

Huw Lewis AC / AM  
Y Gweinidog Addysg a Sgiliau  
Minister for Education and Skills



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

Ein cyf/Our ref MB/HL/5535/13

Lindsay Whittle AM  
National Assembly for Wales  
Cardiff Bay

*Dear Lindsay*

22 December 2013

During Plenary following the Oral Statement by the Minister for Communities and Tackling Poverty on 'Travelling to a Better Future - Gypsy and Traveller Framework for Action and Delivery Plan' on 5 November, you raised the matter of attendance and drop-out rates among Gypsy and Traveller girls and asked why nothing was contained in the proposals to address this. I am replying as Minister for Education and Skills.

Absenteeism statistics are provided in the Annex to this letter. They show that absenteeism is not higher for girls than for boys. 'Drop-out' rates are not recorded or calculated.

In the light of your remarks, at a meeting of the All Wales Forum of Gypsy and Traveller Education Co-ordinators on 21 November, members were asked whether, in their experience, absenteeism and drop-out rates were worse among Gypsy and Traveller girls than boys. The consensus was that the actually the reverse was true and that they were losing more boys from secondary education than girls.

What is irrefutable is that non-attendance generally among Gypsy and Traveller children remains unacceptably high and that is why many of the Education Objectives in the Delivery Plan focus on increasing the number of Gypsy and Traveller children on school roll and on improving their attendance. I am fully committed to improving attendance and outcomes for this vulnerable group. Activity in this area includes an all Wales seminar on Gypsy and Traveller attendance issues planned for next February. The seminar will provide the opportunity for a dialogue with educational professionals around the many issues that can militate against Gypsy and Traveller children's school attendance such as cultural barriers to education; a mobile lifestyle; schools' admissions and bullying. The intention is that the seminar will identify priorities for action and inform policy development.

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*Wedi'i argraffu ar bapur wedi'i ailgylchu (100%)*

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**Percentage of overall absenteeism by Gypsy/Roma and Traveller pupils of compulsory school age, by gender (a) (b)**

	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12
<b>Maintained primary schools</b>					
Boys	25.0	21.2	22.2	22.0	20.1
Girls	21.3	20.8	21.1	22.1	20.1
Pupils	23.1	21.0	21.7	22.1	20.1
<b>Maintained secondary schools</b>					
Boys	24.0	21.2	18.1	22.8	22.7
Girls	23.4	19.7	17.2	22.1	20.7
Pupils	23.7	20.4	17.7	22.5	21.7

(a) Pupils of compulsory school age were aged 5-15 on 31 August before the start of the academic year.

(b) Data were created by matching records in the Pupils' Attendance Record to the Pupil-Level Annual School Census (PLASC). Pupils were not included if no match could be made.