances, it might be sent in a block covering several weeks at a time.

Distance learning can be used to support Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils to access the curriculum whilst they are travelling for work purposes with their families and away from school. In this way these pupils, who remain on the school's roll whilst they are away, keep up with what their peers are doing in school. This can help them maintain progress with their learning as well as make their reintegration easier on their return.

Good Practice

Gypsy, Roma and Traveller families can sometimes need specialist help to ensure their children get the most out of their education. Some local authorities have a specialist Traveller Education Service that can help support schools in developing distance learning. Schools can also consider how ICT can support and enable children to continue their education while travelling.

Good practice guidance as presented in this document aims to provide ideas and inspiration for schools to build on the many opportunities readily available to meet the needs of GRT children who travel whilst remaining on school roll.

It is essential for each school or setting to acknowledge any potential barriers to learning and work with the pupils and parents to find solutions. DLPs can be an effective way for pupils to carry on their education whilst travelling. However, some forward planning is necessary to ensure their effectiveness and once the DLP system is in place and pupils and parents know what is expected, this type of learning can be very successful.

DLPs can also help a Traveller pupil settle quickly back into school life when they return, as they will not have lost the parts of the curriculum being taught in the setting whilst they were away travelling. Furthermore, it maintains a level of communication between school and the family who can maintain contact to discuss any areas of the work that has been set.

This guide offers examples of how to make a robust and comprehensive educational DLP that can be offered to GRT pupils of any age or ability whilst at the same time encouraging the parents of the pupil to keep in touch with the school. It is vitally important that pupils from GRT cultures are not disadvantaged in education because of their culture and lifestyle, as there continues to be concern about the underachievement in mainstream education of GRT pupils.

‘These pupils are known to have lower levels of achievement than other ethnic groups at all key stages. This is due to a complex range of factors, including barriers that prevent them from fully accessing the curriculum, such as lack of engagement, interrupted education and negative experiences of school. It is essential that schools and the Local Authority work together to meet the needs of these pupil and young people including during periods when they are legally travelling.’

Department for Education (DfE) (2010) *‘Improving outcomes for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Pupils.’*

Preparing a Distance Learning Pack (DLP)

Good communication is very important whilst the family is travelling and the GRT pupil is not attending school. Even though the pupil is not in school they are still part of your school community.

A quality, effective Distance Learning Pack should be:

- discussed with parents and pupils to ensure engagement
- marked and feedback provided to pupils and parents
- achievable

How Much Work?

Ideally, plan to provide enough work for each half term, about six weeks.

Consider the topics you will be covering in the next half term and as you plan and prepare put worksheets to one side for use for distance learning packs and consider alternatives for those who will not be in class.

Differentiation of the Work

When you are planning the first DLP for a pupil it is good practice to speak with parents and have an honest conversation about what is achievable.

- Is there anyone in the family with skills to support the pupil with distance learning?
- Can the family provide a learning space for the pupil to work?
- Will the pupil have access to a laptop, tablet, digital camera, mobile phone or printer?
- Can the pupil use scissors, glue, colouring pens etc. where required for an activity?

When you meet with parents set clear expectations orally and have written information as a backup and to support those who can read.

This can set out achievable expectations you require for the DLPs, for example:

- Do some work each day
- Practise spellings once a week (or whatever your school expectation is)
- Read a book or some chapters of a book every day
- Use IT to access the school Virtual Learning Environment (if available) and ensure that usernames and passwords are provided
- Signpost the family to the school website for updates, INSET days, news and information whilst travelling

Expectations set for each pupil will depend on the age and ability of the pupil and the family's circumstances whilst travelling.

School Holidays

When setting dates for the pack to be sent out or returned, bear in mind school holidays. Some families like their child to carry on working during school holidays and may retain work for this period so make it clear when you need work returned.

Sending and Receiving DLPs

With each DLP sent out, include a stamped, school-addressed envelope in which to return the pack with the date marked on it when it should be posted, ideally one for each week. Make sure you have correct contact details for the parents, especially mobile phone numbers, as these will be your only means of contact whilst they are travelling. When a pack is due in and the next one is ready to be sent out, give the family a call or text to say that the next pack is ready and ask where to send it. Most families have an address they can use; if not they will give you the address of a relative it can be posted to and then it can be collected from there.

Diary and Postcards

Send an exercise book with the first pack and ask the pupil to keep a diary. It doesn't have to be anything too comprehensive but should include dates, location and an update of what they are doing with some drawings or photos.

Include a number of stamped, addressed blank postcards that the pupil can draw on and illustrate their environment and use to send messages to their friends, teachers and peers in school. These cards can be pinned on a notice board and when the pupil returns to school, they can see that, although absent, they maintained a presence in school and were valued and had input.

Suggestions for Worksheets to Include

Ensure that worksheets are not too wordy and keep in mind that parents or older siblings may not have the literacy levels needed to help. Write notes in different colour pen or use sticky notes, give examples of answers or explain the method in simpler language if necessary. The core subjects of Mathematics, English and Science can easily be included in the packs.

