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Her Majesty's Inspectorate
for Education and Training in Wales

The education of Gypsy Traveller pupils

An update on provision in secondary schools

June 2011



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Summary

The most important factors in improving outcomes for Gypsy Traveller pupils are improving attendance and attitudes towards school. Although traveller education staff often provide high-quality support to schools and the traveller community, the attendance rates of Gypsy Traveller pupils and their attainment levels still remain low. This is often because of the negative attitudes of many Gypsy Traveller parents to formal secondary education. Few schools have policies or practices that specifically address the needs or views of these pupils and their parents, and nor do they offer a curriculum that actively promotes Gypsy Traveller culture.

Too few local authorities and schools use attendance, exclusions or attainment data to measure the impact of their support for Gypsy Traveller pupils. National data collected on Gypsy Traveller pupils is not always accurate and this can lead to inequalities in funding. Most local authorities use aspects of the Welsh Assembly Government's circular 'Moving Forward – Gypsy Traveller Education' to inform their policy and provision, but its overall impact has been limited.

Of the five recommendations made in the 2005 Estyn report on 'The Education of Gypsy Traveller Learners', only one has been addressed. The Welsh Assembly Government has established an All-Wales Co-ordinators group. It meets regularly and provides a forum for sharing good practice, but its work has not yet impacted widely on the work of most secondary schools.

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Main findings

- 1 Despite the best efforts of a few local authorities and secondary schools, much remains to be done to ensure improved outcomes for Gypsy Traveller pupils. Only one of the five recommendations made in the 2005 Estyn report on 'The Education of Gypsy Traveller Learners' has been addressed.
- 2 The most important factors in improving Gypsy Traveller pupils' outcomes are improving pupils' attendance and their attitudes towards school. Improving low attendance rates and the resulting low achievement of Gypsy Traveller pupils is a challenge for traveller education staff as it involves changing well-established attitudes in the Gypsy Traveller community and in secondary schools.
- 3 The Welsh Assembly Government's All-Wales Co-ordinators Group for Gypsy and Traveller Education was set up to enable staff to discuss common issues and share best practice across the 22 Welsh local authorities. There is now a forum for sharing best practice in Gypsy Traveller education. However, as yet, the work of this group has not impacted widely on policy and practice in many secondary schools.
- 4 Provision for Gypsy Traveller pupils varies across authorities. Most local authorities provide only mainstream secondary education placements, but in a few authorities Gypsy Traveller pupils are inappropriately taught in separate discrete units for their entire secondary education.
- 5 Most traveller education staff provide high-quality support for schools. They also provide important support for parents of Gypsy Traveller pupils and often the wider Gypsy Traveller community. In a few local authorities, traveller education staff work closely with education welfare officers to improve the attendance of Gypsy Traveller pupils. They make joint visits to Gypsy Traveller sites to establish the whereabouts of pupils. In a few cases, these actions are beginning to improve the attendance rates of Gypsy Traveller pupils.
- 6 Despite this support, the overall attendance rates of secondary school age Gypsy Traveller pupils are still too low. Many Gypsy Traveller pupils still have levels of attendance that fall below the Welsh Assembly Government's minimum target for this pupil group of 50% attendance a year. In several local authorities, Gypsy Traveller families are not prosecuted for attendance below this level. This would be counter-productive as there is little evidence to show that prosecution improves the attendance of Gypsy Traveller pupils.
- 7 In a very few schools, an ethos of inclusion is embedded in all aspects of school life, and there are comprehensive policies that cater appropriately to the needs of Gypsy Traveller pupils. However, overall, few secondary schools have policies or practices that specifically address the needs of Gypsy Traveller pupils or encourage a positive attitude towards school, even in schools with large numbers of these pupils. Most schools treat Gypsy Traveller pupils the same as other pupils, instead of according to their particular needs. Few secondary schools actively promote Gypsy Traveller culture as part of the curriculum. Very few schools make additional arrangements to avoid excluding Gypsy Traveller pupils on a temporary or permanent basis. Few

schools provide homework for pupils when they are travelling, to support continuity in their education. Only a few schools have suitable mechanisms in place to gauge the views of Gypsy Traveller pupils and this group of pupils is rarely represented on school councils. Few local authorities offer extra support when Gypsy Traveller pupils are moving from primary to secondary schools.

- 8 The data that the Welsh Assembly Government collects on the numbers of Gypsy Traveller pupils is not always accurate and this can lead to inequalities in the allocation of grant funding. Many local authorities also collect data on the achievement and attainment of Gypsy Traveller pupils. However, very few use this local data well to target support where it is most needed.
- 9 Most local authorities use aspects of the Welsh Assembly Government circular 'Moving Forward – Gypsy Traveller Education' to inform their policy and to enhance their provision for Gypsy Traveller pupils. However, although the circular contains much helpful advice, its overall impact in most schools has been limited. The best practice is in Wrexham, Cardiff and Newport where initiatives such as joint working with youth services and events to raise awareness of Gypsy Traveller culture are impacting positively on the achievement and wellbeing of Gypsy Traveller pupils.

Recommendations

- 10 Local authorities and schools should:
- R1 continue to find ways to improve the attendance rates of Gypsy Traveller children at secondary schools*;
 - R2 ensure that all schools have policies that address the specific needs of Gypsy Traveller pupils*;
 - R3 ensure that the curriculum promotes the positive aspects of Gypsy Traveller culture, particularly in schools where this group of pupils is on roll*;
 - R4 improve the use of attendance, exclusions and attainment data to evaluate the impact of support for Gypsy Traveller pupils; and
 - R5 ensure that any discrete provision for Gypsy Traveller pupils is only a short-term arrangement prior to full integration into mainstream secondary schools.
- 11 The Welsh Assembly Government should:
- R1 ensure that the data collected on Gypsy Traveller pupils from information supplied by designated local authority support staff is accurate and consistent*;
 - R2 consider ways in which funding can be allocated so that it places greater emphasis on the needs of secondary age pupils*; and
 - R3 provide guidelines on prosecution in cases where Gypsy Traveller pupil attendance falls to under 200 sessions a year, to ensure a consistent approach across Wales.

