

# Education in Scotland

## Information for Gypsies/Travellers



This leaflet can be helpful for Scottish Gypsy Travellers, Irish Travellers, English Gypsies and Roma families who want to know about education in Scotland. The term Gypsies/Travellers can mean all the above. The leaflet gives the answers to some commonly asked questions. You might also find it useful to show to schools. The information is also on a DVD and on the following website: [www.scottishtravellered.net](http://www.scottishtravellered.net) or from STEP on 0131 651 6444.

## BY LAW

- Every child is entitled to a school education.
- Education should try to develop the whole child.
- Education should be provided for all children by the education authority in each council.
- Every child has the right to express their own views about their education. In considering the child's views their age and how mature they are will be considered.
- Parents have the responsibility to make sure their child gets an efficient and suitable education, either in school or at home.
- Children should be educated in the way their parents wish as long as this does not cost too much.
- Parents have the responsibility to make sure their child's education must suit age, ability and interests, if they decide to teach at home.



# QUESTIONS AND CONCERNS YOU MIGHT NEED THE ANSWERS TO

1. Does my child have to go to school?
2. What is the 100-day rule?
3. What do authorised and unauthorised absence mean?
4. What if my child does not go to school?
5. Children's well-being and protection.
6. Do I have to tell the school we are Gypsies/Travellers?
7. Can my child get free transport to and from school?
8. What is a base school?
9. What if we go travelling?
10. What if we sometimes travel and sometimes are settled?
11. Is my child entitled to a place at the base school they mainly attend even when we are travelling?
12. What should I do if my child is ill?
13. How can the school get in touch with me?
14. How can I get in touch with schools?
15. Does my child have to wear school uniform?
16. What if we are travelling all the time and do not have a base school?
17. What if I don't want my child to go to school?
18. Do I need permission to home educate?
19. Any other questions?

Education.....

**“It’s a bonus to the child and it’s a bonus to the culture. You are opening up their choices.”**

Sally Kelbie

## **1 | DOES MY CHILD HAVE TO GO TO SCHOOL?**

**Parents have the responsibility to make sure their child gets an efficient and suitable education, either in school or at home.**

If you register your child with a school, then you have a duty to send them to school.

Once a child has been registered **they can only be withdrawn from school education in agreement with the education authority.**

(See Question 17, What if I don’t want my child to go to school? and Question 18, Do I need permission to home educate?)

By law schools must note when a child is in school and if they are absent the reason why. Education authorities can refer the child to the Children’s Reporter if the parent does not make sure their child goes to school. For Gypsy/Traveller families who travel, some absences can be agreed as authorised, if schools know the reason why the child is not attending. Action is only taken against parents when there is too much unauthorised absence and no reasons are given to the school.

## **2 | WHAT IS THE 100-DAY RULE?**

**The 100 day rule no longer applies in Scotland.**

In the past, the 100-day rule meant that Gypsy/Traveller parents who were on the road would not be prosecuted if their child attended school for at least 200 half-days of the school year. Today parents must ask schools to authorise absence from school when families are travelling.

# 3

## WHAT DO AUTHORISED AND UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE MEAN?

**Authorised means that the school has been told and accepted the reason for the child being away from school.**

**Unauthorised means that the school has not been told or the reason is not acceptable.**

The education authority and schools have a guide, which tells them how they should record absence from school for all children.

This is the list of what can be accepted as authorised absence.

- Extended absence for children when travelling has been agreed with the school in advance
- Sickness
- Medical and dental treatment
- Bereavement and funerals
- Weddings of immediate family
- Short-term exceptional domestic circumstances
- Religious observance
- Meetings to prepare for court
- Attendance in court
- Attendance at a Children's Hearing or Care Review

This is the list of what is not accepted and called unauthorised absence.

- Unexplained absence
- Truancy (unauthorised absence from school without good reason, sometimes called dogging it or skiving or skipping school)
- Most family holidays during term-time

# 4

## WHAT IF MY CHILD DOES NOT GO TO SCHOOL?

If your child is registered at a school, but does not attend regularly, without a good reason, a number of things may happen.