Science Worksheets

When it comes to science, think about what activities would be practical. For example, when teaching pupils to identify and distinguish between substances it might be useful to provide some examples of rock, metal, glass etc and ask the pupil to find and identify other substances. If the family has the resources and space, the pupil can keep a diary of their travels and what they can identify at different locations. This could be an activity set at the beginning of the DLP, so each week the pupil could fill out an identification chart and send it back. If they could include them, photos or drawings would be great and could be shared with their class.

When setting science-based work, some caution should be observed to avoid elements that surround biology and reproduction. Some members of GRT communities have a strong aversion to any teaching on reproduction in plants or animals and it is therefore strongly advised that schools avoid setting work on these topics and contact EMTAS for advice and support about which aspects of these topics might be acceptable to include in a DLP and which are best avoided.

Mathematics Worksheet

Make sure the pupil has the equipment needed for any practical maths work. Most pupils already have this but some schools provide them with a ruler, calculator or number lines. Provide an example of a completed worksheet or add a written note explaining what to do. Using coloured Post-it notes is really helpful in providing this information. Remember to put in additional paper if there is working out to be done.

Literacy Worksheets

Worksheets are good for practising sentences, punctuation, comprehension etc. Put in some additional paper for answers. The pupil's spellings can be sent with the pack. You can ask parents to do a spelling test and signpost them to free apps and online resources to support this.

Reading Books

As reading is such a vital part of learning, reading books should be sent out with every pack. Some schools worry that the books won't come back but the majority of parents are very responsible and will look after school property. If you have concerns that the pupil might not return the DLPs, consider using old library books or sourcing from charity shops books that will not impact on the school resources.

Ensure that each pack sets high expectations for the pupil's reading progression and includes resources to match. If relevant for the key stage, check to see which level/stage the pupil is on. An extra activity could be to ask the pupil to write a review about each book, or to ask some comprehension questions.

The "Five Finger Rule" is a handy tool for pupils who are still developing their reading skills. An internet search will provide information and an example of a guide for children and parents is provided in the Appendix. Provide the pupil with a copy of "The Five Finger Rule" to give parents an idea as to which books their child might choose if they have access to a library whilst travelling.

Topic Work

Topic work can be fun in class and even though it is harder to manage through DLPs, it is still achievable with a bit of pre-planning. It can work particularly well when you allow the child to choose their own topic/project to work on whilst travelling as they are missing the classroom input for the topic that is essential for the work the class will be doing. You could give them a suggestion list of topics they may wish to consider and ideas about what kind of work you would expect to see. Nowadays most pupils have access to the internet whilst travelling. However, some families do not have a laptop with internet access, and sometimes mobile broadband strength can be poor in the areas in which the families travel, which can make downloading documents or information almost impossible. The best thing to do is to write down a list of websites linked to the topic for the pupil to look at when they can.

Alternatively, you can send them a book or printed information on the topic. Ask the pupil to read through it and answer questions or draw something that is relevant to the topic or helps explain the pupil's thinking – consider a graphic organiser or other ideas that will be most beneficial and achievable for the pupil and support and encourage their learning.

Recording Communication and Progress

It is essential to record all communication with pupils and parents whilst preparing a DLP and when the pupil is travelling. Evidence is required whilst using “T” or “B” coding. The “T” code is used whilst a child is travelling with their parents for the purpose of work and the “B” code is for when a child is being educated off site. This will show that the school is providing an inclusive and appropriate alternative education for the pupil.

- Log all emails, phone calls and meetings between pupils, parents and the school.
- Keep records of DLPs being sent out and returned.
- Make sure that all marking and feedback of DLPs is recorded and evidence of feedback/reports to pupils and parents is available.
- Progress whilst learning through DLPs should be closely monitored to see if the pupil is achieving. If the pupil isn't achieving as expected it may mean that the DLP work isn't suitable or that the pupil has a particular educational need that isn't being met through the DLPs. In cases such as this, a review of the DLP work should be undertaken and the work varied if required. Also a review of the educational needs of the pupil undertaken at the first opportunity on return to school.

Marking DLPs and Providing Feedback

It is crucial to be able to give feedback about their completed work to the pupil. This is even more important when pupils have completed their work without attending the lessons in school. As soon as pupils complete and hand in their DLPs, they should be marked and sent back just as if the DLP was a normal piece of class or homework. Chat through (via phone or email if accessible) and explain the work they have completed; as they have little or no teacher input whilst they are away, this is vital feedback. This also allows next step progression with subsequent DLPs. Parents should also be given a progress update with each completed piece of DLP work. If they have missed a Parents' Evening, invite parents to meet with class teachers or Heads of Year at a convenient time for both. Communication with pupils and parents is vital.

It is also important that a teacher gives the pupil regular feedback, both orally and through accurate marking, and encourages the pupil to respond to the feedback.

Use of ICT to Support DLPs: Laptops, Internet and Educational Software

If you have a VLE and the pupil can access it, make sure they are confident enough to do so on their own and have all the relevant passwords etc. Invite the parents in to show them too. For any other learning programmes you have within school which require passwords to gain access (My Maths or Ed Lounge for example), you will need to make sure the pupil has the password and is sufficiently confident to access and use them. If possible, install copies of school software on the family's laptop or tablet to ensure continuity and to encourage educational activities when the pupil is travelling.

