



Moving forward together: Raising Gypsy, Roma and Traveller achievement

Booklet 3: Learning and teaching



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Moving forward together: Raising Gypsy, Roma and Traveller achievement

Booklet 3: Learning and teaching

Preface

This guidance aims to support schools and settings in promoting the progress and achievement of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils and gives essential background information for those involved in the teaching of these pupils. It has been produced as part of the DCSF action to raise the achievement of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils and will support schools in meeting their statutory duties in terms of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000.

The guidance materials consist of four interrelated booklets:

1. Introduction
2. Leadership and management
3. Learning and teaching
4. Engagement with parents, carers and the wider community

It is strongly recommended that Booklet 1: Introduction and Booklet 2: Leadership and management are both read before the other two, as they give the context for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children and young people in English schools and outline schools' overarching management responsibilities towards them.

The guidance materials aim to support schools to raise standards, narrow achievement gaps and accelerate progress through:

- an exploration of learning and teaching approaches that will maximise the achievement of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children and young people;
- providing conditions for learning that value diversity and build and promote self-confidence;
- challenging racism and promoting racial equality throughout the school;
- developing effective partnerships with parents, carers, families and communities.

In this way, Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils, like all children and young people, can be helped to achieve their full potential through equal access to – and full participation in – their education.

Key principles

- There are no inherent reasons why a child from a Gypsy, Roma or Traveller community should not achieve as well as any other child.
- High-quality teaching and effective AfL, plus appropriate specialist interventions, supported by school leaders, are key factors in improving the achievement of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children and young people, as groups and as individuals.
- Achievement will only occur through the combined efforts of school, child and home.

Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities

Throughout these guidance materials, reference is made to Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils, parents and communities. This collective grouping includes:

- Gypsies
- Scottish Travellers or Gypsies
- Welsh Gypsies or Travellers
- Roma
- Travellers of Irish heritage
- show people
- fairground families
- circus families
- New Travellers
- bargee or canal-boat families.

Contents

Key messages	1
Introduction	2
Good practice in the classroom	2
● Sources of support	4
● Potential challenges for those Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils new to schooling	5
● Mobility, transitions and transfers	7
Promoting access to learning	10
● Ethos and environment	10
● Relationships	13
Pedagogy, Quality First teaching and assessment	14
● Pedagogy	14
● Quality First teaching	15
● Assessment	16
Personalising learning	26
● Creating an inclusive curriculum	27
● The extended curriculum	32
● Vocational studies and post-16	34
Intervention strategies	37
● Focus on literacy	37
● The three waves of intervention	41
● Which intervention strategy?	42
Distance learning	46
References	50

Key messages

- The attainment of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils enrolling at the school is the responsibility of everyone at that school. Inclusive, in-class, Quality First teaching, provides the means to improve the performance of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils.
- Ensure personalised learning is taking place, including access to appropriate interventions and reflection of learning styles and interests, so that the needs of individuals and groups are recognised and met.
- All children, including Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children, perform at their best in an environment that positively reflects and promotes their culture and lifestyle; the curriculum, its resources and the school should all reflect this.
- Seek the support of your local authority (LA) and its Traveller Education Support Service (TESS) or equivalent, in helping you to meet the needs of your Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils and families.
- Involvement in the whole life of the school is crucial for the success of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils; this includes extra-curricular activities.
- Be proactive regarding any mobility patterns for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils; find out where, when and for how long the families have travelled or plan to travel and then prepare or respond accordingly.
- Collect and analyse a range of data to identify any attainment issues for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils. Use Assessing Pupils' Progress (APP) and then ensure pupil-tracking systems are in place to enable the monitoring and evaluation of progress.
- The school and its staff need to be flexible, especially at the secondary phase, when it comes to engaging and sustaining Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils and their parents in their full educational entitlement.