*Recommendation in the 2005 Estyn report

Context

- 12 This survey is a follow-up to the 2005 Estyn report on 'The Education of Gypsy Traveller Learners'. The main focus of this report is on the progress made in implementing the initial report's recommendations. Recommendations in the previous report (see appendix 1 for details) include the need to:
- share best practice;
 - improve data collection;
 - address low attendance;
 - make school policies more inclusive; and
 - ensure better curricular provision to raise awareness of the positive features of Gypsy Traveller culture.
- 13 Four local authorities in Wales – Cardiff, Flintshire, Swansea and Wrexham – have a dedicated traveller education service provision, with a similar arrangement in Newport through the Gwent Ethnic Minority Service (GEMS). Most other local authorities provide support to schools via a designated member of staff who co-ordinates provision for Gypsy Traveller pupils.
- 14 Most local authorities retain and administer the specific Welsh Assembly Government traveller support grant centrally, rather than delegating funding to individual schools. This enables a flexible approach to providing for pupils' needs, particularly where the numbers of Gypsy Traveller pupils fluctuate through the year and families travel to different areas of the country.
- 15 This report also assesses the impact of the Welsh Assembly Government's best practice guidance 'Moving Forward – Gypsy Traveller Education', published in March 2008 (Circular 003/2008). Schools and local authorities have had two years to take account of the 'Moving Forward' guidance in planning their provision and support for this learner group. The objectives set out in this circular are included in the Welsh Assembly Government's Gypsy Traveller Strategy, which has recently been published following consultation.
- 16 Throughout this report, case studies highlight the best practice found in the local authorities and secondary schools visited, in relation to their provision for Gypsy Traveller pupils.

1 Improving attendance

- 17 Estyn's 2005 report recommended that schools find ways of improving the attendance of Gypsy Traveller pupils. However, overall, the attendance of secondary age pupils in this group has not improved. It is still too low and improved attendance does not always result from the efforts of schools and traveller education staff.
- 18 The Welsh Assembly Government does not publish all-Wales figures for Gypsy Traveller pupil attendance, partly because the figures are unreliable as many Gypsy Traveller parents do not declare their children's heritage when they are asked by schools to provide details of their ethnic origin. This also means that the official figures for Gypsy Traveller pupils in Welsh schools are probably lower than the actual numbers.
- 19 There are no particular trends in attendance rates between most different categories of Gypsy Traveller pupils, although there are often big variations between families. Attendance at secondary school is highly dependent on the value that individual Gypsy Traveller families place on formal education. Pupils from more settled communities tend to have the highest levels of attendance and this can be as high as 90% for a whole school year.
- 20 The most successful strategies in improving attendance are:
- the establishment of good working relationships with Gypsy Traveller parents, often over a long period of time;
 - having a designated member of school staff act as the point of contact for any issues that Gypsy Traveller parents may wish to raise; and
 - joint working between services such as the traveller education service, or other school staff, education welfare officers, behaviour support staff, youth services and sports development officers, to take account of individual pupils' needs.
- 21 When all these strategies are in place, they often have a positive impact upon Gypsy Traveller pupils' overall levels of attendance.

Strategies for improving attendance

- 22 Most schools have a range of strategies in place to improve pupil attendance generally, but very few have strategies that specifically target Gypsy Traveller pupils.
- 23 One of the most effective strategies for improving the attendance of Gypsy Traveller pupils is where schools make direct contact with the parents. The better the relationship the school or dedicated staff has built with the parents, the better the improvement in attendance rates of the pupil. For example, in Cardiff, where traveller education service staff have developed good relationships with the Gypsy Traveller community over a number of years, schools report improved attendance rates for this group. St Illtyd's High School had overall attendance rates of approximately 90% last year, with the average attendance for Gypsy Traveller pupils being around 70%. This is gradually improving.

- 24 In Powys, the local authority has set a target of 80% for Gypsy Traveller pupil attendance. Welshpool High School reports Gypsy Traveller attendance rates as varying between 55% and 86%, with only one pupil out of the seven who attend the school achieving the local authority target. However, neither the local authority nor the school have put in place specific additional measures to address the low attendance rates of this group of pupils and setting a target has had little impact.
- 25 In some instances, schools and traveller education services adjust the curriculum they provide to make it more relevant for pupils reluctant to attend. For example, at the Delyn Centre in Flintshire, where there is separate provision for Gypsy Traveller pupils, staff have provided more 'fun' activities for pupils through collaboration with the youth service. Although attendance rates are still low, these measures are beginning to impact positively on attendance rates.
- 26 Most schools say that transport issues do have an effect on the attendance of Gypsy Traveller pupils when they live within the school's catchment area. However, in a few areas, traveller education service staff make special arrangements to transport pupils to and from school, as otherwise they would not attend.

Case study

Swansea traveller education service has made special arrangements to improve the attendance of Gypsy Traveller pupils.

Context

In Swansea, pupils who attend the separate Gypsy Traveller provision come from all over the Swansea area. Without special transport arrangements, the vast majority of these pupils would not be able to attend school.

Strategy

Traveller education service staff wanted to put in place more formalised arrangements for the education of Gypsy Traveller pupils whose parents would not allow them to attend mainstream secondary school. In order to do this, they gradually encouraged parents to allow their children to attend a part-time placement in a specially dedicated classroom, based in an unused adult education centre. This provision was to replace the previous provision of on-site education provided in a travelling mini-bus for short periods each week.

Action

The traveller education service looked at ways in which transport could be provided for these pupils, on a regular basis through the utilisation of existing resources. The service arranged for their mini-bus (formerly used to provide the on-site education), to transport Gypsy Traveller pupils to and from the specialist provision. Traveller education service staff act as bus escorts to ensure that pupils are collected from home, or from other sites where they may be staying, and the bus returns them at the end of the day.

Outcomes

This arrangement is time-consuming and expensive, but it allows staff to track pupils' whereabouts and gives encouragement to parents to send their children to school on a more regular basis. If this arrangement were not in place, these pupils would not access any secondary education.

- 27 Most schools monitor the attendance of Gypsy Traveller pupils through their normal procedures. This often involves close liaison with the education welfare service. In a few authorities, traveller education service staff work closely with education welfare officers in order to improve the attendance rates of Gypsy Traveller pupils. This includes joint visits to Gypsy Traveller sites and homes to establish pupils' whereabouts by talking to parents.

Case study

A few secondary schools in Newport use data analysis well to track and monitor the attendance of different groups of pupils.