- A home-school link worker or an education welfare officer may come to your home to discuss the absence and what can be done to improve attendance
- Your child may be referred to a Children's Reporter
- A social worker may contact you to discuss why the child is not attending school and how help can be offered to your family from other professionals
- The education authority may take out an Attendance Order
- In extreme cases you may be taken to court

**It is a parent's duty to make sure their child attends school regularly or to make sure that their child gets an efficient and suitable education at home.**

If your child is registered at a school, but does not attend regularly, then you are committing a criminal offence, as it is a parent's duty to make sure their child attends school regularly. If your child does not attend regularly then the school will try to contact you if you have not told them why they are absent or given good reasons for their absence. Schools may also become worried about children who are on their school roll but who do not show up at school. Schools should care for pupils. If the headteacher does not know why a child is not at school and cannot contact the parents then they have a duty to report this to the education authority. The education authority may carry out a local and national search because of concerns about children's safety. Child protection officers or the police may then try to find out where the child is, and that they are safe. Parents are encouraged to let the school know why their child is not in school and when they are expected to return.

**Education authorities have a legal obligation to safeguard and promote the well being of all children in their schools. They often have key people who work with Gypsy/Traveller families. This person might help you to speak with your school about any problems with attendance or other matters.**

# 5

## CHILDREN'S WELL-BEING AND PROTECTION

The well-being and protection of all children from abuse or violence, whether educated at school or elsewhere, is of great concern to everyone. If you, or anyone else, have any issues of concern about abuse or violence for your child, or another child, you should tell the school, a doctor, a social worker or, if it is really serious, tell the police.

If there are issues of concern about your own child, information may be shared with other professionals where it is thought to be in the best interest of the child. You should be told about this.

There is more information about this in another leaflet, called BEING SAFE IN SCHOOL IN SCOTLAND, INFORMATION FOR GYPSIES/TRAVELLERS.

# 6

## DO I HAVE TO TELL THE SCHOOL WE ARE GYPSIES/TRAVELLERS?

**No, if you feel worried about this. But it is useful for the school to know, because your culture can be supported and reasons for absence are easier to explain.**

It is in the best interests of your child to tell the school you are Gypsies/Travellers. The Scottish Executive and local councils say that schools should support children and families from an ethnic minority background. The law says, under the Race Relations Amendment Act 2000, that councils and their schools must promote equality for children and families from a recognised ethnic minority background and promote good race relations.

# 7

## CAN MY CHILD GET FREE TRANSPORT TO AND FROM SCHOOL?

**Councils have a duty to provide transport for some children to attend school depending on local and personal circumstances.**

Some of the factors that are considered are:

- child's age
- walking distance from home to school
- safety of pupils
- safety of route between home and school
- if the child has Additional Support Needs

Even where the strict legal duty does not apply, the authority may still provide transport if they think that it is reasonable to do so. The authority is likely to have a policy on transport to school. You are entitled to a copy of this policy. You or the school need to apply to the education authority who will tell you if your request for transport has been successful or not.

# 8

## WHAT IS A BASE SCHOOL?

**This is the school your child mainly attends. You should tell the base school when you go travelling so that their name gets kept on the roll.**

The base school has the responsibility for keeping your child's name on the roll. Your child's records will be kept by the school until you return or until they are asked for by another school. You can ask the base school to contact other schools for you, or provide work or support for your child when you are travelling.

# 9

## WHAT IF WE GO TRAVELLING?

**By law the school must know the reason why a child is absent. You should let the school know as soon as possible that you will be going travelling.**

When Gypsy/Traveller families travel, some absences can be agreed as authorised, if schools know the reason why the child is not attending. Schools and education authorities should record absences as authorised if you tell them you are travelling. If families are travelling, for example for work or because of their lifestyle, then the guidance to education authorities and schools suggests that these absences can be authorised.

Family occasions such as weddings, funerals, and some cultural events, may be agreed by the school and classed as authorised absence, if you tell them about it. It could be helpful to explain to the school how important family events are to Gypsies/Travellers.

Family holidays during term time are usually classed as unauthorised. Travelling may be classed as a family holiday if it is not part of your regular travelling during the year. It is much better to discuss the absence with the school beforehand. It will be better for your child if the school knows when he or she will be off and when he or she will return.

(See Question 3. What do authorised and unauthorised absence mean?)