Introduction

This booklet explores some of the main learning and teaching principles intended to close the attainment gap for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils. However, the educational needs of individual Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils may differ considerably. Children of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller heritage do not belong to one, homogeneous group; their individual differences and needs are as varied and extensive as those of settled communities. The communities have different backgrounds, different home experiences and therefore different educational experiences. Varying educational experiences of parents and pupils among the groups will determine a range of responses to learning and teaching. Much will depend upon the levels of mobility in each community.

School leaders and teachers will need to tailor the guidance in this section according to individuals' experiences and the diverse nature of the communities from which Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils come.



Crucial to closing any attainment gap is recognising that each pupil has a distinct knowledge base, skills set and individual aptitudes and aspirations. Teaching needs to focus on those aptitudes, interests and skills to personalise their learning accordingly.

For some Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils, access to a school place may be initially negotiated through a supporting agency. However, once the pupil is in school and in class, their education is the responsibility of the whole school; and the pupil is entitled to the full range of educational

resources that are available. To treat a pupil in any other way denies their right to full equal opportunity and will ultimately hinder their chances of reaching their educational potential.

Good practice in the classroom

From the very first point of contact, whether by telephone, in person at the school's reception area or on entry into the classroom, newcomers must be made to feel welcome. Schools are advised to take a systematic approach to new arrivals. See the section 'Mid-term admissions' in Booklet 2: Leadership and management for more information about effective systems to manage mobility.



It is important that, from the outset, everyone in the school regards a Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupil as a long-term member of the school community, rather than as one who is only staying temporarily.

Pupils may need support to settle into the school or class. Schools should be sensitive to the fact that, for some highly mobile Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils, issues and concerns regarding accommodation, for example the threat of eviction or poor access to services, may impact on their ability to settle and learn.

Information about the pupil's previous schooling and learning will help the school assess and support them appropriately; for example data about their mathematical knowledge will help to place the pupil in an appropriate set. Information may be available from sources including:

- the previous school;
- the LA TESS, or equivalent specialist service, for information about previous schools or LAs the pupil has attended;
- adapted, client-held educational history records, for example the Record of Educational Development (RED) book or the 'Green' card, which can be examined for information;
- direct communication with families themselves.

Key initial actions that can support speedy integration and improve pupils' learning include:

- spending time talking to the pupil about their interests, how they like to learn, their previous schooling and experiences;
- speaking to the previous school, where possible, to gain an overview of the pupil, their preferred learning styles and attainment;
- recognising that the pupil should access the mainstream curriculum offer and take part in age-related learning, even if their literacy skills are below those of their peers because of interrupted learning;
- identifying gaps in schooling, in order to personalise learning;
- providing activities with clear learning outcomes;
- making every minute count in building learners' self-esteem.

A number of other factors may also come into play during the early introductory period of a Gypsy, Roma or Traveller pupil at the school. Some will indirectly affect the pupil's ability to engage with teaching and affect their eventual learning. Some issues can be ameliorated through effective home-school liaison.

- Dates of birth and birth or baptismal certificates may not be given as much significance as they are in literate, settled communities. Schools should be sensitive to this.
- Schools may find that they are uncertain of the pupil's exact chronological age. The preferred, long-term response in this situation is to establish trusting home-school relationships in which information can be shared in an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect. The intervention of a third party, such as the LA's TESS, or an equivalent responsible for advising on raising the achievement of minority ethnic children, may support the school in this process.
- Gypsy, Roma and Traveller parents will often request education for family groups and may not be aware that schools group children according to chronological age. Schools should explain to parents why this is not achievable but cite occasions when children are able to be together to support each other during the school day.

Sources of support

While the responsibility for the pupil is clearly held by the school, additional support for newly arrived Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils may be available from a variety of external sources. Due to the fact that some pupils may have travelled to the school from outside the immediate area or even from another country, it is particularly important that these support agencies are utilised to best effect.