Context

When St Julian's High School in Newport admitted a group of Roma Gypsy pupils, they used their standard procedures to monitor the attendance of these pupils to ensure the best possible outcomes both socially and educationally. Data analysis showed that European Roma pupils had the poorest levels of attendance of any group within the school. This was due to the fact that families of pupils who arrive in Wales when they are teenagers are often unwilling to send their children to secondary education on a full-time basis as this is not part of their culture. At this age, in their country of origin, children are expected to be working or even married.

Strategy

The school was therefore realistic in its expectations of good attendance. Home visits were planned to address poor attendance either by the education welfare officer or the home language support assistant, or in some cases joint visits by both. This approach was also intended to forge closer links with parents. Specific reward systems for pupils were also devised.

Action

The school used the reward systems successfully. Pupils responded well to these. Good links with the parents of the Roma pupils were also established, through the home visits and the translation, into Romanian, of the school's standard letter about the importance of good attendance. As a group, parents were also invited in to school to meet staff.

Outcomes

These measures had a positive impact on pupils' overall levels of attendance. Romanian Roma pupils in Duffryn High School, some of whom previously attended St Julian's, confirm that schools in Newport encourage good attendance through certificates, stickers and merits (in English and Romanian) and this encourages them to come to school. Pupils also confirm that, when they are absent from school, this is usually because of family commitments that take precedence over education.

Dual registration

- 28 The Welsh Assembly Government encourages schools with pupils who are travelling to use a system of dual registration. This offers schools a mechanism to capture attendance rates more reliably. The system means that pupils may be registered at their base school and also at any other provision they access, when travelling or when they attend other provision within the same local authority. This system is currently used successfully by a few schools. In areas such as Powys, where the majority of pupils are from the settled community, dual registration is not necessary.
- 29 For dual registration to work successfully, there need to be formal lines of communication between institutions. Dual registration is used successfully in Wrexham when Gypsy Traveller pupils attend part-time at both a secondary school and at provision provided by the youth service. However, communication difficulties can arise when families travel to other local authority areas, particularly when they cross into England.
- 30 In an effort to establish where families have moved to, Cardiff traveller education service staff use an 'intend to travel' form, which details a family's travel plans. This is usually completed by the family with support from traveller education service staff. It enables staff to communicate more effectively with other local authorities to track pupils' attendance. Traveller education service staff report that dual registration systems work best when good relations have been built up with the families of Gypsy Traveller pupils over a period of time. This means that parents are more likely to share their travel plans with school or traveller education service staff as they see this process as supportive.

New registration arrangements

- 31 A new registration code for schools, recently introduced by the Welsh Assembly Government, is used if a family is known to be travelling but the school does not know whether a pupil is attending another education provision (either at a school or other provider). In such cases, the pupils' absence can be 'authorised'. This change may have the impact of overcoming the reluctance of some schools to admit Gypsy Traveller pupils, because overall school absence figures will not be affected so adversely when pupils are travelling with their families.
- 32 For example, Penyrheol Comprehensive School in Swansea has pupils from the families of Occupational Travellers attending the school. These pupils are often

absent from school during the holiday season from May until the October half-term, as their families move around the country working on fairgrounds. The school says that the new travelling code, authorising their absence, will have a positive impact on the attendance figures of this group of its pupils.

- 33 There is some concern among traveller education staff that this use of the new registration codes may result in attendance figures looking much improved although in practice pupils may still not be attending school and school staff may be doing little to increase attendance.
- 34 For schools in areas where the Gypsy Traveller population is settled, this change in registration codes will have little impact. The biggest impact on attendance levels for schools in these areas are lengthy family absences from the area to attend occasions such as family weddings and funerals.

Prosecuting parents for pupils' poor attendance
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- 35 In several local authorities, Gypsy Traveller families are not prosecuted for poor attendance. This is because there is little evidence to show that prosecution improves the attendance of Gypsy Traveller pupils. Prosecution may also be counter-productive and harm relationships that have been built up over a number of years. Instead, many staff work closely with families to address issues of poor attendance. However, there is a lack of consistency across local authorities and traveller education services in their approach to prosecution currently, with most cases being considered on an individual basis, using local knowledge of the families.

2 Improving attitudes towards school

The curriculum

- 36 The 2005 Estyn report recommended that local authorities and schools should:
- “ensure that the curriculum promotes the positive aspects of Gypsy Traveller culture”.**
- 37 Although there are pockets of good practice in a few local authorities and in a few secondary schools, most secondary schools have not chosen to use the curriculum positively to promote positive aspects of Gypsy traveller culture. However, where there is discrete specialist provision, or in a few schools where there are large numbers of Gypsy Traveller pupils, more of an effort is made to raise all pupils’ awareness of the traditions and values of Gypsy Traveller families.
- 38 In the best practice, a few schools have embedded work on learning about Gypsy Traveller culture in their curriculum. When looking at the themes of prejudice and intolerance, pupils in Year 7 in St Julian’s High School in Newport spent time learning about the Holocaust and its devastating impact on the Roma community and then went on to study Roma and Gypsy Traveller culture. This successfully raised pupils’ awareness of the importance of inclusion.
- 39 In Wrexham, Year 10 pupils in St Joseph’s Catholic and Anglican High School watched a play during personal and social education (PSE), about a boy called Johnny Delaney. The play is based upon the true story of a Gypsy Traveller pupil and helped to raise pupils’ awareness about discrimination and harassment through empathy.
- 40 Although many schools address a range of issues to do with stereotyping and discrimination during PSE lessons, very few include specific lessons on Gypsy Traveller culture and traditions. Many schools say that this is because of prejudice within the local community. Schools say that they do not want Gypsy Traveller pupils to be singled out and become potential targets for abuse. In addition, many schools claim that Gypsy Traveller parents support this view, as they do not want their children to be identified as belonging to this group. This is because they have apparently experienced prejudice themselves within their local communities.
- 41 In Cardiff and Newport, the traveller education service and Gwent Ethnic Minority Service have worked in partnership with the Romany Arts Project and the South East Wales Equality Council to engage schools in raising awareness of Gypsy Traveller and Roma culture and to celebrate Gypsy Traveller History Month. This has been instrumental in improving pupils’ understanding of the community and has raised the self-esteem of its members, through competitions, school assemblies and workshops. Such an approach demonstrates the value and success of celebrating diverse cultures as a way of bringing different cultural groups together and promoting racial harmony through better understanding and tolerance of differences.

