

Improving relations with parents to raise achievement and improve attendance of Traveller pupils: Kingsmead Primary School

URN: 100250
Region: London
Remit: Schools

Provider background

[Kingsmead Primary School](#) is a medium-sized 3–11 community primary school with 245 pupils on roll, situated in London near Hackney Marsh in an area of significantly high deprivation. The school was judged outstanding in its [last inspection](#) in October 2011.

Brief description

This good practice example shows how Kingsmead Primary School engages Traveller parents to help raise achievement and improve attendance of their children.

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 proportion of Traveller pupils at Kingsmead Primary School is 4.5%, but has risen over time. None are new to speaking English. There are no Gypsy or Roma pupils on roll. The school has been relentless in raising the achievement of Traveller pupils. All leave school at the end of Key Stage 2 having reached at least national expectations in reading, writing and mathematics. This demonstrates good and often outstanding progress from their low starting points.

All pupils' progress is checked regularly, including by ethnicity. This enables the Inclusion Manager to track the progress of Traveller pupils. Staff discuss all pupils

during regular pupil progress meetings and agree next steps, which may include pupil support from the Inclusion Manager, resources for staff or suggestions for teaching strategies. Where Traveller pupils or other individuals are struggling with their reading, they receive one-to-one or small group catch-up sessions with a specialist reading teacher. Parents are invited into school to see what activities they can do with their children at home to support their reading. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, there is a focus on language development and communication skills for pupils at below age-expected levels. This continues through Key Stage 1 so that pupils can catch up quickly and make substantial and sustained progress in Key Stage 2.

Improving attendance

The school is consistent in its approach to pupil attendance. Parents are contacted on the first day of absence to ensure that reasons for non-attendance are valid. If necessary, staff collect pupils from home. Where attendance is an ongoing concern, parents have to attend more formal meetings at school, called 'attendance surgeries'. Parents are reminded several times by telephone and text message that the meeting is taking place and, in most instances, they attend. The school clearly explains the consequences of poor attendance, including the potential for court action and fines.

The school has successfully worked with the Local Authority Attendance Officer and Traveller Education Service to tackle persistent absence, which fell to 12.5% in 2012/13 – compared to the national average for Traveller pupils of 40.6%. The overall level of attendance for Traveller pupils was 86.8% compared to the national average for all Traveller pupils of 79.6%.¹ While this is still below the national average for all pupils, it is a significant improvement over previous attendance levels, some of which were as low as 42% four years ago.

There are regular rewards for good and improving attendance for individuals and classes. Notices about when the term starts after a holiday are placed on the school gates. Pupils enjoy school, understand the importance of regular attendance and want to come to school. The school has gained the trust and respect of parents over a period of time, through key workers such as the Inclusion Manager and attendance officer. Parents now understand that the school has high expectations for attendance and the importance of regular attendance through talking to key staff. Parents now inform the school in advance of planned absences; this is a large step forward.

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.

Working with families

School staff have established positive relationships with parents through home visits and regular telephone contact. Leaders and teachers have found that communication with families is more successful when oral.

Parents are encouraged to send their children to nursery. The headteacher knows the families well and has built up good relationships. She often knows when children within the community are of nursery age. She is very proactive in talking to the parents and encouraging them to send their children to the Early Years Foundation Stage. The school reminds parents when to apply and helps them to complete their admission forms.

Parents are confident to allow their children to go on trips despite their worries because they trust the school. The school has gained this trust through a number of ways.

- Parents can stay in touch with their children by access to the school mobile phone number. Parents rarely use it but are reassured by the security that it is there.
- Staff will give anxious parents a quick telephone call to say that all is well, which is much appreciated.
- Staff are happy to be the partner of the Traveller child during the visit to reassure parents that their child will be safe.
- If Traveller parents were not confident in the school, they would previously keep their children off school on the day of trips but that now hardly ever happens.

All staff know the Traveller families and individual pupils very well. Pivotal to the school's success in achievement, attendance and engagement with parents are the key staff involved. The family worker and inclusion manager are available and visible to parents at the beginning and end of the school day. They take time to talk to parents to build relationships, including visiting them at home. The low rate of staff turnover ensures continuity.

Staff have had good training from the local authority through the Traveller Education Service. They have developed a high level of expertise in working with Traveller pupils. The Traveller Education Service advisor visits the school regularly and works closely with the Inclusion Manager to check on the progress that Traveller pupils are making. The service is an excellent resource for the school to draw on, including curriculum resources, and it has excellent relationships with all the Traveller families.

Gypsy, Roma and Traveller history month is celebrated every June. The whole entrance hall is decorated and displayed. Pupils are all involved. They visit exhibitions and watch films and travelling theatre productions celebrating Gypsy, Roma and Traveller culture. This is run by the Traveller Education Service and is borough-wide in Hackney.

The headteacher has an unwavering commitment to celebrating diversity and understanding the population her school serves; it is deeply rooted in the ethos of the school. Traveller pupils say they 'fit in' and develop a very positive attitude to school where they can be themselves. One comments: 'If the staff understand my culture then I feel as valued as everyone else.'

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.