The LA has a duty under the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 to promote equality of educational opportunity and good race relations (see Booklet 2: Leadership and management). LAs will have designated staff whose role is to close attainment gaps for minority ethnic pupils, including Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils. Moreover, many LAs have a TESS with specialist staff for advising schools on raising the achievement of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils. A school may find that a Gypsy, Roma or Traveller pupil who is taken on roll may already have had contact with the TESS. Whether this is the case or not, the school will find it useful to seek guidance from the LA in the early stages of its work with the newly arrived Gypsy, Roma or Traveller family. The support the LA may be able to offer includes guidance on:

- home-school liaison for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils;
- cultural awareness;
- access to culturally specific materials relating to Gypsy, Roma and Traveller lifestyle and heritage;
- race equality training as it relates to Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils.

Points for reflection

- How does your school offer an open and warm welcome to newly arrived pupils and families, including Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils?
- Where would you seek further information and support for your work with Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils and families? Do you know who to contact in the LA?



Potential challenges for those Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils new to schooling

Once pupils have been welcomed into the school and supported by the induction process, as swift an access as possible to appropriate age-related and ability-related learning should be achieved.



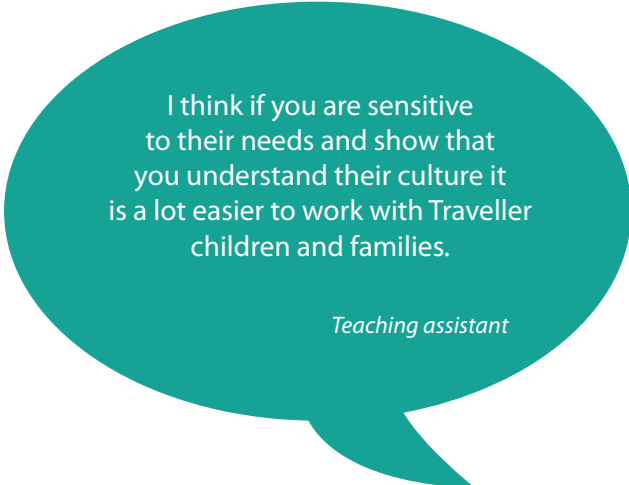
If the pupil has transferred to the primary or secondary school with their peers, at one of the usual transfer times, challenges may well be few. However, if – unlike the peer group – a pupil is new to school and experiencing an educational setting for the first time, staff should be alert to potential challenges. This underlines the importance of gaining information regarding the pupil's educational past during the induction process.

All pupils new to school are generally anxious about being away from their parents and families, perhaps in an unfamiliar setting. School staff should expect to give particular support to a Gypsy, Roma or Traveller pupil in this context. Schools have conventions that may be very alien to children who have not learned the social 'rules of engagement'. Particular areas requiring support may include:

- prolonged periods of time when pupils are required to sit still or be silent;
- turn-taking, which may need to be actively promoted and modelled for younger children;
- identifying perceptions of inappropriate interaction with adults (Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children are used to interacting on the same level as adults within their communities);
- ensuring that pupils know classroom conventions such as putting up their hand before speaking, asking before moving or taking books or equipment;
- awareness that older family members may be reluctant to leave younger family members (older children may previously have been asked to look after siblings and they take their family responsibilities seriously);
- encouraging pupils to join school friendship groups that are not part of their extended family;
- ensuring cousins or siblings do not provide the sole social interactions;

- awareness that many pupils may be reluctant to undress in front of non-family members (Schools may need to make arrangements to cater for this.);
- the unfamiliarity of wearing uniform or sports kit;
- the school environment, which might be spatially challenging for some children living in a trailer (or caravan), where a trailer door leads to the outdoors – in a school it leads to another enclosed space;
- pressures on space in a trailer, with little room to store books, equipment and schoolwork or finding sufficient space to do homework.

It is important for staff to examine their first perceptions and look beyond problematic or unusual behaviour for the causes or reasons behind it. Once this is achieved, interventions can be put into place to support the early stages of a pupil's learning.



