



Policy for the Education of Traveller Children

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Introduction

Gateshead welcomes all cultural communities, including Traveller communities, into our schools, nurseries and all other learning establishments.

As a Local Authority we have a statutory duty under the Equality Act 2010, in the discharge of our functions including the provision of education to have due regard to the need to promote race equality and eliminate racial harassment.

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that a place is allocated to a child/young person as quickly as possible once it has been recognised that a place is required and to support the attendance of a child/young person at school.

Background

Families from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities are subject to frequent movement at short notice. This can mean that children of such families are disadvantaged educationally and have additional challenges when accessing education.

The issue of improving educational outcomes for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils has been a focus of research and policy for some time and is particularly serious for secondary age pupils. Evidence suggests that where Gypsy and Traveller pupils do transfer successfully to secondary school, their attendance is unlikely to continue beyond the age of 14 (DfES 2006a; Derrington and Kendall, 2004).

Although there is some evidence of growing economically and educationally successful Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities, there is still concern that Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils are reported to be amongst the lowest achieving ethnic groups within schools in England, are more likely to be identified as having special educational needs (SEN), and are four times more likely than any other group to be excluded from school as a result of their behaviour (DfES, 2005; DCSF, 2009).

Definition of 'Travellers'

'Travellers' is an umbrella term covering many distinct communities, including Fairground or showmen, Gypsies (English, Scottish and Welsh), Romany, Roma, circus families, Irish Travellers, New (Age) Travellers, Bargee Travellers and those living on the waterways. It can also refer to a parent who is engaged in a trade or business of such nature that required them to travel from place to place.

Gypsies are defined as an ethnic minority by the Equality Act 2010. More recently Irish Travellers have also been deemed to be covered by this Act.

Some Travellers live on private or local authority sites and pay rent as other members of society. Some Travellers live in housing and some live on unauthorised sites, which may or may not be 'tolerated'.

The term 'travelling' means travelling as part of the parents' trade or business. It does not mean travelling as part of a holiday or extended holiday. (DCSF advice on Attendance reference 00891-2008FLY-EN).

The Traveller population in Gateshead comprises of:

- Families living on the Borough's Traveller site, which has 20 pitches.
- Children who live on the West Pastures Site which is in South Tyneside and is on the border of Gateshead. Many of these children choose to attend a Gateshead school.
- Fairground and Circus families who reside in Gateshead for work purpose.
- Traveller families living in accommodation, although still maintaining their cultural identity, values and expectations.
- Roadside encampments or pupils of any age on unauthorised sites who have a highly mobile lifestyle.

School Admissions

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that a place is allocated to a child/young person as quickly as possible once it has been recognised that a place is required and to support the attendance of a child/young person at school.

1. Traveller children have equal access to the full curriculum, appropriate to their age, ability and aptitude and any special educational needs they may have.
2. Parents from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller families have the same right as any other family in relation to access to school places. The Local Authority will ensure that there is no unfairness or discrimination when an application for a school place is received.
3. Traveller children are admitted to school using the same LA criteria as apply to any other child seeking a school place.
4. The school will seek to obtain educational records from the last school attended to support achievement and the continuity of education.
5. All children including those from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller families can be on the register at more than one school. This is known as dual registration.
6. If the child(ren) are dual registered it is up to the schools involved to ascertain who is the main school and who is the subsidiary school for the purposes of funding, attendance, exclusions and exam results.
7. The school expects the same high attendance levels for traveller students as for all students. Where attendance is low or irregular the student will be referred to the member of school staff who has responsibility for attendance and the school's stage response will be implemented.
8. Schools should explain to parents/guardians that to ensure best educational outcomes, parents must communicate regularly with school regarding their travelling arrangements and if intending to travel should be advised to give a return date so that a place at the school is maintained for the student. They should also be informed that if a return date is not given when travelling they may lose their school place.
9. The school will work closely with the Gateshead Ethnic Minority Service (EMTAS) to raise the achievement of traveller students.
10. The main school will provide distance learning materials for Traveller child when they are travelling.

Attendance at school

Code T: Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence

The Education (Pupil registration) (amendment) Regulations 1997 allow traveller children to be dually registered using **Code T: Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence**.

This code should be used when Traveller families are known to be travelling for occupational purposes and have agreed this with the school but **it is not known** whether the pupil is attending educational provision elsewhere. It should not be used for any other types of absence by these groups.

Code D: Dual Registered - at another educational establishment

To help ensure continuity of education for Traveller children it is expected that the child(ren) should attend school elsewhere when their family is travelling. In this instance, when **they are known to be attending school elsewhere**, they should be dual registered with the other school using code 'D' dual registered. This code is used to indicate that the pupil was not expected to attend the session in question because they were scheduled to attend the other school at which they are registered.

If the child(ren) are dual registered it is up to the schools involved to ascertain who is the main school and who is the subsidiary school for the purposes of funding, attendance, exclusions and exam results.