# 10

## WHAT IF WE SOMETIMES TRAVEL AND SOMETIMES ARE SETTLED?

**If you are settled, either in a house or trailer, in the winter months and travel for work in the summer months the schools need to know that you are Gypsies/ Travellers and you plan to travel and come back to school.**

If you return frequently to the same area, perhaps as a winter base, then the school your child attends becomes their base school. Your child can attend another school in the area you have travelled to, even if it's for a short time. This becomes a temporary school or alternative provision. The temporary school should tell the base school when your child attends. This helps the base school keep its records right. The school will keep your child on the school roll and is able to monitor attendance. It would be helpful if you could also tell the base school that your child is attending school in another area but will be returning after travelling.

If you are settled in the winter months and travel for work in the summer months the school needs to know that you are Gypsies/Travellers and you plan to travel and come back to school. You can ask the school to provide schoolwork for your child to do while they are travelling. It is helpful for the school to see this work when it is done. You may be able to come to an arrangement with the school to have completed work sent back to the school for marking. This can help make sure your child can join the work of the class when he or she returns. Some education authorities have Traveller support teachers who may be able to support you and your child when you are in a new area.

	Number Present	School Dinner	Packed Lunch	Home
Monday				
Tuesday	26	5	21	0
Wednesday	26	6	19	1
Thursday	26	3	23	0

# 11

## IS MY CHILD ENTITLED TO KEEP A PLACE AT THE BASE SCHOOL THEY MAINLY ATTEND EVEN WHEN WE ARE TRAVELLING?

**Yes. As long as you have told the base school that you intend to return your child's name should remain on the school roll.**

It is in your child's interest if you let the school know when you are likely to be travelling and when you expect to be back. These dates do not have to be exact but help the school to prepare for your child's absence and return. It helps if the school has some notice of when you are leaving and returning, even if it's for a few days, so they can be prepared and so your child feels welcomed and a valued member of the school community. If the school does not know in advance that you will be returning your child might not be able to settle in straight away. Keep a note of the school's phone number.

# 12

## WHAT SHOULD I DO IF MY CHILD IS ILL?

**You should let the school know as soon as possible if your child can not go to school because they are not well.**

If possible, let the school know roughly when they can expect your child to return.

If you are not sure, remember to contact the school again to remind them why your child is absent.

When your child returns to school they may also want a note from you to cover your child's absence. Even if you are not able to write a note you should phone the school and explain.

Keep a note of the school's phone number.

# 13

## HOW CAN THE SCHOOL GET IN TOUCH WITH ME?

**It is always good to tell the school of the best way to contact you.**

**This can be done by letter, phone, in person or by e-mail or text.**

**Agree with the school how you will keep in touch.**

**By letter.** School letters can sometimes be difficult to read and understand. If you don't want the school to use letters to get in touch, you can ask them to phone instead.

**By phone.** This makes it easier for schools to contact you should the need arise. Make sure the school has a phone number which you can be contacted on.

**In person.** You may prefer someone to come and speak to you or arrange for you to go to the school to speak to them.

**E-mailing and texting.** You can ask to be contacted in this way if it is suitable. Make sure the school has a phone number or e-mail address that you can be contacted on.

# 14

## HOW CAN I GET IN TOUCH WITH SCHOOLS?

It is a good idea to keep in touch with your child's school, to let them know anything important. This can be done by letter, phone, in person or by e-mail or text. Agree with the school how you will keep in touch.

You can contact them:

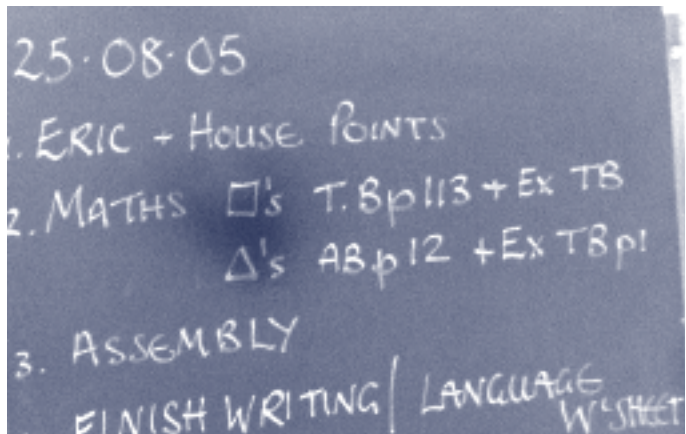
**By letter.**

**By phone.** Make sure you have a note of the school phone number.

**In person.** Sometimes it's better to phone to let the school know if you plan to go in so that the right person can be there.