I think if you are sensitive to their needs and show that you understand their culture it is a lot easier to work with Traveller children and families.

Teaching assistant

School language

Some of the vocabulary that schools use every day carries its own particular meanings. These are learnt over the duration of a pupil's school career. If a pupil is unused to the conventions of that language it is important that teaching staff take steps to clarify the meaning of their messages.

The language commonly used in school may not be sufficiently self-explanatory for a Gypsy, Roma or Traveller pupil who is new to the school to understand. Phrases such as 'wait in line' or 'turn over' (a page) may need to be explained; similarly words representing a change in activity, such as 'assembly' or 'break' may be unfamiliar.

It is easy to assume that, because of their chronological age, a pupil has a certain degree of school-related information, knowledge and understanding. Although most pupils will acquire this knowledge very quickly, by copying and learning from others, time spent on checking understanding is very helpful for a pupil who is in a strange and new environment.

In a primary school, teachers may be able to draw upon the expertise of Early Years Foundation Stage colleagues who will have experience of teaching new vocabulary and ensuring understanding. At secondary level, colleagues responsible for teaching English as an additional language are also likely to have experience of 'un-schooled' older pupils and will be a source of support to staff.

School rules and conventions

Similarly, school rules, regulations and customs often change from the context of one school to another and may need to be explained. School staff should consider:

- midday meal-time and dining room routines;
- exit, entry and corridor rules;
- when talking in class is appropriate and supports learning;
- when permission is required;
- playground rules and boundaries;
- rules governing eating and drinking around the school.

This can help pupils to interpret and react accordingly, to ensure that potential barriers to learning are minimised.

Points for reflection

- Do you know the extent of the school experiences of the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils in your class? If they have little previous school experience, what are the additional needs to consider for those pupils in order for you to promote their successful access to learning?
- When communicating with those very new to school, do you consider carefully the messages that are given through the school's language, customs and rules? How can you explain those messages more clearly to all parties concerned?



Mobility, transitions and transfers

Even for a Gypsy, Roma or Traveller pupil who is more established in school, a number of distinct, often culturally related challenges may sometimes inhibit their successful engagement with the curriculum and school life.

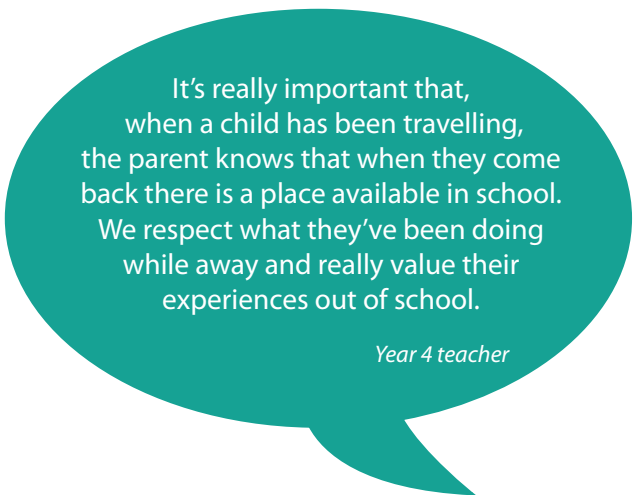
A key inhibitor to learning for the majority of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils is mobility, which is defined as *the total movement in and out of schools by pupils other than at the usual times of joining and leaving*. Pupils can arrive at any point during the year and at any point in their education. In some cases, a pupil may have had no previous schooling or an interrupted educational history, while other pupils may only have gaps in attendance or have missed some developmental steps in their education. Children from some families, for example showmen, circus or fairground families, travel on a regular basis for work. Other families may only travel very occasionally, for example to attend annual fairs such as Appleby Horse Fair or for important extended family gatherings such as weddings or funerals.

