

Being Safe in School 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 or from STEP on 0131 651 6444.

PARENTS AND SCHOOLS

It is very important that schools are safe places where children and staff can learn without fear or constant disruption.

- Schools are responsible for making sure that pupils are safe.
- Parents are responsible for making sure that their children agree to stick by the school rules.
- Schools set rules to ensure the safety of staff and pupils.
- Certain kinds of behaviour are not allowed. Schools can exclude pupils if their behaviour is not acceptable.
- Some education authorities have Traveller Support Services with teachers who may be able to help you in making sure your child is safe and help to keep others safe.

QUESTIONS AND CONCERNS YOU MIGHT NEED THE ANSWERS TO

1. What should I do if my child is being bullied?
2. What if my child gets into trouble at school?
3. What if my child gets excluded?
4. What if I disagree with the decision to exclude my child?
5. What kinds of records are schools allowed to keep about my child?
6. Can I see my child's school records?
7. Can I take these records with me?
8. I'm not sure what they teach in schools.
9. I worry about my child being taught sex education at school.
10. Any other questions?

1

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF MY CHILD IS BEING BULLIED?

Contact the school as soon as possible if your child is being bullied or getting called names or if you think that this is happening. Speak to the head teacher or a member of staff you have contact with.

- Give them as much detail as possible
- Keep a note of when you told the school about it, who you spoke to and what was said
- Ask them to keep you informed

These are serious matters and the school has a duty to investigate and to sort things out. Bullying can take many forms:

- name calling
- rude gestures and remarks
- physical, such as fighting or being pushed around
- being left out or ignored
- being taunted, threatened or hurt

The law says, under the Race Relations Amendment Act 2000, that councils and their schools must promote equality for all children and families.

Some schools have safe zones where children can go during interval breaks or older pupils can look out for younger ones in the playground and try to keep them safe.



**STOP
BULLYING
NOW!**

**A guide for Gypsy and
Traveller children**



Stop Bullying Now! is a pocket sized leaflet for Gypsy/Traveller children. It gives advice on what to do if a child is bullied. You can ask Traveller Support Services for a copy or ask the school to download a copy from the STEP website (www.scottishtravellered.net). Your child can telephone Childline for help on 0800 1111.

2

WHAT IF MY CHILD GETS INTO TROUBLE AT SCHOOL?

Contact the school as soon as possible if you are concerned that your child is in trouble or is having problems.

Arrange to speak to the head teacher or a member of staff you have contact with. Discuss this with your child.

At any meeting at the school, you can take a friend or relative with you if that makes you more comfortable. Try to be calm and ask questions so you have a full understanding of what has happened and what the school has done about it.

Some education authorities have Traveller Support Services who will have teachers who may be able to help you and the school reach a satisfactory conclusion.

- If you think the school has been fair, then you can talk to the teacher about how to make sure it does not happen again – they should be supportive.
- If you do not think the school has been fair, talk to the teacher about this. You may say what you want to happen next or how you would like it to be put right.
- You can also talk to the education authority about your views on what has happened, and they may investigate.

Education authorities have mediation services, which may be able to help parents sort out difficult situations with schools.



3

WHAT IF MY CHILD GETS EXCLUDED?

Exclusion is when your child is told not to come to school for a while. Sometimes this is called being expelled or suspended. Exclusion is very serious and should only be used as a last resort. The length of the exclusion will reflect the seriousness of the misbehaviour.

If your child is excluded you will get a letter which will tell you:

- the reason
- how long for
- the time, date and place for you and your child to come to the school to discuss the exclusion

You and your child have a right to appeal against the exclusion.

In Scotland, the law says that a pupil may be excluded if:

- there is a serious incident of misbehaviour
- there is repeated misbehaviour after warnings
- the school believes that the safety of other pupils or staff is at risk
- either the pupil, or parents, refuse to agree with the school rules and discipline procedures.

The school still has a responsibility to provide education for your child if excluded for more than 10 days.

You should be given work for your child to do at home or your child should have to attend another place to be taught.

Usually, a pupil will go back to the same school after the time of exclusion is over. If you go travelling while your child is excluded, you should still inform the school of when you plan to return.

If a child is taken off the school register because of a very serious exclusion or repeat exclusions, then the education authority must find another school or some other kind of place where they can be taught. This should be discussed with the pupil and the parent. You should keep in touch with the education authority if you are travelling while they are sorting out a new school, as your child's right to an education is important.