Policies and practices

- 42 The 2005 Estyn report found that very few schools had policies that specifically addressed the needs of Gypsy Traveller pupils. This is still the case and includes those schools with large numbers of these pupils. 'Moving Forward' advises that:
- “Schools are not expected to have separate policies for Gypsy and Traveller pupils, as this may have the effect of emphasising rather than promoting inclusion.**
- “However, it is recommended that anti-bullying, anti-racism and equal opportunities policies and strategies take account of the particular needs of these pupils and make specific reference to how these will be met.”**
- 43 Most schools use generic copies of policies provided by their local authorities, but do not tailor these to reflect their own school's circumstances. These generic policies tend to refer to ethnic groups in general, but rarely to Gypsy Traveller pupils specifically. Only a few schools adapt local authority policies well to reflect these pupils' particular needs. Most schools justify the non-adaptation of policies by saying that they treat everyone equally, and this means that there is no need for policies to be tailored to specific groups. For example, few schools have suitable formal mechanisms in place to listen to the needs and views of Gypsy Traveller pupils, through representation on school councils. In the best practice, in a very few schools where an ethos of inclusion is fully embedded into all aspects of school life, policies are comprehensive and appropriate to the needs of Gypsy Traveller pupils.
- 44 In a very few schools, when members of the school's senior management team are fully committed to inclusion and take an active part in dealing with any incidents of unacceptable racist behaviour, this has a positive impact on reducing instances of bullying against Gypsy Traveller pupils.

Case study

A Newport school uses its existing high-quality policies to address issues of bullying or harassment.

Context

St Julian's High School states that it is committed to providing the best quality education for all its pupils through total inclusion. The school has achieved the Level 2 Newport Equality and Diversity Award and also the seven top grades in its last inspection. Because the school is already a very inclusive community, it did not need to adapt its existing policies to cater for a sudden influx of Romanian Roma pupils, none of whom spoke English.

Strategy

The school worked closely with Newport's Gwent Ethnic Minority Service to ensure that pupils' additional language needs were catered for and to successfully integrate them into school life.

Action

The school's senior management team are totally committed to inclusion and deal with any incidents of harassment or bullying that arise immediately. The school logs the very few racist incidents that occur and submits these regularly to the Gwent Ethnic Minority Service. The school reports only two minor incidents that were targeted at Romanian Roma pupils.

Outcomes

Both these incidents were dealt with immediately to the satisfaction of these pupils and their parents. Overall, few such incidents occur.

- 45 Most schools say that they have no racist behaviour targeted at Gypsy Traveller pupils and have no record of any such incidents. However, where racist incident returns are made by schools, most local authorities do not monitor these by minority-ethnic group and so they are unaware of whether Gypsy Traveller pupils, as a specific group, are experiencing racial discrimination.

Exclusions

- 46 Only a few schools make additional arrangements to avoid the exclusion of Gypsy Traveller pupils. However, where local authorities have a dedicated traveller education service or other staff who support these pupils, useful additional strategies such as home visits are employed. A good example of this is in Newport, where Duffryn and St Julian's High Schools have support from a Romanian-speaking home language assistant. She provides an invaluable link between the schools and the families and is instrumental in helping to resolve any behavioural issues that arise.
- 47 Where Gypsy Traveller pupils are at risk of exclusion, a few schools employ a multi-agency approach to provide support and this can be extremely effective as is shown in the case study below.

Case study

A school in Wrexham successfully uses a multi-agency approach to avoid possible exclusion.

Context

For a number of years, a pupil from the Gypsy Traveller community had been attending St Joseph's Catholic High School in Wrexham and had been progressing well with her studies, despite traditional pressures from her family. When this pupil reached Year 10 she began to suffer from depression and anxiety regarding her cultural identity. She became disruptive and was at risk of exclusion.

Strategy

In order to avoid temporary or permanent exclusion, the school organised a meeting to bring together a range of different support agencies to agree and put in place a

multi-agency package of support.

Action

This multi-agency approach included a learning coach, pastoral support, anger management sessions, youth worker support, liaison with and support for parents and support from the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services. Regular meetings were held to review progress.

Outcome

This approach led to an increase in the pupil's self-esteem and better liaison between the school and the parents. The pupil's attendance stabilised and her behaviour became more settled, allowing her to continue with her studies.

- 48 'Moving Forward' makes schools aware of the potential impact of hurtful behaviour by other pupils against Gypsy Travellers, when it says:

“It is recognised that it may not be realistic to expect Gypsy Traveller pupils not to stand up for themselves in the face of violence or particularly hurtful name-calling as they are brought up to stand up for themselves”.

- 49 This was the case at Penyrheol Comprehensive School in Swansea, but intervention from the traveller education service successfully overcame the issues for a pupil from one Occupational Traveller family. In addition, the traveller education service provided one-to-one support where necessary in certain lessons that acted as a known trigger point for poor behaviour by this pupil.
- 50 The provision of flexible vocational courses and curricular provision through the youth service in school time, such as in a few schools in Wrexham, successfully increases Gypsy Traveller pupil engagement and helps to reduce the risk of exclusion.
- 51 Most schools report that there are no more exclusions of Gypsy Traveller pupils than of other groups. Schools say that poor behaviour leading to the potential risk of exclusion is very much dependent on the attitude of the individual pupil and his or her parents and the value that they place on education.

Transition arrangements

- 52 The local authorities with a dedicated traveller education service often make additional arrangements to ease transition when Gypsy Traveller pupils move from primary to secondary schools. This may be by arranging for headteachers to visit sites, and traveller education service staff to visit parents, so that they can visit the secondary schools involved for themselves. Such personal contact often impacts positively on the attitudes of Gypsy Traveller parents towards secondary education.
- 53 Traveller education services' staff frequently know the Gypsy Traveller families in their area well, having worked with many of them over a number of years. Because of this, staff are often able to tailor transition arrangements to the needs of a

particular family. Transition is usually more difficult for Gypsy Traveller parents than for their children as, in many cases, the parents have negative cultural attitudes towards secondary education. Once one child in the family is in secondary education, whether in mainstream, or in discrete provision, it tends to be easier for subsequent children to settle, as the precedent has been set and parents are more accepting of education.