Mobility during any school year may therefore be:

- *extensive* and take up the majority of the school academic year, for example the Easter to Bonfire Night, April to November, travelling period of the most highly mobile travelling fairground or circus families;
- *extended* and take up a prolonged period, for example for highly mobile Irish Traveller families who travel across large geographic areas to maximise self-employment work opportunities, or for families travelling abroad for family events in Eastern Europe or Eire;
- *intermittent* and extend to a few weeks, where families might only travel for family events or fairs;
- *minimal* and be at no higher a rate than for settled families.

Good practice in mitigating the effects of mobility includes:

- effective initial academic assessment processes, followed by regular AfL;
- informed school-home liaison so that travel patterns, past and future, are shared in an atmosphere of mutual respect;
- the upkeep of accurate registers of attendance (see Appendix 1 in Booklet 2: Leadership and management);
- the development and use of distance learning where appropriate.



It's really important that, when a child has been travelling, the parent knows that when they come back there is a place available in school. We respect what they've been doing while away and really value their experiences out of school.

Year 4 teacher

Transfer occurs when a whole cohort of children moves at the same time to a different school, for example from primary to secondary school; **transition** takes place when children move from one school year and class to the next within the same school, or from one setting to another within the Early Years Foundation Stage. It is helpful to view both transfer and transition as processes, not events.

Children from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller families, as a group, make less and less progress as they move through the education system. They underachieve by the end of Key Stage 2 and become the lowest-performing groups by the end of Key Stage 4. Thus the continuation of progress at all transition and transfer points, from Early Years Foundation Stage onwards, is crucial in reversing this trend. Continuity and progression refer to:

- continuity of experience, expectations and aspiration;
- familiarity with and progress within the context of the learning and teaching environment, areas of learning and programmes of study.

Clear messages regarding the expectation of continued progression through transfer and transition periods are crucial for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils. For further guidance, see 'Managing continuity of learning during transfers and transitions' in Booklet 2: Leadership and management.



Points for reflection

- Do you have an accurate picture, informed from a variety of sources, of the history of mobility of each of the families in your class? What impact has this had (or will it have in the future) on their educational achievement?
- How effective is your school in tracking the learning of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children so that all concerned are clear about the steps that need to be taken to accelerate learning and close growing gaps for pupils whose progress is poor?

Next steps

- Be proactive regarding mobility; find out where, when and for how long the families have travelled and where, when and for how long they plan to travel in the future. Use this information to plan in advance.
- Map the interventions provided for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils and identify the impact on learning.

Promoting access to learning

Ethos and environment

There are some key factors that need to be considered by school staff who are aiming to develop an inclusive school culture and ethos which encourages children from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller families to achieve. These are:

- school vision and values;
- celebrating identity and image;
- relationships between children, between staff and children and between staff, promoting respect.

These factors will be tangible in both the physical environment of the school, for example corridor and classroom displays should reflect the backgrounds of all children, including those who are of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller heritage, and in who plays with whom in the playground. They should also be embodied in school policies and practice.

Linking work on Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children's achievement with work on Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) will be helpful to school staff in developing a school culture that is constructive, open and supportive of children, helping them to grow safely and confidently as human beings and as learners. The main aims of the SEAL programme, listed below, are consistent with key features of work on raising children's achievement.

- Be effective and successful learners.
- Make and keep friendships.
- Deal with and resolve conflicts fairly.
- Solve problems with others.
- Manage strong feelings such as frustration and anger.
- Recover from setbacks.
- Work and play cooperatively.
- Compete fairly and win and lose with dignity and with respect for others.
- Recognise and stand up for your rights and the rights of others.
- Understand the differences between people, respecting the values and beliefs of others.

For more information on the SEAL programme, refer to www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/nationalstrategies and select 'Inclusion', then 'Behaviour, attendance and SEAL'.