**E-mailing and texting.** Make sure you have a note of the school phone number or e-mail address.

Some schools and some education authorities have staff who work specifically with Gypsies/ Travellers and they could help you get in touch with the school. Sometimes the site manager may be able to help you get in touch with the school.

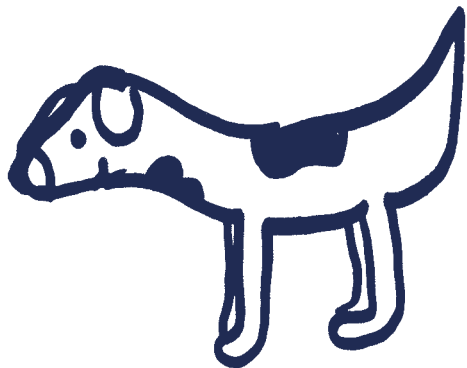


Some people see school uniform as a way to reduce bullying and reduce the cost of changing fashions for parents. Other people regard uniform as unnecessary.

In many schools the dress code is very general. Often it refers to the colour that clothes worn to school should be, and the kinds of clothes that should not be worn. So children travelling to different areas during the school year may find they are able to stay within the dress codes of different schools without added expense. School uniform does not usually extend to outdoor coats, as these are more expensive items. However, pupils will usually be asked to remove their outdoor coats or jackets when they are in lessons.

Schools in Scotland are encouraged to consult with parents and pupils when introducing school uniform. In practice, many schools have already consulted on this and have had a uniform in place for some time. The uniform is usually described in the School Handbook. The wearing of a uniform has become a 'school rule' in many cases. Exclusion from school should be a last resort for very serious incidents when a pupil or parent refuses to keep the school rules. Failing to wear a school uniform should not be grounds for an exclusion, unless many other kinds of action had been tried first and the pupil continued to refuse to wear uniform.

For families who find it difficult to afford suitable clothes for school, help can be given by the council.



# 16

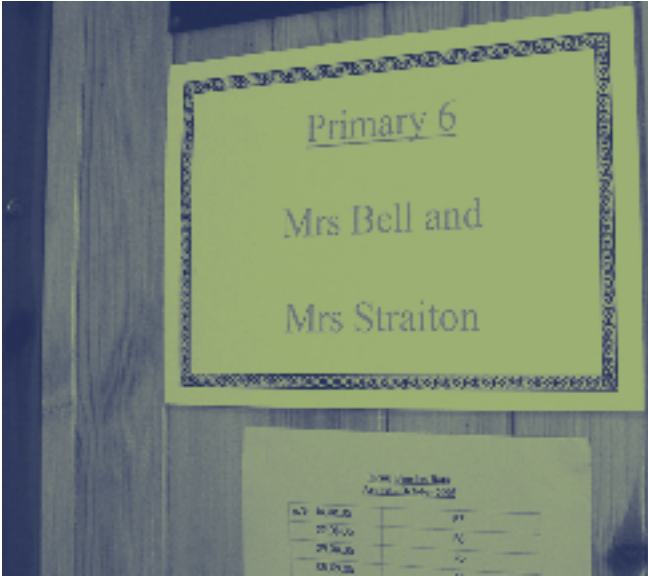
## WHAT IF WE ARE TRAVELLING ALL THE TIME AND DO NOT HAVE A BASE SCHOOL?

If you are travelling all the time you may find it more difficult to give your child a suitable education. Some education authorities have Traveller support services that may be able to support you and your child with arrangements with schools or offer some teaching to your child.

If there is an area where you go regularly then you could enrol your child as a pupil in a school there, asking if this could be their base school or you could speak to schools in the places where you go.

You can ask schools for advice on planning your child's education and for work for your child. If you know where you are going to next, try to contact the school before you arrive so they can be prepared for your child's arrival and to make sure there is a place for your child. Your base school might do this for you if you ask them. Sometimes the site manager may be able to help you find out information or contact the school for you.