The main school will mark the child(ren) using the 'D' code and the subsidiary school will mark the child(ren) present or absent.

Normal attendance and registration

Children from these groups whose families do not travel for occupational purposes 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.

Non-attendance

If a child is a non-attender in a Gateshead school, then the school will undertake their staged response procedures, which will include liaising with EMTAS.

Ultimately if the child continues to fail to attend school, it may result in a referral by the school to the Legal Intervention Team for formal non-attendance procedures to be undertaken with the parents. Consideration will be paid to the following legislation....

"Traveller parents are protected from conviction (for the non-attendance of their children at school), if the parents can show that their trade or business requires them to travel, and the child has attended school as regularly as the nature of the trade or business allows, and the child – where aged six or over – has attended school for at least 200 sessions during the preceding twelve months." (Education Act 1996 – Section 444)

Children Missing Education (CME) / Travellers

If a traveller family have not given school a return date, then the school is obliged to complete a CME left area form and forwarded this onto the CME officer (Please refer to the Local authority CME procedures for more information). The school will then be authorised to remove the child/ren off the school roll. On return the family must re-apply via the school admissions for a place in a Gateshead school.

This request for a school place may go via the Fair Access Process.

If a traveller family does give a return date they should remain on roll at the school. If they do not return by the date stated as the return date the school should then complete a CME left area form. The school will then be authorised by the Local Authority to remove the child off the school roll.

Transition from Primary to Secondary School

Local authorities have a statutory duty to arrange suitable full-time education for children of compulsory school age at school, or otherwise for children and young people who do not attend school in the usual way. (Education Act 1996) The Local Authority has a responsibility to establish a central record of all children not accessing full-time education in the usual way in order to monitor these pupils, working with schools via the Fair Access process to ensure that suitable fulltime education is provided.

Although we are aware of cultural issues that may mean that a Yr6 child fails to transfer to Secondary Education, the local authority fully understands its responsibly to the children and their families in ensuring that full-time education is provided for the families of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children.

The local authority would expect that children of Gypsy, Roma and Travelling families are either in full time education (when they are not travelling) or home educated.

The EMTAS Service priorities are to work with families to support their continued education by:

- Securing access and attendance for highly mobile children and young people.
- Encouraging and facilitating transfers to secondary school.
- Maintaining pupil's attendance at secondary school.
- Supporting the professional development of staff.
- Supporting the assessment of pupils and where appropriate providing time limited targeted support.
- Assisting with home/school liaison.

- Providing advice and assistance on the provision of Distance Learning packs and other continuity strategies.
- Liaising with outside agencies.
- Visiting the family on a half term basis to ensure their continued engagement.
- Feedback following the visit to the Education Support Service if circumstance change in relation to the child, this might include the family moving.
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Should a child fail to transfer to secondary education, the Education Support Service will place the child on its 'Off Roll' register to ensure safeguarding monitoring takes place on a termly basis.

The 'Off Roll' register is monitored every term at the primary and secondary Fair Access Panels.

The local authority officer who oversees Elective Home Education will regularly monitor the home education that is provided by the family who have elected to home educate.

If it appears that the child is not attending full-time education or receiving a suitable education through being home educated, the local authority will consider issuing a School Attendance Order.

West Pastures Site – South Tyneside

The West Pastures Site is within the boundaries of South Tyneside, but historically many of the children attend schools in Gateshead.

- A child who is not on a school roll will be the responsibility of South Tyneside, including those children who have been in a primary mainstream school but do not transfer up into secondary education in Gateshead.
- If a child from West Pastures is a non-attender in a Gateshead school (and registered in a Gateshead school), then the school will still refer the case out to the Education Support Service once they have undertaken their staged response procedures, which will include liaising with EMTAS.
- Ultimately if the child continues to fail to attend school, it may result in a referral by the school to the Legal Intervention Team for formal non-attendance procedures to be undertaken with the parents.
- Families must be made aware, via the work undertaken by EMTAS that if they reside on the West Pastures Site and do not give a return date then there is a strong possibility that the children will not be given a place in a Gateshead school when they return.

Monitoring, Evaluation and Review

The policy will be reviewed on an annual basis by Ethnic Minority Service and Education Support Service.

The Ethnic Minority Service will liaise regularly with the Education Support Service and the Children Missing Education Officer regarding any concerns in relation to admissions or attendance of Traveller children.

As part of the Fair Access process pupils placed on the 'Off Roll' register will be reviewed on a termly basis.

As part of the EHE process children who are home educated will be reviewed on an annual basis.

Dissemination of the Policy

This policy has been sent to all schools/academies and services within Gateshead Council. It is available on the EMTAS website and on request to parents through head of EMTAS or the Service Manager Education support Service.

Other policies that have relevance are:

Admission and Appeals Policy (DfE Dec 2014)

School Attendance (DfE Nov 2013)

Education Act 1996

Children Missing out on Education (Ofsted Nov 2013)

