



Case study

Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils: supporting access to education

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Schools showing successful practice in improving the attainment and attendance of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) pupils.



Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) pupils are among the lowest achieving groups of pupils at every key stage of education, although some GRT pupils achieve very well at school.

There are many complex and interwoven factors that may influence the educational attainment of GRT pupils. Schools and local authorities can make a big difference to their life chances through:

- clear high expectations of all pupils, regardless of their background
- an inclusive culture that welcomes all communities
- strong engagement from parents

Kingsholm Primary School (Gloucestershire)

Compared to reception year, this primary school has a much higher proportion of pupils of Traveller ethnicity and pupils joining the school later. The school reports that most GRT pupils have good attendance and attainment. Ofsted has rated Kingsholm Primary as outstanding.

Strong community relations

Ofsted recognises the school's successful promotion of good relations between pupils from different communities and its refusal to tolerate discrimination of any kind. Initiatives designed to prevent discrimination include whole school assemblies to raise awareness of GRT culture.

High expectations of attendance

Kingsholm Primary also has rigorous attendance systems, with the same high expectations for all pupils attendance, regardless of their ethnicity. There is a named attendance officer who works closely with GRT parents to ensure they understand the possible sanctions for any unauthorised absence. The attendance officer follows up any cases of lateness or absence on the same day.

Working with occupationally mobile families

The school has good relations with its Showmen families, working closely with them to plan any periods of travelling for work, helping to minimise disruption to pupils' education. For example, the school encourages Showmen to try to arrange their work so that pupils can attend the school at the start of term and to dual register their children at 2 or more schools while they travel.

Shirley Community Nursery and Primary School (Cambridgeshire)

Around half of all children at Shirley Primary are from minority ethnic backgrounds, with around 10 children of GRT ethnicity. Ofsted's most recent report notes that Traveller children are making good progress at the school. Ofsted has rated Shirley Primary as good.

Identifying the concerns

The school works with GRT pupils and parents to identify any concerns. This includes:

- pupil voice interviews with GRT children about their attitudes to school and homework to inform the school's understanding of any issues they experience
- consultations with parents, including a questionnaire to capture their main concerns and assess the level of interest in future events for parents

Parental engagement

The school identified that GRT parents lacked confidence in their knowledge of what their children are learning in maths and phonics, and how they might support these areas at home. The school's interventions included:

- a jointly run session with the on-site children's centre for GRT parents, invited personally by school staff (one such session, recognising that GRT communities have an oral story culture, supported parents to understand how to construct a written story, and gave them a story sack resource to support their children's learning at home)
- support for children beginning school, including introductory sessions for parents and children on the main areas of learning that will be covered at school, and expectations of good attendance and behaviour
- regular tailored update letters to GRT parents on their children's progress in reception class

The school reports higher levels of usage of the children's centre, improved parental engagement and a smoother transition from early years provision to primary school.

Isbech St Mary CoE Primary School (Cambridgeshire)

This small primary school has around 100 pupils, with a large minority of Gypsies and Irish Travellers. The school reports good attainment of GRT pupils up to key stage 2. Ofsted has rated Isbech St Mary Primary as good.

Supporting transition to secondary school

Having identified that GRT parents were more likely than other communities to opt for home education after primary school, the school put into place additional support for their transition to secondary school. Their actions included:

- a designated teaching assistant and home liaison officer from Cambridgeshire's Traveller Education Team working with parents to identify and alleviate common concerns, such as explaining the secondary school's anti-bullying policies to the parents
- year 6 and 7 pupils spending a day at a local secondary school to carry out an enterprise project, looking at what they will learn in secondary school and how it will improve their employment prospects.
- parent-and-child visits to the secondary school to familiarise themselves with the building and staff

Parkside Community Primary School (Kent)

This small primary school has a higher-than-average number of pupils of Romany or Gypsy heritage. Ofsted reports that pupils' achievement, including those of GRT heritage, is good and improving across the school. Ofsted has rated the school as good overall.

Promoting an inclusive ethos

To achieve these results, Parkside School has:

- set high expectations from the senior management team for the attainment, attendance and inclusion of all pupils, including GRT children
- raised awareness of GRT history and culture through assemblies and events like book week, including oral storytelling
- ensured all staff attend Kent local authority's training to develop awareness of GRT history and culture
- adopted a no-tolerance approach to bullying

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