

ATTENDANCE · GUIDE 3

The T code: travelling for work



SHORT ANSWER

If you travel for work, your child's school can record the absence with a T code. This is an authorised absence that protects your child's school place — but you must agree it with the school before you travel.

When the T code applies

- 1 **You are travelling for work.** Your child's parent is travelling in the course of their trade or business, and the child travels with them. Agree the absence with the school **before** you go — the school grants a leave of absence after your request, and it cannot be backdated.
- 2 **Your child counts as a “mobile child”.** This includes families with no permanent address **and** families who have a house or pitch but are away for substantial parts of the year because of work.
- 3 **Your child keeps attending as regularly as the work allows.** If your child is aged 6 or over, the legal defence (s.444(6), Education Act 1996) expects at least 200 attendances in the previous 12 months.

WHAT THE T CODE MEANS

It is recorded as an **authorised absence** — you should not be fined — but schools can still act if attendance falls to an unacceptable level.

DUAL REGISTRATION

Your child is expected to attend a school where you are travelling and be **dual registered** there and at their main school — so they keep their place.

PROOF

Schools should **not** routinely demand proof that you are travelling for work — only where there is genuine, reasonable doubt.

When the T code cannot be used

- For weddings, funerals, holidays or any other non-work reason — these need the head teacher's permission like any other absence.
- If the child is travelling with someone other than their parent.
- Families who are not travelling follow the same attendance rules as everyone else.

Who is covered: Roma, English and Welsh Gypsies, Irish and Scottish Travellers, Showmen (fairground people), Circus people, Bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and New Travellers.

Sources: DfE, *Working together to improve school attendance* (statutory guidance from 19 August 2024), Code T; Education Act 1996, s.444(6).

Need advice?

Call The Traveller Movement on **020 7607 2002** or email us at **info@travellermovement.org.uk**