Case study

A Swansea comprehensive school has innovative arrangements to help improve transition for Gypsy Traveller pupils.

Context

Penyrheol Comprehensive School in Swansea educates pupils from the families of Occupational Travellers who are based in the school's catchment area for part of the year. Because of the nature of the work their families do, pupils are always out of the area during the summer months. This can cause problems with transition at the end of Year 6 and the beginning of Year 7.

Strategy

The school has built up very good links with the families and, wherever possible, parents try to bring their children back to the area for the transition day visits. However, because this is not always possible, the school has put an alternative strategy in place by building more transition links with its feeder primary schools.

Action

The school has created a 'Transition Council', organised and run by a pastoral assistant. This consists of four Year 10 pupils and Year 6 representatives from each of the six feeder primary schools. The council meets every six weeks throughout the year and discusses issues such as bullying. It also answers any queries or questions that Year 6 representatives have brought from their classmates. The answers are then reported back.

Outcomes

The council has had a very positive impact on Year 6 attitudes to transition. Due to the success of this initiative, the school has included its Year 10 Occupational Traveller pupil on the Transition Council this year, as there are other children from Occupational Traveller families due to transfer into Year 7 in September 2011.

- 54 In those local authorities where there is no specific traveller education service, the vast majority of schools make no special transition arrangements for Gypsy Traveller pupils. In addition, only a very few authorities monitor the number of Gypsy Traveller pupils who make the transition from primary to secondary schools.

3 Improving achievement

- 55 The Welsh Assembly Government publishes data annually on the attainment of Gypsy Traveller pupils. The data suggests that the attainment of Gypsy Traveller pupils has not improved. For example, the data for key stage 3 below shows the low attainment levels of Gypsy Traveller pupils when compared to all-Wales figures. From 2006-2008 to 2007-2009, the attainment of Travellers of Irish and Gypsy/Roma Heritage in the core subject indicator (CSI) fell by 1.3 and 2.5 percentage points respectively.
- 56 However, this data can only provide a rough guide to Gypsy Traveller pupil attainment, as the number of pupils accounted for in the data is lower than the actual numbers of Gypsy Traveller pupils in secondary schools.

Key stage 3	Number of pupils	English	Mathematics	Science	CSI*
2006- 2008					
Traveller of Irish heritage	62	29%	37.1%	37.1%	22.6%
Gypsy/Roma	59	15.3%	20.3%	23.7%	10.2%
All-Wales	110,634	68.8%	71.5%	72.7%	58.4%
2007- 2009					
Traveller of Irish heritage	61	27.9%	34.4%	31.1%	21.3%
Gypsy Roma	65	18.5%	16.9%	21.5%	7.7%
All-Wales	107,648	69.7%	72.1%	73.4%	59.4%

* The CSI is the expected level of attainment for pupils of this age.

- 57 Key stage 4 data is even worse and shows that no Gypsy Traveller pupils, whose results are collected by the Welsh Assembly Government, have achieved the core subject indicator.

Vocational courses

- 58 In the more settled Gypsy Traveller communities, where pupils attend mainstream comprehensive schools, the 14-19 pathways initiative is providing opportunities for more regular attendees to access a range of vocational training.

Case study

The Flintshire traveller education service is beginning to implement useful initiatives through the 14-19 pathways to raise the achievement of Gypsy Traveller pupils.

Context

The recently established Delyn Centre is an alternative educational provision for secondary age Gypsy Traveller pupils in Flintshire. This provision is attended by pupils whose parents do not want them to attend mainstream secondary education.

Strategy

The aim of this provision is to enable pupils to gain basic skills, GCSEs, and other qualifications or credits. In addition the traveller education service is hoping that this provision will decrease the number of Gypsy Traveller pupils who become NEETS (Not in Employment, Education or Training) at the age of 16 or younger.

Action

Training has been provided for all local careers personnel. A learning coach on Gypsy Traveller issues has also been provided. The learning coach has visited pupils and their families, both at Delyn and in their own homes, to begin to forge relationships with the families. Pupils also receive support from both the learning coach and traveller education service staff with applications, references and interviews.

Outcomes

As a result of this support, the Year 11 pupil attending Delyn in 2009-2010 has secured a place in Deeside college studying for a hair and beauty qualification. Two pupils in Year 10 have been offered places on 14-19 learning pathways construction courses.

- 59 However, the course choices that pupils make tend to reinforce traditional stereotyping of roles within the Gypsy Traveller community and therefore restrict equality of opportunities. For example, courses such as hairdressing and beauty are a popular choice for many girls, with boys choosing options such as construction.
- 60 In schools where the Gypsy Traveller population is transient, schools do not encourage this group of pupils to access vocational courses. This is because Gypsy Traveller pupils are often not in school long enough to complete the necessary coursework.
- 61 In a few schools, Gypsy Traveller pupils gain GCSE qualifications. These pupils tend to be those whose parents are increasingly recognising the value of formal qualifications, as traditional areas of work for the Gypsy Traveller community disappear.

Improving basic and social skills

- 62 A few local authorities and schools, in conjunction with Gypsy Traveller support staff, provide specific programmes to improve the basic and social skills of Gypsy Traveller pupils. In most instances, the programmes on offer are the same as the provision made for other pupils.

Case study

The Cardiff traveller education service monitors the performance of Gypsy Traveller pupils and works with schools to raise their levels of achievement.

Context

The Cardiff traveller education service works closely with schools to support them in identifying underachievement of Gypsy Traveller pupils and to find ways to address this, wherever possible.

Strategy

A Cardiff secondary school met with the traveller education service co-ordinator to discuss a pilot project concerned with raising the literacy levels of Gypsy Traveller pupils in Year 9 who had been identified as underachieving.

Action

The school's head of English requested focused support from the traveller education service peripatetic teacher to improve the writing skills of three Gypsy Traveller pupils. The school hoped that these pupils would achieve level 5 at the end of key stage 3 (the average expected attainment for this age group). Support was provided and the three pupils were targeted for a once-weekly intensive course.

Outcomes

All three pupils achieved level 5 in literacy at the end of Year 9. Due to this successful outcome, the pilot scheme has now been extended to Gypsy Traveller pupils in Year 8.

