

Celebrate and Participate:

Education guidance to support Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children and young people



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

A summary of guidance for
schools and education settings



A good education is important. As the Welsh Government we want all children and young people in Wales to get the best education possible. We don't want anyone to miss out because of who they are, their culture or background.



Our vision

We want all children and young people to:

- be successful in education
- achieve high standards
- reach their goals in life

In Wales we have people and families from many different backgrounds, including Gypsy, Roma and Traveller families.

It's important all schools help and support children and young people in the right ways.

Our guidance:

- raises awareness of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities
- raises awareness of the challenges experienced by Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children and young people
- explains how schools can support them, and gives examples of how schools can do this



Different communities

Gypsy, Roma and Traveller people and communities are not all the same. They include:

- **Romani Gypsies**
- **Irish Travellers**
- **Gypsy Traveller** — Irish, Welsh, English and Scottish Travellers
- **Migrant Roma** — people who lived in central and eastern Europe but have now moved to Wales
- **New Travellers**
- **Occupational Travellers** — traditional show, fairground and circus communities
- **Barge Travellers** — families that live and work on the waterways



These communities have different cultures, heritage and lifestyles that should be respected.

Understanding laws and children's rights

All children must have an education.

The Education Act 1996 says:

- Parents (or carers) must make sure their children have an 'efficient' and 'suitable' education that meets their needs
- Local authorities must make sure all children in their area are receiving a suitable education

Children's rights

All children and young people have rights set out in the **United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)**.

The UNCRC sets out these rights in the form of articles.

Article 2 — All children have rights whatever their race, religion, abilities and whatever type of family they come from.

Article 3 — All adults must think about how their decisions will affect children and to do what is best for them.

Article 12 — Children and young people have the right to have a say in decisions that affect their lives, and to have their opinions taken into account.

Article 28 — Children and young people have the right to education, no matter who they are.

Article 29 — Children and young people have the right to an education which develops their personality and talents and encourages respect for their own and other cultures.