Celebrating identity

Schools are supported by the DCSF to encourage voluntary self-declared ethnicity ascription among their pupils and families. This is particularly important, and challenging, among a school's Gypsy, Roma and Traveller community. In 2008 the DCSF produced *The Inclusion of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Pupils: strategies for building confidence in voluntary self-declared ethnicity ascription*, a guidance document for schools. The guidance explains the importance of self-ascription for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils.



Pupils: Why should I ascribe my ethnicity – what's in it for me?

- It is good to be proud of who you are.
- It is a human right for the world to respect you for who you really are.
- There is nothing to be ashamed of in being a Gypsy, Roma or Traveller.
- Bullies will never be challenged and exposed for what they are by the silence of fear.
- It is good that others are able to learn about, and to meet and know, people of different backgrounds – it is what brings human beings together to live in peace and harmony. It is the essential building block of community cohesion.
- Your parents and sisters and brothers, and your community, need to be presented to the world through your proud and honest representation and advocacy.
- You have a right to education and it is not conditional on you hiding your ethnic identity.
- Your happy and successful learning will often need you to draw on and share your life experiences within your family and community. You will not be able to do that if you are fearful about the school knowing who you really are.
- When you achieve success at school and receive applause in assembly you will be unable to earn the praise and respect for the ethnicity and cultural status of yourself, your family and your community.
- Childhood should be full of happiness and it is short enough, without the burden of having to keep a closely guarded secret and living in the fear of 'exposure'.
- In order to have real friends in school, relationships have to deepen and for this to happen and for them to be truly rewarding, they have to be based on honesty and truth.
- Your teachers will not be able to help you as much as they would if they do not know about your ethnicity and cultural background.

The Inclusion of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Pupils: strategies for building confidence in voluntary self-declared ethnicity ascription (DCSF 2008)

These principles could also be shared with older pupils and used more widely, for example as part of work on pupil voice or pupil identity.

It doesn't matter; some people might be different, I'm glad to be different.

Year 6 Traveller pupil

We want to celebrate difference. We need to ensure the children feel that they are special being different but, equally, that they have an appreciation of each other's differences and an understanding and a tolerance towards each other.

Headteacher

Case study 1: Improved cultural identity and literacy levels for primary Roma pupils

An East London primary school wanted to improve the literacy levels of its Roma children, increase their involvement in school life and raise their self-esteem. The school approached the task in two phases.

In the first phase it initiated Roma project afternoons, where children attended sessions with Roma storytellers, musicians and dancers as well as a professional female Roma football player. Each Roma child took a friend, and two children from any classes without Roma children also attended. These children then fed back to their classes. Displays were also created. Levels of achievement, attendance and punctuality of the Roma children were monitored throughout.

During the second phase, interventions for literacy were made, with incentives to improve attendance and punctuality. While the afternoon project continued, schemes of work were built and tested in these sessions, for example, building varda (horse-drawn caravans) and exploring various aspects of Roma culture, history and language.

One year group undertook a design and technology project to design a storybook, using a Roma myth, and Gypsy, Roma and Traveller History Month was celebrated across the school, with the support of a member of the local Roma Support Group. All classes undertook sessions, learning about Roma culture, history and language. Finally, displays of the work were put up throughout the school.

As a result of the focus:

- attendance and punctuality of all Roma children improved and has been sustained;
- all children improved in their writing – all boys progressed at a faster rate than national expectations;
- the design and technology, art and PSHE units relating to Roma people and Travellers are included in the new curriculum overview of the school;
- the storybooks created are going to become a published book;
- there are books about Roma and Traveller culture in every class library;
- the member of the Roma Support Group used her work with the school, and information and resources from the school, to create a published resource pack for schools, called *The Roma: An introduction to their history and customs*;
- Gypsy, Roma and Traveller History Month will be celebrated each year.

Relationships

Relationships are an important part of school ethos; they are often the one aspect of school life on which most people focus when they recall their own school experiences – people remember their teachers more than they recall particular lessons.