- 63 In the separate provision made for Gypsy Traveller pupils in Flintshire, pupils benefit from music and dance courses provided by a youth forum worker. They also work with the sports development team to improve their health and fitness through taking part in a variety of sports and in a gardening project.
- 64 In Swansea, pupils have had their awareness of trailer safety improved through links with the local fire service. They are also taken swimming by their teacher and are taught to cook and take part in sponsored events such as Sport Relief. Such projects have a beneficial impact on pupils' wider skills.

- 65 In Newport, the Gwent Ethnic Minority Service has worked with Coleg Gwent to provide a course to develop the basic English skills of older European Roma pupils. The course also provides tuition in basic mathematics and information and communications technology skills, as many of these pupils have previously received no formal education.
- 66 Many local authorities run programmes such as SEAL (Social and Emotional Aspects Learning) and SAP (Student Assistance Programme) in their schools. In a few schools, Gypsy Traveller pupils are included in these programmes. Schools report that in a few cases, such programmes have a beneficial impact upon the self-esteem of Gypsy Traveller pupils, and this in turn impacts positively on their school attendance and their levels of achievement.

Encouraging talent

- 67 A very few secondary schools recognise and develop particular talents that individual Gypsy Traveller pupils possess, but in most schools no such special provision is made.
- 68 Although most schools provide a range of extra-curricular clubs that are open to all of their pupils, very few Gypsy Traveller pupils choose to attend these as they often see them as an extension of the school day.

Case study

A Powys high school's initiative to encourage and develop a Gypsy Traveller pupil's musical talent

Context

Staff at Welshpool High School noticed that one of its Gypsy Traveller pupils was fascinated by the piano in one of the school halls. This led them to consider whether this pupil had a special musical talent even though the pupil had never had any formal music training.

Strategy

The school arranged for the pupil to play the piano for a member of the music staff, in order to assess whether he had natural musical ability. This was quickly confirmed.

Action

As a result, the school made arrangements for the pupil to have access to a piano every morning before school. The pupil played on a regular basis and showed much promise. This led the school to provide formal music and singing lessons to develop the pupil's talent.

Outcomes

As a result, the pupil was regularly able to perform in school assemblies and concerts. With continued encouragement the pupil also gained a pass in GCSE music.

Homework

- 69 Most secondary schools run homework clubs, but they report that very few Gypsy Traveller pupils choose to attend these. There are specific arrangements in place to encourage Gypsy Traveller pupils with homework in only very few areas. In Wrexham, traveller education service staff support mixed-culture homework clubs in a few schools and these are attended by small numbers of Gypsy Traveller pupils. In Cardiff, the traveller education service runs a homework club on a designated Gypsy Traveller site and this is well attended and impacts positively on pupils' attainment in school.
- 70 Romanian Roma pupils in Duffryn High School confirm that they have targets for improvements in literacy and they understand when they have achieved these. They receive homework and, if they find this difficult, they receive extra support from English additional language support staff. This has a beneficial effect on their ability to cope in mainstream lessons.

Providing continuity of learning

- 71 Over the years, much of the Gypsy Traveller population in Wales has become more settled and many families do not travel, other than for events such as weddings or funerals. However, where schools have pupils from families that travel, only a few have good arrangements in place to try to ensure the continuity of pupils' learning when they are travelling.
- 72 The Swansea traveller education service, for example, liaised closely with traveller support staff in Pembrokeshire, when a Year 10 pupil went travelling over the summer with his family. They arranged for him to sit his GCSE examinations at a Pembrokeshire comprehensive school, close to where the family was staying.

Case study

An innovative approach used by a Swansea comprehensive school to help to ensure continuity of learning

Context

Penyrheol Comprehensive School in Swansea has four pupils from Occupational Traveller families. These families have parents who work on fairs around the country, during the summer season from around April until the October half term. As the pupils travel and work with their parents they miss a great deal of school. This has a significant impact on their academic attainment and their ability to re-integrate into school life after several months of absence. To help alleviate this problem, the school, in conjunction with Swansea traveller education service, ran a pilot project last year with a Year 7 pupil.

Strategy

The school considered a number of ways in which closer contact could be maintained with the pupil when his family were travelling. Possibilities were discussed with his parents before a final strategy was agreed.

Action

The pupil was provided with a laptop computer to take with him when his family were out of the area and his parents agreed to purchase a device to provide him with Wi-Fi internet access. The Year 7 pastoral assistant kept in regular contact with the boy and his family via email and ensured that work in all subjects was sent to him electronically, with deadlines for when this should be returned. This system worked very effectively.

Outcome

The pupil was also able to stay in regular electronic contact with his friends from school and his form tutor and this was invaluable in helping a smooth return after a long period of absence. It also enabled some continuity of education.

Because of the successful impact of this pilot project on the pupil's academic achievement and his social skills, the school intends to make similar provision for all of its other pupils from Occupational Traveller families when work takes them away from the area in the summer of 2011.

Using data to track pupils' progress

- 73 Each year, local authorities report to the Welsh Assembly Government on how the delegated grant for Gypsy Traveller pupils has been spent. These reports are detailed and give a good overview of the support provided and the initiatives undertaken. In a few authorities, the success of strategies aimed at raising the achievement of this group of pupils is measured well through analysing data on attendance, exclusions and attainment. In Cardiff, for example, the traveller education service collects and analyses data on its Gypsy Traveller pupils and can show that outcomes for this group of pupils are steadily improving.
- 74 However, in most authorities, although data on Gypsy Traveller pupils is collected, it is not used well to target where support is most needed or to measure the impact of the support provided.
- 75 A few secondary schools use data and other indicators effectively to assess outcomes for Gypsy Traveller pupils.

Case study

The successful use of data in a Wrexham high school to identify the impact of support put in place for Gypsy Traveller pupils

Context

St Joseph's Catholic and Anglican High School in Wrexham educates a number of pupils from the local Gypsy Traveller community and is committed to ensuring that these pupils achieve to the best of their ability.

Strategy

The school has put in place a number of strategies to support these pupils and evaluate the success that these initiatives have on pupils' achievements and wellbeing.

Action

Staff used a range of data and other information, such as talking to pupils and their parents, to identify the impact of the support strategies. Additional support included: a curriculum enrichment programme; joint provision with the local youth service; support from a traveller education service secondary teacher; links with the community to develop 'street dance'; and a homework club.

