

Supporting Traveller pupils in the transition from primary to secondary school: St Edmund's Catholic Primary School

URN: 119592

Region: North West

Remit: Schools

Provider background

[St Edmund's Catholic Primary School](#) is a small 3–11 voluntary-aided primary school with 117 pupils on roll. It is situated in Skelmersdale in an area of high deprivation. The school was judged as good in its [last inspection in May 2012](#).

Brief description

This good practice example shows how St Edmund's Catholic Primary School supports Traveller pupils throughout the transition from primary to secondary school.

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

At St Edmund's Catholic Primary School, 2.3% of pupils are Travellers. There are no Gypsy or Roma pupils on roll. None of the pupils are at the earliest stage of learning English as an additional language.

The school faces an ongoing challenge persuading Traveller pupils and families of the value and relevance of continuing education in the secondary school, especially beyond Year 9. Staff have worked hard to support the transition for pupils at risk of leaving school after finishing their primary education at the end of Year 6. They have a multi-agency approach with all relevant teams within the two schools involved and the local authority's Traveller Education Service.

Enrolment in secondary school

The primary school offers parents and carers of Traveller pupils the chance to look around the secondary school during a normal school day. In instances where parents are unenthusiastic about this, the primary school staff are relentless in persisting with parents to change their minds. They seek to persuade parents of the value of continuing with education and assure them that their children will be safe and well looked after. If the child is keen to continue with school in the secondary phase, this can also be a positive influence on Traveller parents. If necessary, staff will go with the parents to the secondary school for a visit if they continue to have reservations.

Where parents are considering removing their children altogether from school once they reach secondary age, the primary school will negotiate a phased start with the secondary school, whereby the pupil will attend some lessons in Year 7 but return to the primary school for the rest of the timetable to attend Year 6 classes for additional literacy and numeracy support and help with homework. This is seen as a better alternative than risking losing them from education entirely. Parents are reassured by the ongoing relationship with the primary school while at the same time building new relationships at the secondary school. A uniform can be kept at the primary school that the school makes sure is ready for when pupils return. Gradually the timetable is built up at the secondary school so that less and less time is spent in the primary school.

Initially, the primary school offers Traveller pupils free transport to secondary school. The learning mentor, a key worker from the primary school funded through the pupil premium and who knows the pupils well, takes the pupils to school and stays with them. Pupils can travel on the primary school bus until they feel confident to get to school by themselves. When the pupils are fully integrated into secondary school life, the school continues to keep the primary school informed of how they are getting on, which helps to maintain links between the two schools.

Traveller children and young people who do not enrol in secondary school are still engaged and provided with home study packs where possible – for example if the school is aware of pupils' siblings who are not in education. Close relationships established between both schools and the Traveller families are formed through this work, meaning that future generations of younger siblings are more likely to enrol in secondary school.

Building trust

The key to the school's success is the trust it has built up with Traveller families. Consequently when the school arranges trips, which historically families were reluctant to let their children attend because of fears about their safety and wellbeing, Traveller pupils are now more likely to participate. The school is confident in reaching out to families through home visits, text messages, telephone calls and meetings in school or at sites. The relationships established are then transferred to secondary school because of the strong transition links established between the key workers at both schools.

The school understands the difficulty some pupils have with doing homework at home because of overcrowded conditions and expectations of helping with household duties. There are after-school clubs for reading and homework and extra-curricular activities. The key to Traveller pupils staying for these activities is that they work with staff who they and their parents are familiar with and trust.

Attendance rates are rising. The attendance of Traveller pupils (90.2%) in 2012/13 was higher than that compared to Traveller pupils nationally (79.6%) but below that for other pupils in the school and all pupils nationally.¹ There was no persistent absence, although the national average for persistent absence of Traveller pupils is 40.6%.

Support from the local authority

The local authority's Ethnic Minority, Roma and Traveller Achievement Service plays a key role in supporting both the school and Traveller families.

In addition to helping with transition from primary to secondary, it is invaluable in helping older pupils to gain work experience and arranging alternative education for those who have chosen not to continue with school.

The local authority also analyses data on attainment and progress of different groups of pupils, including Travellers, in order to hold schools to account for their performance.

It offers a service of peer mediation between school and family if an issue cannot be resolved to both parties' satisfaction. Key specialists provide training to enable staff to coach and support their colleagues in school who, in turn, can build their own relationships with families and develop independence from support services.

The school accesses the additional support and training provided by the local authority through its pupil premium fund. Without the contribution of this key specialist service – which has a good local knowledge of individual families – there is a greater risk that some pupils could be lost to the system altogether, as they would not be involved in any form of continuing education.

The school works closely with a range of other agencies to remove what would be additional barriers to accessing education. For example:

- liaising with doctors' surgeries over health issues

¹ '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.

- communicating with the children's centre on behalf of families to encourage earlier engagement with education for their children
- lobbying the local authority over secure housing or permanent sites for families.

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.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.