Although staff should use positive language when they interact with children, in order to build confidence and self-esteem, some evidence suggests that teachers are likely to interact more with children from a background similar to their own and to interact less with children from backgrounds with which they are unfamiliar.

When teachers repeatedly overlook children, these children's motivation is affected. They may behave badly to gain attention or they may become withdrawn. This may, in turn, lead to a lowering of their teachers' expectations of them.



Schools that are effective in raising the attainment of children from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller groups:

- have high expectations of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children;
- understand and identify the political and social factors that affect the lives of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children and their parents or carers;
- recognise positive staff–children relationships as being important to the achievement of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children and staff are consistent and fair in response to the needs of these children;
- create environments, rules and procedures that make disruptive behaviour difficult and desirable behaviour easy;
- apply fair and firm boundaries consistently;
- provide training for all staff and children in finding alternatives to conflict and dealing with conflict constructively if necessary;
- use learning mentors, senior staff and people from backgrounds sympathetic to the children to provide constructive reinforcement for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children who are becoming detached from school life;
- recognise that disaffection can be reversed if children feel that significant people in the school are able to see and acknowledge some of their strengths.

For practical suggestions for primary pupils, see the 'Relationships' theme in the SEAL materials.

Pedagogy, Quality First teaching and assessment

Pedagogy

Teaching is a complex and interactive process and there are many different definitions of pedagogy. The National Strategies have developed the following working definition.

Pedagogy is the act of teaching, and the rationale that supports the actions that teachers take. It is what a teacher needs to know and the range of skills that a teacher needs to use in order to make effective teaching decisions.

Pedagogy and personalisation (DCSF 2007)

Pedagogic approaches are influenced by beliefs about how children learn, the context in which the learning is to take place (including the wider social and political context) and the purpose of the learning. Most teachers and practitioners use a range of pedagogic techniques, including direct, inductive, exploratory, experiential, enquiry and problem-solving approaches. However, research has shown that some particular approaches are most effective in supporting different kinds of learning.



Developing a shared understanding and a common language to talk about pedagogy are crucial steps towards transforming learning and teaching to ensure that there is continuity and progression at all stages of the learning journey. This approach should also be shared with and understood by pupils so that they are able to own their learning, which will lead to children and young people achieving their full potential.

The key issue to consider when reflecting on the effectiveness of teaching in a class or school is the impact of selected pedagogical approaches on children's engagement and attainment, and in this context, on the specific attainment and progress of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils.

Excellence and Enjoyment: learning and teaching in the primary years (DfES 2004) offers extensive guidance and case studies to support whole-school reflection on effective learning and teaching.

Thinking about how children learn makes it possible for teachers to work out how best to teach. When children understand what helps them to learn they can review the effectiveness of the strategies they have used and their attitudes to learning more effectively. Teachers and practitioners need to start by reflecting on their assumptions about how Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children learn, how these ideas affect their own practice and how the ethos and attitudes in the school support the learning process.

Staff in schools can help children to learn specific skills, but they can also help children become better learners through helping them recognise their own learning strengths and areas for development.

These ideas are explored further in *Pedagogy and personalisation (DCSF 2007)*.

To create the right conditions for learning, teachers and other practitioners will need to understand how to:

- manage a class, a group or an individual and establish routines;

- interact effectively with learners to include them and use language to build mutual respect;
- ensure that learning builds on prior learning and attainment, varying approaches to ensure that children and young people learn in a variety of ways;
- plan effective use of time, space and resources, making use of the wider environment to meet the needs of different groups.

Quality First teaching

Inclusive, in-class, high-quality teaching provides the means to improve the performance of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils, just as for all others. An emphasis on Quality First teaching ensures the greatest impact upon pupils' outcomes; prior learning is recognised and pupils' learning needs are targeted. Planning within schemes of work identifies clear learning objectives designed to move pupils from where they are to where they need to be. For Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils, this will also incorporate a curriculum that reflects their cultures and allows opportunities for reflection and discussion of their cultural identities.