Outcomes

The school found that pupils are becoming more confident to move on to post-16 education. Exclusion rates have fallen, as have reported incidents of bullying. Participation in extracurricular activities has increased.

Overall, levels of achievement are still low, but have improved through alternative curriculum provision, and more pupils are attending into key stage 4.

- 76 However, only a very few secondary schools use data well to analyse the impact that the support provided has had on Gypsy Traveller pupils' self-esteem and overall levels of achievement.

4 Use of resources – staffing, provision and grant support

- 77 Most traveller education service staff provide high-quality support to schools, but they also provide important pastoral support to the parents of Gypsy Traveller pupils in the wider Gypsy Traveller community. This often involves support for day-to-day matters requiring literacy and numeracy skills. Over the years, many traveller education service staff have gained the trust of this group and this is beginning to impact positively on some Gypsy Traveller parents' attitude to secondary education. Many of this group of parents have themselves had negative experiences in secondary schools. In addition, Gypsy Traveller parents also wish to protect their children from what they see as the sex and drugs culture of the teenage years. Because of this, tackling issues of low attendance at secondary level and the consequent low attainment is a huge problem for traveller education service staff as this involves changing well-established attitudes and values in the Gypsy Traveller community. It is also a slow process for traveller education service staff to change the negative attitudes of many secondary schools to Gypsy Traveller pupils.

The provision of places

- 78 The nature of provision for Gypsy Traveller pupils varies across authorities. Most local authorities provide only mainstream secondary education placements for this group. However, in a few local authorities, Gypsy Traveller pupils are taught in separate, discrete units for their entire secondary education. This is because, in some cases, parents of Gypsy Traveller pupils of secondary school age will not agree to mainstream placements for their children, due to cultural issues. While discrete provision is often appropriate as an interim short-term arrangement, long-term placements may contravene the Race Relations Act 1976 (Amendment) Regulations 2003.
- 79 In its guidance document 'Moving Forward - Gypsy Traveller Education', the Welsh Assembly Government recommends that local authorities consider developing specific guidance for their schools on the inclusion of temporary and short-term pupils. However, in practice, few authorities have done this, as they report that requests for such placements are not an issue in their area. In Newport, Duffryn High School was able to quickly provide a place for a pupil from a circus family after a single phone call to the local authority. Short-term placements are more of a problem in primary schools, where restrictions on class sizes can mean that schools are often full, particularly in urban areas.
- 80 Swansea and Flintshire local authorities use the specific grant funding to provide discrete provision to ensure that pupils access at least some secondary education. However, pupils attending discrete provision do not always receive their entitlement to 25 hours of secondary education a week.
- 81 In particular, the Welsh Assembly Government encourages schools to aim for the attendance of Gypsy Traveller pupils to be at least 200 half-day sessions a year (approximately 53% annual attendance), but emphasises that this should not be regarded as a target. However, in Swansea, where there is discrete provision for some Gypsy Traveller pupils, this is only provided on a part-time basis. This means

that pupils attending this provision do not have the opportunity to reach a total of 200 sessions per year, even if their parents ensure their regular attendance.

Data collection and funding allocations

- 82 In 2009, in order to ensure that the data it collects from schools more accurately reflects the diversity of the school population, the Welsh Assembly Government introduced changes to the 'Traveller' category in its annual school data collection exercise. The new categories offer Gypsy Traveller pupils and parents a wider choice from a more comprehensive list which may better fit their cultural heritage. However, due to the high levels of mobility and transient life-styles of sections of the Gypsy Traveller community, data on this ethnic group can at best only provide a snapshot, accurate at the time of collection. In addition, schools and local authorities report that it is not uncommon for families of Gypsy Traveller heritage to fail to declare this on school data returns, for fear of being singled out unfavourably by the local community or the school.
- 83 The Welsh Assembly Government distributes a grant for the 'Education of Gypsy Children and Traveller Children' to local authorities according to a funding formula based on the numbers of this group of pupils. These numbers are supplied by the designated Gypsy Traveller co-ordinator in each authority. The current system takes no account of the greater needs of secondary age pupils. This is the same funding system that was in place when the 2005 Estyn report was published. At the time, Estyn recommended that the Welsh Assembly Government:
- “should ensure that data collected is accurate and consistent and consider ways in which funding can be allocated so that it places greater emphasis on the needs of learners”.**
- 84 Hence, the system still fails to ensure that the data collected accurately reflects the level of need and ages of Gypsy Traveller pupils within each authority. This continuing problem can lead to inequalities in the allocation of resources.
- 85 Most schools are pleased with the levels of support provided for Gypsy Traveller pupils by their local authority, particularly where there is a dedicated traveller education service. Local authorities base their support on pupil numbers and on the number of Gypsy Traveller pupils with additional learning needs. However, this local data is not always accurate either, as pupil numbers can fluctuate considerably over a short period of time.

5 Sharing best practice - 'Moving Forward'

- 86 In 2007, the Welsh Assembly Government established the All-Wales Co-ordinators Group for Gypsy and Traveller Education. This group has successfully enabled staff with responsibility for Gypsy Traveller pupils to discuss common issues and share best practice across the 22 Welsh local authorities. This has been achieved through regular meetings and visits to observe provision and best practice in local authorities, particularly those with a dedicated traveller education service. However, as yet, the work of this group has not impacted widely on policy and practice with regard to Gypsy Traveller pupils in many secondary schools.
- 87 Members of the all-Wales group have assisted the Welsh Assembly Government in producing the 2008 guidance document 'Moving Forward – Gypsy Traveller Education'. Most local authorities have tried to ensure that their schools are familiar with this document, which provides best practice guidance on supporting this group of pupils. This document has been useful in a few cases to schools with little previous experience of Gypsy Traveller pupils. It is also helpful in ensuring continuity in practice when there are changes in the dedicated traveller education service staff who support this group.

Case study

An example of how a Newport High School drew on best practice to ensure the full inclusion of a specific group of pupils at very short notice

Context

St Julian's High School in Newport admitted 15 Romanian Gypsy Roma pupils in one week in the autumn term 2009. Most of these pupils spoke little English and had very little previous experience of formal education.

