

Distance Learning and Traveller pupils

Distance learning is a scheme of **independent learning** that has been developed nationally, not as an alternative to school for Traveller pupils, but as a means to provide some continuity of education and equality of opportunity within a pattern of interrupted learning. The EC define Distance Learning as ‘...any form of study not under the continuous or immediate supervision of tutors, but which nevertheless benefits from the planning, guidance and tuition of a tutorial organisation’.

For the seasonal and/or occupational Traveller, Distance Learning, managed jointly by the base school, parents and pupils and supported by the Specialist Advisory Teaching Service (SATS), provides this continuity when the pupil is too highly mobile to be dual registered at another school. It is a means of keeping children in contact with the curriculum of the school, creating a sense of belonging to the school community and responding to and valuing their mobile lifestyle.

Currently, Distance Learning is not recognised by the Government as an approved off-site educational provision, so the pupil needs to remain on the schools roll and be marked as an authorised absence. (Code T in the register). Nor does Distance Learning relieve parents of their duties under Section 7 of the 1996 Education Act to ensure their child receives efficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise. However, schools can record any pupil as being present at an approved educational activity whilst on distance or e-learning but only if they are certain that the activity was properly supervised, that the work is being done by the pupil (not someone else) and that it is being done during the session in question (not at night, weekends for example) ¹

The Specialist Advisory Teaching Service (SATS)

The Ethnic Minority Achievement team with SATS can offer advice and support to families or schools wishing to explore the possibility of undertaking Distance Learning. They have prepared guidance for schools and families and a series of supporting documentation to record various aspects of the Distance Learning programme. The team can also offer training to schools wishing to support their pupils with a Distance Learning programme. For support with Distance Learning, you should refer the pupil to SATS in the normal way. You can access the guidance and supporting paperwork on Distance Learning here www.cumbria.gov.uk/childrensservices/sats/ema/travellers.asp

¹ Pupil Registration Regulations 2006

Further Information

- The DCSF has prepared a report on using ICT to support Distance Learning. View it at: www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/ethnicminorities/resources/dfessdlp2006.pdf

For further information or to make a referral, please contact the Ethnic Minority Achievement team:

East 01228 60 6955

West 01946 595860

South 01229 89 4456