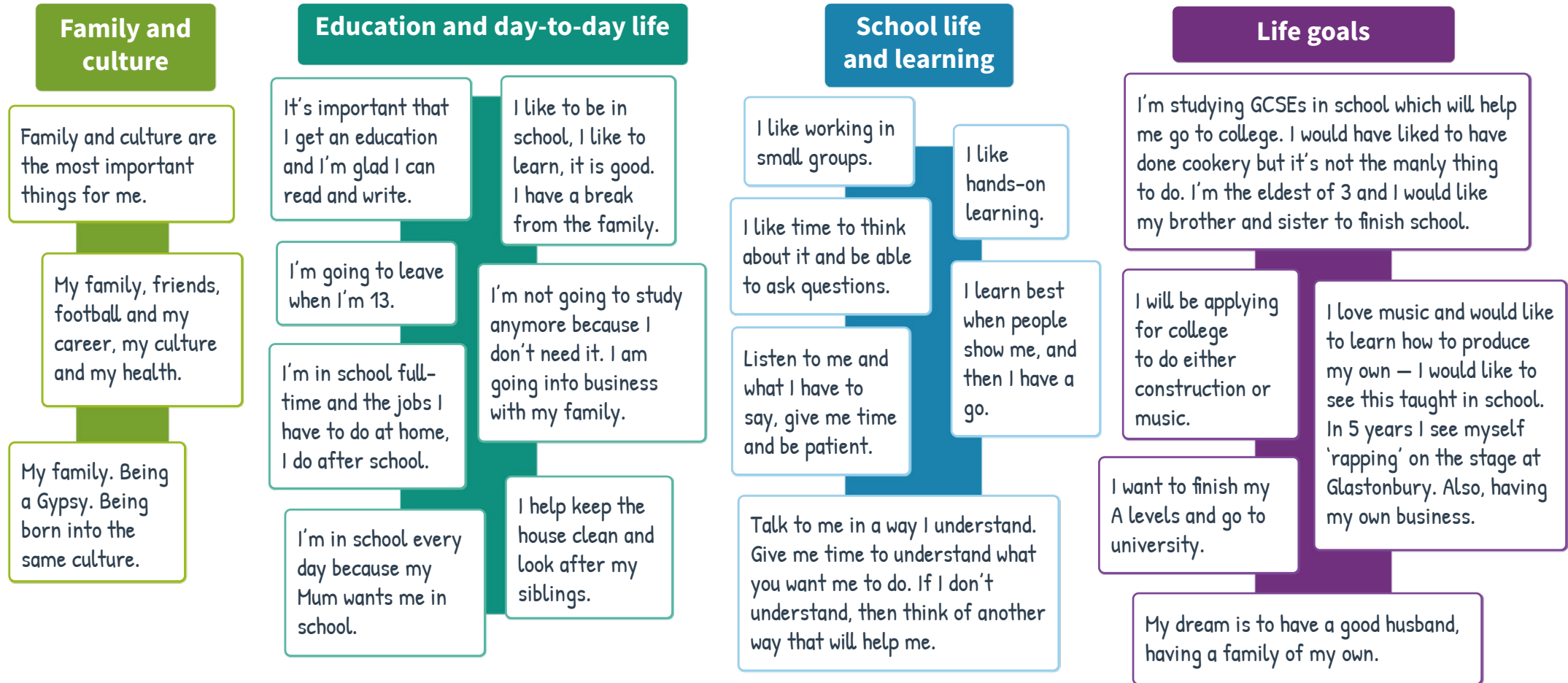




What matters to children and young people

The **Gypsy Traveller Stakeholder Group** and the **Minority Ethnic, Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Local Authorities Group** helped us make this guide.

We asked **over 40 children and young people** from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities about what's important to them, and this is what they told us:



Once we understood what really matters to Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children and young people we found examples of what can work to:

- help with the different problems they may face such as bullying or racism
- improve help and support in school
- try something new and celebrate Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children and young people's cultures

We want all schools to think: **What do we already do? What can we do better? How can we do something different?**

Main ways to support children and young people

Professionals and children and young people said:

There needs to be a whole-school approach

Schools need to build trust and better relationships with families

Our culture needs to be recognised and celebrated

We need trusted adults who understand Gypsy, Roma and Traveller cultures that children and young people can talk to at school

Children and young people need better support when they move from primary to secondary school

Community Focused Schools

Community Focused Schools provide services and activities for the wider community. For example, Community Focused Schools help Gypsy, Roma and Traveller parents continue their education and develop their skills.

Our actions

We have lots of different plans and resources that help schools support children and young people. There is a list of useful links at the end of this guidance.



Additional Learning Needs (ALN)

People said:

It can be difficult for parents to know whether their child has additional learning needs. Gypsy, Roma and Traveller families can sometimes find it hard talking to teachers and staff.

★ Schools should:

- spot a child who could have ALN and carry out an assessment
- support Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children and young people and families through the assessment
- support families whose first language isn't Welsh or English
- look at all parts of a child or young person's learning
- make sure children and young people with ALN get an Individual Development Plan (IDP) that sets out what support they'll get

School admissions

Children and young people told us:

Our families like schools where they understand us, or there are other Traveller families.

My parents can read and write with a little bit of help.

My mum can't read or write.

★ Schools should:

- follow the Welsh Government's School Admissions Code
- offer school places in a fair and open way
- offer places to Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children
- help Gypsy, Roma and Traveller families to register their child at a school, even if they're only in the area for a short time



School attendance

Children and young people told us:

