



Know Your Rights

School Attendance

About The Traveller Movement

The Traveller Movement (TM) is a UK charity challenging discrimination and promoting inclusion of ethnic Romani (Gypsy), Roma and Irish Traveller communities. TM facilitates legal education, strategic litigation and direct advocacy to support their access to justice and fair treatment.

The school attendance & home education webinar was prepared in partnership with Clare Cruise, a solicitor specialising in education law at [Southwark Law Centre](#).

You can watch this topic on the webinar [here](#).

Understanding risks

Parents currently have the legal right to remove children from school and educate them at home (though this may change in the future). If your child has special educational needs and is enrolled in a special school, or is subject to a School Attendance Order, you must get permission first. Teachers must report any concerns if they think home schooling poses safeguarding risks; they remain responsible for children on their school roll.

Starting off well

Schools must ensure parents understand the importance of children attending school regularly. Staff must educate themselves about Romani (Gypsy), Roma and Irish Traveller communities' cultural norms, avoid stereotypes and communicate empathetically with parents. Policies on inclusion and anti-racism must be actively applied to foster effective relationships.

Know Your Rights

School Attendance (continued)

Education topics

Parents can withdraw children from sex education lessons (education on reproduction) but not from relationship education (education on respectful relationships).

Unauthorised absences from school can lead to fines of £60 per child, per parent, for each absent day.

Young people can opt into sex education lessons when they reach three terms before their 16th birthday. Schools should explain that, without adequate education, children's safety is at risk, and they may be vulnerable to exploitation.

Sharing children's Romani (Gypsy), Roma and Irish Traveller heritage helps their school improve support, and tackle bullying. Schools should not ban anyone speaking Rumnus or Cant. If a child is asked to provide cultural education to other pupils, this should always be voluntary and respectful of the child's participation.

Parents can request a move to a school which better aligns with their religious views. Admission policies may prioritise children of that school's religion, so check if places are available.

Absences

Local authorities may issue School Attendance Orders (SAOs) if they consider children are not receiving adequate education. There are serious penalties for non-compliance so get advice and comply with SAOs immediately.

Absences for significant cultural events or bereavement can be authorised when justified.

Choosing not to send children to high school with the intention of them attending college later to gain, for example vocational qualifications, can create difficulties. Gaps in learning can pose challenges plus additional costs for tutoring and exams. Parents should consider the implications of this choice and research college admission requirements to support children's education pathways.

Contact the solicitor

Southwark Law Centre does not provide advice on a 'drop in' basis; it has a pre-arranged appointment system. If you need help, contact your local Citizens Advice Service www.citizensadvice.org.uk.

Contact The Traveller Movement on [020 7607 2002](tel:02076072002) for more help.