Strategy

Prior to this, the school had experience of providing support for a very few asylum seekers and refugees. 'Moving Forward' proved to be a valuable source of information for this school when planning, at very short notice, suitable provision and an appropriate curriculum for this considerable influx of pupils with very specific needs. The school also ensured that best practice was implemented through working closely with the Gwent Ethnic Minority Service.

Action

Senior management are very committed to inclusion for all pupils and worked closely with staff to ensure that the needs of this group of pupils were met. This was achieved through a mix of additional support in withdrawal groups and differentiated provision in mainstream lessons. The school also worked hard to build relationships with parents as they saw this as a critical factor in ensuring that these pupils made progress.

Outcomes

The impact of these strategies was that the school met the needs of this group of pupils well. As a result, pupils enjoyed coming to school and the school felt that these pupils had also gained much from the experience due to the quality of the relationships that were forged. The school also found that the expertise staff developed in adapting the curriculum and approaches to teaching to ensure the successful full inclusion of this group enriched school life.

- 88 All the local authorities and traveller education services visited during this survey are aware of the Welsh Assembly Government circular 'Moving Forward – Gypsy Traveller Education'. They are using aspects of it to inform policy or to enhance their provision, for example to build closer links with other agencies and improve the quality of education for Gypsy Traveller pupils.
- 89 The circular is impacting positively in Wrexham where the traveller education service and the schools they support, find the background and contextual information on Gypsy Travellers useful in raising staff awareness of potential issues with this group of pupils. Much of the good practice highlighted in the document in relation to 14-19 pathways and learning coaches; links with youth support services; the provision of flexible curriculum opportunities; improved transition arrangements; and close partnership working with parents has already been put in place. This is beginning to impact positively on the achievement and wellbeing of Gypsy Traveller pupils in this local authority.
- 90 Examples of good practice are highlighted in the circular in other local authorities, such as Newport and Cardiff, where awareness of Gypsy Traveller culture has been successfully raised through events and activities organised during Gypsy Traveller History Month. In spite of this and, although the circular contains much helpful advice, its overall impact in most schools has been limited.

Appendix 1: The evidence base

This survey considers how successfully the recommendations in Estyn's 2005 report 'The Education of Gypsy Traveller Pupils' have been addressed. These recommendations were for schools and local authorities to:

- find ways to improve attendance and increase the numbers of Gypsy Traveller children attending secondary schools;
- ensure that schools have policies that address the specific needs of Gypsy Traveller pupils; and
- ensure that the curriculum promotes the positive aspects of Gypsy Traveller culture.

The report also recommended that the Welsh Assembly Government should:

- collaborate with local authorities to identify and put in place appropriate arrangements to enable staff, with responsibilities for Gypsy Traveller pupils, to discuss common issues and share best practice; and
- ensure that data collected is accurate and consistent and consider ways in which funding can be allocated so that it places a greater emphasis on the needs of pupils.

The survey also explores the impact of the 'Moving Forward – Gypsy Traveller Education', strategy for Gypsy Traveller pupils in 10 secondary schools and the local authorities of Wrexham, Flintshire, Swansea, Powys, Cardiff and Newport. Wherever possible, the survey team spoke to Gypsy Traveller pupils.

Appendix 2: Funding arrangements

Local authorities are obliged by statute to ensure that all children of compulsory school age receive an education that is appropriate to their age, abilities and any special educational needs, to promote high standards in the provision of education and the welfare of children. These obligations apply to all children whether or not they are permanent residents in an area. Grant funding is used by local authority for projects that seek to improve and broaden provision for Gypsy Traveller pupils.

The Welsh Assembly Government delegates funding to local authorities to support the education of Gypsy Traveller pupils through a specific grant. In 2010-2011, allocations were as follows to the 18 local authorities who bid for funding*.

Local authority	Grant funding 2010-2011
Gwynedd	£22,243
Conwy/Denbighshire	£35,332
Flintshire	£66,220
Wrexham	£49,686
Powys	£28,044
Pembrokeshire	£93,946
Carmarthenshire	£62,375
Swansea	£61,640
Neath Port Talbot	£59,944
Bridgend	£27,768
The Vale of Glamorgan	£7,362
Rhondda Cynon Taff	£22,971
Merthyr Tydfil	£20,794
Blaenau Gwent	£31,476
Torfaen	£42,944
Newport	£86,140
Cardiff	£181,302

*Source: The Welsh Assembly Government

Anglesey, Ceredigion, Caerphilly and Monmouthshire had no registered Gypsy Traveller pupils and did not bid for funding.

The numbers of Gypsy Traveller pupils fluctuate considerably in many local authorities during the course of a year and this means that the grant allocations are often based on historical pupil numbers. In addition, actual numbers of Gypsy Traveller pupils are often undercounted as not all Gypsy Traveller parents declare their children's heritage on schools' data collection records.

Appendix 3: Legal framework and definitions

The following definitions are taken from the Welsh Assembly Government circular 'Moving Forward – Gypsy Traveller Education'.

Gypsies and Travellers are generally represented by three main groups:

- Gypsy Travellers;
- Occupational Travellers; and
- New Age Travellers.

The term Gypsy Traveller includes Irish Travellers, Scottish Gypsies/Travellers, English Gypsies and Romany and Welsh Gypsies.

New Age Travellers are described as a UK group which emerged in the 1960s. Some have dropped the use of 'Age', whilst others prefer to be known simply as Travellers.

Occupational Travellers include those who belong to the traditional Show and Fairground communities, the Circus communities, and Bargees and other waterway family businesses.

Romany Gypsies have been recognised in law since 1988 and Irish Travellers have had legal recognition as an ethnic group since 2000. Both groups are covered and protected by the Race Relations (Amendment) Act, 2000.

For ease of reference, the generic term 'Gypsy Travellers' is used throughout this report when referring to all of the groups described above. However, the distinctive identity and ethnic status of each community are fully recognised and acknowledged.

Appendix 4: References

Moving Forward - Gypsy Traveller Education. Welsh Assembly Government Circular 003/2008

The Education of Gypsy Traveller Pupils. Estyn, 2005

A Road Less Travelled – A Draft Gypsy Traveller Strategy. Welsh Assembly Government Consultation Document, August 2009

Consultation on School Attendance Codes. Welsh Assembly Government, December 2009

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School Admission Appeals Code. Welsh Assembly Government Statutory Code Document No: 003/2009, July 2009

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