4

WHAT IF I DISAGREE WITH THE DECISION TO EXCLUDE MY CHILD?

You and your child have the right to appeal against the decision to exclude your child.

Children who are mature enough (usually from the age of 12) have the right to appeal against exclusion. The school or education authority will advise you on how you can appeal against the exclusion. This does not mean your child can return to school before the appeal is decided but if the exclusion is over before the appeal is decided then your child should return to school.

There are some organisations that can give advice to parents and pupils about appealing against being excluded, for example, the Education Law Unit at Govan Law Centre, telephone 0141 445 1955 or the Scottish Child Law Centre, telephone Freephone for under 18s : 0800 328 8970 or 0131 667 6333.

5

WHAT KINDS OF RECORDS ARE SCHOOLS ALLOWED TO KEEP ABOUT MY CHILD?

By law the school must keep records of information about your child such as name, date of birth, address, gender, ethnic background, religion and schools attended. The school must also record your child's progress, their achievements, attendance, and Additional Support Needs where necessary.

All records should be treated as confidential and secure.

This information helps the school plan the best use of resources for its pupils and ensures your child's needs are being addressed. You do not have to tell the school that you are Gypsies/Travellers but it is useful if the head teacher knows because then your culture can be supported and reasons for absence are easier to explain. Also it is recommended that schools should be noting racist incidents and should include racist name-calling of Gypsies/ Traveller children.

All schools keep records on the children in the school and must keep them for five years after your child has left. All records should be treated as confidential and secure.

6

CAN I SEE MY CHILD'S SCHOOL RECORDS?

Parents are entitled to see their child's educational record. These records must be made available to you within 15 school days. In exceptional circumstances the education authority can withhold some sensitive information.

If you wish to have a copy then you have to ask the education authority. They may ask for proof that you are the child's parent or guardian and there may be a small charge. Sometimes the education authority can withhold some sensitive information, but only where it is likely to cause significant harm or distress to the child or any other person.

7

CAN I TAKE THESE RECORDS WITH ME?

Some education authorities have a special record for Travelling families to take with them. You should make sure the schools your child goes to get a copy of this record.



8

I'M NOT SURE WHAT THEY TEACH IN SCHOOLS

The school should be willing to talk to you about what your child is being taught and what they will be learning about in the different subjects. You can ask to see where they will be taught.

If you or your child are worried about some aspect of their school subjects or homework it's important to talk to their teacher about this. They might invite you to come into school and see a class learning. You will also be invited to attend Parents' Nights at certain times of the school year. If you cannot go to Parents' Nights then you can ask for an appointment at a different time.

9

I WORRY ABOUT MY CHILD BEING TAUGHT SEX EDUCATION AT SCHOOL

Schools should ask permission from parents to teach sex education. Some parents prefer to teach their children sex education themselves when they feel their child is ready. If you feel like this then you should talk to your child's headteacher.

The headteacher should discuss the content of the sex education lessons with you. If you still have concerns the headteacher should discuss alternative arrangements with you, perhaps withdrawing your child from class.

The Scottish Executive has produced a leaflet called 'Sex Education in Scottish Schools: A Guide for Parents and Carers'. This should be available from your child's school.

10 | ANY OTHER QUESTIONS?

This leaflet has tried to answer important questions. There are some other helpful sources of information on the back of this leaflet. There are 2 other leaflets available to Gypsy/Traveller parents - EDUCATION 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 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

Schoolhouse Home Education Association

Tel: 01307 463120
www.schoolhouse.org.uk

Education Law Unit at Govan law Centre

Telephone: 0141 445 1955
www.edlaw.org.uk

NATT – National Association of Teachers of Travellers (England)

Telephone: 01865 428 089
www.natt.org.uk

Education Otherwise

Telephone: 0870 7300 074
www.education-otherwise.org

Childline

Telephone: 0800 1111
www.childline.org.uk

Anti-Bullying Network

www.antibullying.net

Parentline

Telephone: 0808 800 2222
www.parentlinescotland.org.uk

Kidscape

Telephone: 0845 120 5204
www.kidscape.org.uk

Save The Children

Telephone: 0131 527 8200
www.savethechildren.org.uk

Scottish Child Law Centre

Telephone Freephone for under 18s:
0800 328 8970 or 0131 667 6333
www.sclc.org.uk