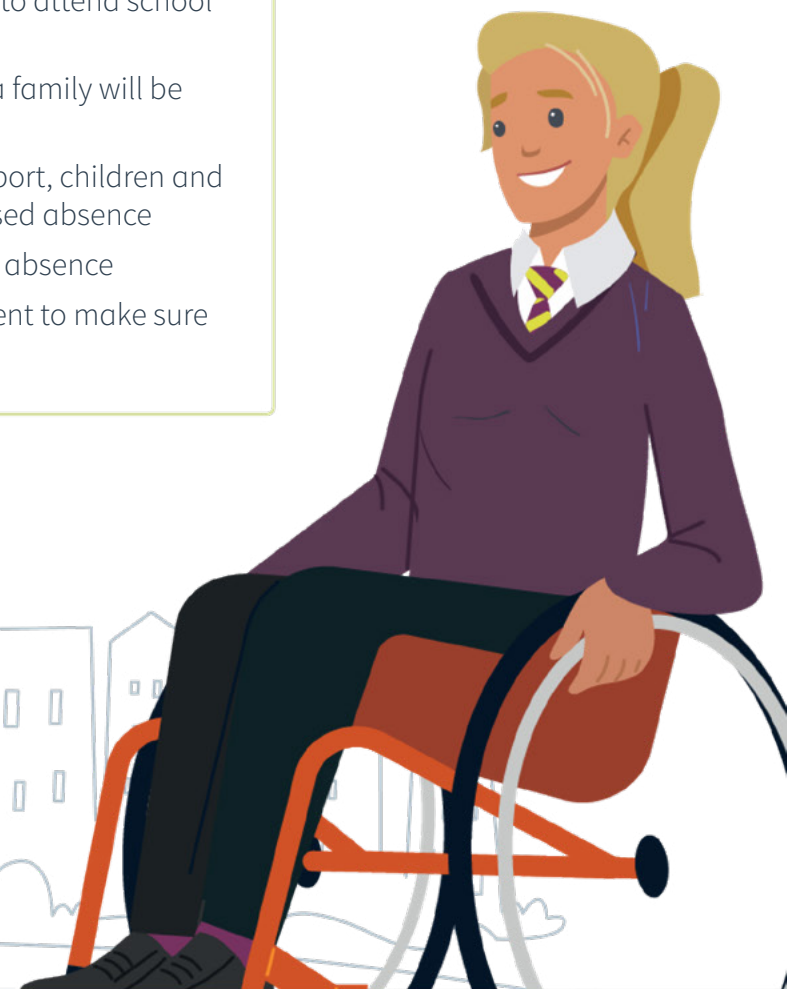
I've missed a bit of school, so I want help explaining things in school. I am shy when I first meet people, so I don't speak. I don't really have many friends because of this, and it helps when I have a louder friend or cousin to be with because they can figure things out for me like ordering dinners in school. I don't like going to school on my own because of this.

I go part-time. I'd like more stuff like sewing, cooking, and also doing hair and beauty.

I go to school full-time. I do my chores when I go home. If my mum or grandparents are ill, I might have to stay at home to help.

★ Schools should:

- follow the Welsh Government's school attendance guidance ["Belonging, engaging and participating"](#)
- be sensitive and respect the lifestyle and culture of families
- support children and young people to attend school as much as possible
- allow an absence when they know a family will be travelling and plans to return
- try to keep in contact with, and support, children and young people who have an authorised absence
- try to avoid taking legal action over absence
- check on children when they're absent to make sure they're safe



Bullying

Children and young people told us:

I've been called names in school such as 'Gypo' and 'Pikey', which I hate.

I've never been bullied. I think schools should do more and give stricter punishments for bullying and being racist.

People sometimes bully us with words like 'Czechy' and stuff like that. It's often about our culture and our country. I don't care about the bullying as I'm proud of where I'm from and when I show I don't care, it stops.

★ Schools should:

- understand the unfair situations that Gypsy, Roma and Traveller families face
- look into any claims of racism and bullying
- take action to stop racism and bullying
- record and deal with any bullying in their school
- make sure everyone knows what is bullying and online bullying
- teach children and young people to value and respect everyone
- give the right support at the right time

Communication with families

Children and young people told us:

Information comes through e-mails but my parents prefer a call.

My parents prefer a phone call. They understand it better than a text because it can be explained.

School sends a text but they can't read it so I have to tell my family.

★ Schools can help in different ways and:

- work with a local Traveller Education Service (where there is one) to build better relationships with families
- make sure information is translated so families know what's happening
- invite families to parent coffee mornings and school events
- hold parent meetings
- offer education packs when families are travelling
- help families get support from other services



Celebrating culture

Children and young people told us:

I'd like to see more lessons on all the cultures and the way people live.

I feel the school doesn't celebrate my culture. Schools could have Gypsy, Roma and Traveller history within lessons.

My school does recognise my culture and staff are interested.

★ Schools should:

- talk about and celebrate Gypsy, Roma and Traveller lifestyles and cultures

★ Schools could:

- take part in Gypsy, Roma and Traveller History Month every June
- display cultural information and art created by Gypsy, Roma and Traveller learners
- talk about different cultures across different school lessons
- make sure history lessons on the Second World War explain how Gypsies, Roma and Travellers were persecuted in the Holocaust
- explore the work of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller artists and writers
- discuss people's lives, food and ways of living for example in a house, or in a caravan
- talk about role models in Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities
- invite grandparents and community groups into school to talk about their heritage and cultures



Curriculum for Wales including Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE)

Children and young people told us:

We will talk about it but with family members and not in front of a whole class or boys, as that isn't appropriate.