Communication and Safeguarding

Make sure the family have the telephone number and email address for their contact at the school who is overseeing the distance learning.

To encourage communication and engagement suggest that the pupil makes a photographic record of their activities whilst travelling and emails this to the school. It's a good way to stay in touch with their teacher and classmates and helps with safeguarding issues, as you will know to a degree where the family is and what is happening.

Photographs allow their classmates to see where the pupil has been and what activities they have been engaged in. For Showman pupils, photos of their stalls or rides are great and can be used to promote discussion within class about fairs, cultural history and communities. If you have the family's email address, the school can send photographs of school events to the pupil in return so that the GRT pupil remains included and the communication is reciprocal.

Let the parents know that they can contact school if they have any questions or concerns. It's good practice to put the School Newsletter or any current school information in the DLP. Where possible encourage parents to sign up for electronic mail to stay up to date with school events. The children and parents are still part of the school community even when they are out travelling, and it is best practice to ensure that they know what is going on while they are away.

SATS and GCSEs

If you know that the pupil will be travelling during exam season make sure parents are aware of any exam dates so they can bring them back in time for the exams. Discuss the importance of the SATs and GCSEs and how it might benefit the pupil and school.

If appropriate, revision guides can be sent with the pupils. Also, past papers are a good resource for practising and preparing for tests and exams.

If it's not possible for the pupils to get back for the exams in their base school, another option could be to liaise with a school or local Attendance Officer in the area where they'll be travelling during that time. The pupil may be able to do the exams there but this will need advance notice and require planning so it is essential to plan with the family and get dates as soon as possible.

School Trips/Transition to New School

Many families are willing and able to bring their child back for visits to support transition between key stages or to a new school. Discuss the importance of these events with parents and how it might benefit the pupil and family.

DLPs for Key Stages 3 and 4

It might be advisable to stick with only the core subjects throughout Years 7 – 9 for DLPs. In years 10 – 11 there will be more GCSE teaching based on the pupil's chosen options. Best practice is to identify a member of staff who can liaise with all subject teachers to coordinate and collate suitable, bespoke, curriculum-based work. Consider using BITESIZE and similar programmes alongside GCSE Revision Guides (provided free if pupil is Pupil Premium but incurs a cost if they are not). If the pupils are in Year 11, make sure before they travel they have the correct exam timetable so they know exactly when they need to be back. Also let them know of any revision sessions taking place during holiday periods. Regular communication and meetings with parents help to maintain continuity between when the pupil is in school and when they are travelling.

Make it clear to whom the parents and pupils should speak if they have any issues whilst they are in school as well as when they are travelling.

Additional Support

Further support is available from EMTAS and includes a dedicated GRT phone line offering support and advice.

You may want to consider registering your school for the EMTAS GRT Excellence Award. This tool both recognises good practice and gives an indication of areas for development which can support schools to make meaningful improvements in a focused way to benefit pupils and staff.

Further information on the GRT phone line and GRT Excellence Award are included in this guidance.

Supporting Gypsy, Roma Traveller Pupil Achievement

Gypsy, Roma Traveller Phone Line

EMTAS telephone advice service for schools and parents/carers to answer questions relating to Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils and to discuss any concerns.

If you require more information regarding attendance-related matters and appropriate use of attendance codes please see our website, call the phone-line or email us for guidance.

To speak with one of our dedicated Traveller team:

Phone 0370 7794 222

Ask for the Traveller phone line

Thursday 12:00 – 15:00

Email emtas@hants.gov.uk

Available term time

GRT Excellence Award

Description of Service

Developed by GRT specialists, this Award is a way of recognising excellence in current practice within a school in relation to a set of descriptors. Offered as an interactive tool, schools can assess provision and practice for their GRT learners across 5 key areas:

Teaching & Learning
Leadership & Management
Pedagogy & Practice
Data, Assessment & Progress
Parental & Community Engagement.

When complete, schools can submit their evidence and receive a Bronze, Silver or Gold Award in the form of a certificate which will remain valid for 3 years. All levels of Awards will be validated through a visit from an EMTAS Specialist Teacher Adviser.

The tool both recognises good practice and gives an indication of areas for development which can support schools to make meaningful improvements in a focused way.

Service comprises

- access to the GRT Excellence Award online tool
- a validation visit from an EMTAS Specialist Teacher Advisor
- a certificate recognising good practice.

Phase of Education

The GRT Excellence Award is suitable for all schools.

For more information, please contact emtas@hants.gov.uk

Appendix

Five Finger Rule Handout

THE FIVE FINGER RULE

1. Choose a book and read the first page or two.
2. Put one finger up for every word you don't know.
3. If five fingers go up while reading, choose another book.
4. If only two or three fingers go up, you've found a "just right" book for you.



HAPPY READING 😊

Contact Us

Please get in touch with us if you would like to know more about our range of services or to discuss how **EMTAS** can work with your school to achieve improved outcomes for your **BME, EAL** and **GRT** pupils.

Tel: 0370 7794 222

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