

# Raising aspirations and retaining Roma pupils at Key Stage 2: Parkside Community Primary School

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**URN:** 118536  
**Region:** South East  
**Remit:** Schools

## Provider background

Parkside Community Primary School is a small but growing 3 to 11 community primary school on the outskirts of Canterbury in an area of high deprivation. The school was judged to be good in its [last inspection in June 2013](#). The proportion of Roma pupils on roll was 10.3% in 2013.

## Brief description

This good practice example shows how Parkside Community Primary School has raised aspirations and retained pupils at Key Stage 2

This is part of a set of examples showcasing good practice in raising the achievement and attendance of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils, as well as reducing their exclusion rates.

## The good practice in detail

The key ingredients of the school's success are:

- strong commitment from the headteacher and governing body
- a welcoming ethos
- consistently effective communication with parents.

## Monitoring achievement and the virtual school

Expectations for pupils' achievement are high and monitoring is rigorous.

- Tracking information is used incisively to pre-empt barriers and to tackle them when they arise.
- Pupil progress meetings take place regularly..
- Roma pupils are treated no differently from other pupils in this process.

The school accesses the support of a local authority ethnic minority support service and a virtual school for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils, led by a virtual headteacher. The virtual headteacher tracks and analyses the achievement, attendance and behaviour of all the authority's Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils. The authority provides weekly reading sessions and pastoral support. It has also supported these pupils by transporting them to school to improve attendance.

The virtual school provides training for schools about Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils and those learning English as an additional language. All staff take responsibility for these groups of pupils, as they are a whole-school priority. The aim is for the school to be a Gypsy and Roma champion and a model for other schools.

## Effective relationships

The close partnership between the senior leaders for pupil achievement and community links and the authority's outreach worker has fostered effective communication and trusting relationships with Gypsy and Roma families.

Communications are modified to better engage Gypsy and Roma families. For example:

- the school newsletter is pictorial, accommodating families who may have low literacy levels
- parents receive short texts rather than formal letters – a more direct and friendly method that is proven to work
- information is sent more than once to ensure that any parents do not miss events
- the outreach worker makes home visits to back up written and telephone communication with face-to-face communication and feeds back any information to the school to reinforce and improve existing positive relationships.

Gypsy and Roma parents report that the school respects their culture yet does not treat their children as 'different'. Pupils say they feel welcomed and valued. The curriculum is genuinely adapted to reflect the community's language, culture and values; this is not tokenistic. For example:

- a topic on homes included caravans alongside dwellings
- the school reflects the tradition of oral story-telling but also places a strong emphasis on teaching reading
- pupils have been trained as 'language ambassadors', including Roma speakers.

## Attainment and attendance

The impact of this support and commitment is reflected in outcomes for Gypsy Roma and Traveller pupils.

In 2013, the attainment of Gypsy and Roma pupils at Key Stage 2 was well above that of Gypsy and Roma pupils nationally in reading, writing and mathematics and in line with that for all pupils in the school and nationally. All Gypsy and Roma pupils made at least expected progress from their starting points at the end of Year 2 to the end of Year 6. At Key Stage 1, Gypsy and Roma pupils' attainment was below the national average but above that of other pupils in the school. Their progress based on value-added measures was above the national mean, especially in writing.

The attendance of Gypsy and Roma pupils (91.5%) in 2012/13 was higher than that of Gypsy and Roma pupils nationally (86.1%) and persistent absence was lower (16.7%) compared with Gypsy and Roma pupils nationally (28%).<sup>1</sup> To promote better attendance of Gypsy and Roma pupils on school trips, their parents have been invited as well and this has improved their participation.

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<sup>1</sup> 'Statistical first release: Pupil absence in schools in England: autumn 2012 and spring 2013', Department for Education, October 2013; [www.gov.uk/government/statistics/pupil-absence-in-schools-in-england-autumn-2012-and-spring-2013](http://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/pupil-absence-in-schools-in-england-autumn-2012-and-spring-2013).

The good practice case studies that Ofsted publishes highlight specific examples of practice that providers of education, learning and children's services have used to achieve successful outcomes.

For education, the case studies do not recommend a single particular approach to teaching and learning. Ofsted has no preferred lesson structure or teaching style. We showcase and share a wide range of approaches that providers have found work well for them in achieving good outcomes for children, young people and learners.

Are you thinking of putting these ideas into practice; or already doing something similar that could help other providers; or just interested? We'd welcome your views and ideas. Complete our survey [here](#).

Click [here](#) to see other good practice examples.

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