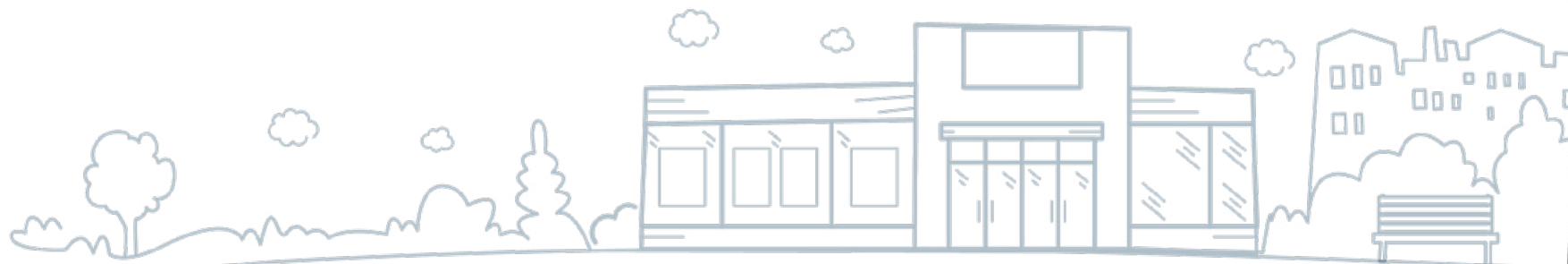
I think I am allowed to learn some things, but only in a class with just other girls. I wouldn't be allowed to listen if there were any boys there. My mam and sisters talk to me about changes at home.

I actually like going to RSE as most of my friends are in the lesson and I feel that it's more chilled and not a formal lesson. No one talks to me about that topic outside of school.

I'm not allowed to go to these lessons. I think RSE lessons are disgusting. At home these subjects are not mentioned.

★ Schools should:

- design their curriculum to support all children and young people to make progress and achieve their goals and ambitions
- give all learners the information they need to keep them safe from harm
- give all learners information about healthy relationships and how to raise issues with responsible adults
- provide learners with factual information
- discuss different values, views and other subjects in society
- work with families so they understand what their children and young people are learning
- keep communication open and give families opportunities to talk about their concerns



Trusted adults in school

Children and young people told us:

I don't really know anyone, so if the TES person isn't in, I don't know how to order dinner or I get lost. I wouldn't have anyone to talk to all day.

My family can talk to the TES team if they are worried about anything.

I settled into Year 7 OK. Having a TES at school made it easier because there was someone I could go to and for my Mam to ring.

★ Schools should:

- keep communication lines open with families and work with a local authority Traveller Education Service (TES)
- have a dedicated person such as a teacher or support worker who builds trust with families and learners
- have staff who work with their local Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities so they understand how to help children and young people

Digital inclusion

Children and young people told us:

I need help with technology, I don't have internet at home or a laptop.

I prefer handwriting rather than using the laptop.

I prefer using technology when learning, even though our school doesn't always give us the time to use the ICT facilities. I like to do my work on a computer, it's easier and more fun than using papers.

★ Schools should:

- support all of their learners with online homework
- make sure learners have paper-based work packs if they want them
- support learners to become better at using IT
- help parents learn how to use computers and the internet and become more digitally aware
- help children and young people use online learning including literacy and numeracy platforms



Home education

Sometimes Gypsy, Roma and Traveller families choose to home educate because they have concerns about school or bullying.

One young person told us:

I'm not going to high school. My mum will get me a tutor at home like for my older brother and sister.

★ Schools should:

- work with families and look at ways to help the child or young person stay in school
- work with a local Traveller Education Service and/or the Elective Home Education officer
- help families understand their role and responsibilities when home educating

Financial support

The cost of living is increasing and affects lots of families.

★ Schools should:

- tell families about the help and support that's available
- help families apply for support to help with the cost of school uniform, school meals and other things
- make it easier for parents to buy uniform items from different shops like supermarkets, and not just specialist suppliers
- set up recycling or exchange schemes for school uniforms and equipment



Moving from primary into secondary school

Children and young people told us:

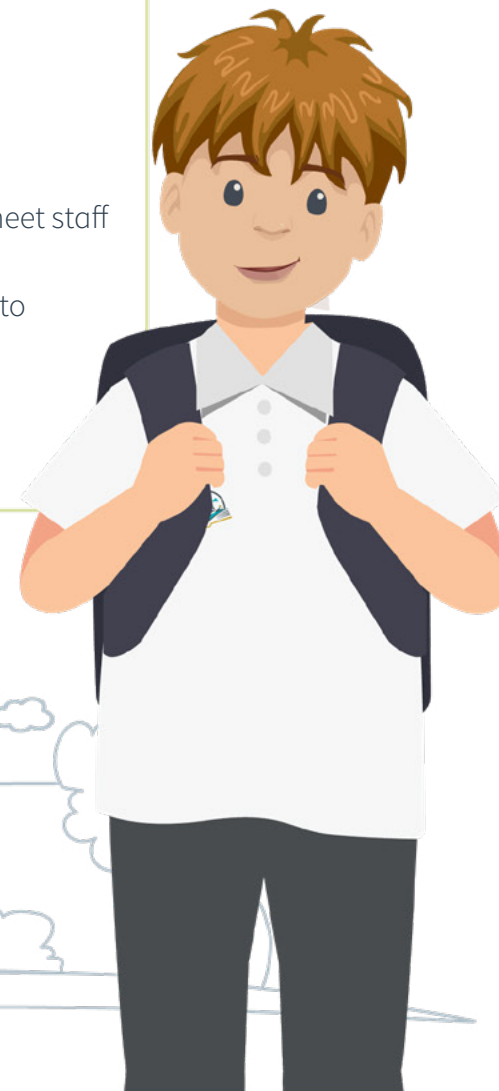
I'm not going to high school because my older sister doesn't go and my mum never did.

I will only go to high school if I can't read and write well enough by the time I leave primary school.

None of my older brothers have gone to high school or college so I probably won't either.

★ There are things schools can do to help make it easier, for example:

- work with TES teams and encourage children to move to secondary school
- start to prepare children for the move before Year 6
- help families fill in paperwork and application forms
- promote the benefits of a secondary education
- celebrate the move and make it a positive experience
- develop 'transition plans' that meet the needs of each child
- have opportunities for families to visit the secondary school and meet staff and learners
- invite Year 7 and Year 8 Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children to talk to Year 6 learners
- have a 'buddy' system for primary school children with secondary school learners



Next steps in education

Young people told us:

I want to finish my A-levels and go to university. I'm thinking I want to do criminology.

My brothers went to 6th form college. I think I will stay until Year 12 because I can get a good job and education. I would like to be a pianist or mechanic and have a family and buy a house.

★ There are things schools and colleges can do to help make it easier, for example:

- support Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children and young people into post-16 education and offer a range of options like A Levels, or practical study like apprenticeships
- explain options for accessing higher education and studying at university
- support young people to visit colleges, sixth forms or training providers to help them decide what they want to do
- raise awareness of opportunities for exam resits
- offer extra learning support
- promote different career options and highlight Gypsy, Roma and Traveller role models
- explain to young people that they can study on a part-time, flexible, or remote basis
- connect learners to college Student Services teams so they get the right information and support
- work with organisations like Careers Wales or Working Wales





Useful list of resources

Additional Learning Needs (ALN)

[The additional learning needs code for Wales](#)

Admissions to School

- [The school admissions code](#)
- [The All Wales \(school\) Attendance Framework](#)
- [The belonging, engaging and participating guidance](#)
- [School attendance codes: guidance](#)

Bullying and racism

- [Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan](#)
- [‘Rights, Respect, Equality’ anti-bullying guidance for schools](#)
- [Framework on embedding a whole-school approach to emotional and mental wellbeing](#)

Curriculum for Wales including Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE)

- [Cross-cutting themes for designing your curriculum](#)

Digital inclusion

- [The Hwb digital learning platform](#)
- [Keeping safe online](#)

Elective home education

- [Elective home education guidance](#)
- [A handbook for home educators](#)

Financial support and school uniform

- [A School Essentials Grant](#)
- [The Price of Pupil Poverty guides and fact sheets](#)
- [Children in Wales the Price of Pupil Poverty Guide for Governors](#)
- [The Children’s Commissioner’s Charter for Change resources](#)
- [The school uniform guidance](#)
- [School uniform exchange and recycling schemes guidance.](#)
- [The Children’s Commissioner’s Revolve resources supporting children to set up uniform re-use shops](#)

Vocational courses, apprenticeships, further and higher education

- [Careers Wales - Working Wales](#)

Thanks for reading this

You can read the full guidance here:

gov.wales/education-guidance-support-gypsy-roma-and-traveller-children-and-young-people