# 17

## WHAT IF I DON'T WANT MY CHILD TO GO TO SCHOOL?

**You can choose to educate your child at school or at home. You must make sure that they are getting a suitable education.**

Parents have the responsibility to make sure their child gets an efficient and suitable education. The education a child gets must suit their age, ability and aptitude.

You can choose to educate your child at school, or at home by yourself, or in a group with other children, or with private tutors.

If your child is registered at school but you decide to home educate you must ask for the education authority's permission to withdraw your child from school.

You should include details of when you wish to withdraw your child from school and how you intend to educate your child and what resources you might use. You must satisfy the education authority that you will provide an efficient and suitable education which suits a child's age, ability and aptitude. The education authority cannot say no without good reason. Where they are concerned about you being able to provide suitable education they will discuss this with you.

You do not need permission to educate your child at home if:

- your child has never attended school
- your child has never (registered or) attended school in a council area
- your child is being withdrawn from an independent (private) school
- your child has finished primary education in one school but has not enrolled or started secondary education in another
- the school the child has been attending has closed
- the child has been permanently excluded from school

If you are home educating your child the education authority may ask you to show evidence of how your child is getting on with their education. Your child may be asked by the education authority about their views on being home educated.

The Scottish Executive published *Guidance On The Circumstances In Which Parents May Choose To Educate Their Children At Home*.

If you choose to educate at home you can ask the education authority for guidance and help. There are some organisations that can advise you about home education – see back page. If you think that your child needs extra help with learning then you are entitled to ask for a formal assessment of their Additional Support Needs. But the education authority does not have to provide the support needed for their learning at home. There is more information about this in another leaflet, called ADDITIONAL SUPPORT FOR LEARNING IN SCOTLAND, INFORMATION FOR GYPSIES/TRAVELLERS.

# 19 | ANY OTHER QUESTIONS?

This leaflet has tried to answer important questions. There may be others you need the answer to, for example, whether your child can receive school dinners, whether they can get special arrangements for school trips or if they need different ways of doing a subject. The best way is to speak to the school yourself, or ask someone like a Traveller support teacher to speak to the school for you. There are some other helpful sources of information on the back of this leaflet.

There are 2 other leaflets available to Gypsy/Traveller parents - **BEING SAFE IN SCHOOL IN SCOTLAND, INFORMATION FOR GYPSIES/TRAVELLERS** and **ADDITIONAL SUPPORT FOR LEARNING IN SCOTLAND, INFORMATION FOR GYPSIES/TRAVELLERS**.

These leaflets can be downloaded from [www.scottishtravellered.net](http://www.scottishtravellered.net) or from the DVD, in the Contacts section.



## CONTACT INFORMATION

Individual Education Authorities will provide you with phone numbers of schools and Traveller Support Services. You should find the name of the education contact in the local council offices.

### **Enquire**

Advice and information to families of children who need extra help at school

Telephone: 0845 123 2303

[www.enquire.org.uk](http://www.enquire.org.uk)

### **Schoolhouse Home Education Association**

Tel: 01307 463120

[www.schoolhouse.org.uk](http://www.schoolhouse.org.uk)

### **Education Law Unit at Govan law Centre**

Telephone: 0141 445 1955

[www.edlaw.org.uk](http://www.edlaw.org.uk)

### **NATT – National Association of Teachers of Travellers (England)**

Telephone: 01865 428 089

[www.natt.org.uk](http://www.natt.org.uk)

### **Education Otherwise**

Telephone: 0870 7300 074

[www.education-otherwise.org](http://www.education-otherwise.org)

### **Childline**

Telephone: 0800 1111

[www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)

### **Anti-Bullying Network**

[www.antibullying.net](http://www.antibullying.net)

### **Parentline**

Telephone: 0808 800 2222

[www.parentlinescotland.org.uk](http://www.parentlinescotland.org.uk)

### **Kidscape**

Telephone: 0845 120 5204

[www.kidscape.org.uk](http://www.kidscape.org.uk)

### **Save The Children**

Telephone: 0131 527 8200

[www.savethechildren.org.uk](http://www.savethechildren.org.uk)

### **Scottish Child Law Centre**

Telephone Freephone for under 18s:

0800 328 8970 or 0131 667 6333

[www.sclc.org.uk](http://www.sclc.org.uk)