Personalised learning – a practical guide (DCSF 2008) defines the key elements of Quality First teaching as:

- focused lesson design with sharp objectives;
- high demands of pupils' involvement and engagement with their learning;
- an expectation that pupils will accept responsibility for their learning and work independently;
- high levels of interaction for all pupils;
- appropriate use of teachers' questioning, modelling and explaining;
- an emphasis on learning through dialogue, with talk both individually and in groups;
- regular encouragement and praise to engage and motivate pupils.

Many of these elements have particular importance for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils. In particular, the emphasis upon positive teacher–pupil interaction will be crucial early on. This will help quickly to establish a learning relationship, upon which future academic success can be built.

Teachers' explanation and modelling will help to make explicit the language and thinking that is expected to achieve the learning goals set, while dialogue or talk for learning offers the vital medium for rehearsing thinking with the further advantages of peer support and the development of classroom relationships.

The importance of encouragement and praise for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils cannot be overstated. The possibility of previous negative school experiences, sometimes emphasised by wider family experiences, make it vital that the current classroom experience is a positive and affirming one. This will support Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children's self-esteem, engagement and motivation in their learning.



Quality First teaching needs to be based upon knowledge of pupils' prior learning and previous school achievements. Establishing 'where the pupil is' can be achieved through assessment of their current learning. The need for this assessment will sometimes be particularly important for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils if information about prior learning and school achievements is unavailable due to the disjunction between current and previous schooling experiences. It is crucial that this is achieved as speedily and as accurately as possible.

Assessment

Initial assessment

In this context, initial assessment refers to the early processes that senior and middle leaders and teachers will need to employ in order to ascertain current levels of attainment when pupils join the school mid-term. This is a necessary prelude to the identification of learning strengths and weaknesses, setting and subsequent monitoring of learning targets. The National Strategies' *New Arrivals Excellence Programme Guidance* (DCSF 2007) provides schools with indicators of good initial assessment practice for all children. These include:

- informal assessment, chatting with the child;
- observing the child in different settings;
- referring to previous schools' records (see page 3);
- discussion with parents/carers and children, so that they understand the purpose for assessment and its impact on the child's self-confidence and self-esteem;
- discussion with support staff and other teachers.

Schools will also need to ensure that:

- quick and early informal teacher assessment takes place to ascertain listening, speaking, reading, writing and numeracy skills;
- assessment tools relate to National Curriculum levels or, for those pupils working below level 1 P scales;

- assessment tools are appropriate to the child's ability, for example older children with interrupted learning may still be learning letter sounds or sentence structure;
- assessment activities are relevant and of interest to the child – this will enable more accurate assessment.

Throughout initial assessment, the teacher needs to be wary of the pitfalls relating to cultural bias:

Many aspects of assessment are culture-bound. ...If the assessor does not share the cultural roots of the child, assessment might not always be accurate. When assessing children who are not from the same cultural heritage or social background as ourselves, we need to check our conclusions. At the very least this means that we interrogate assessment criteria for bias in interpretation and, when observing practice as an assessment strategy, we always check our interpretation of events or describe our conclusions with a clear statement of negotiable doubt.

Excellence and Enjoyment: learning and teaching for Black children in the primary years (DCSF 2008)

The aim of initial academic assessment is to identify next steps in learning so that the correct curriculum targets are set for the pupil; these targets must be relevant to past learning and challenging in regard to future learning.

The assessment should be informative but it should also be a positive and affirming experience for the child.



Case study 2: Targeting Year 1 pupils, using a personalised literacy intervention

At one small rural primary school the Gypsy Traveller pupils form the largest minority ethnic group, forming 12 per cent of the school population. The use of data is seen as key to informing teaching and learning opportunities. At this school, pupil progress is tracked termly in order to gain a clear understanding of where children are in relation to their targets. The specific context for each child is noted and individualised programmes are put in place as necessary. The data is analysed to identify underperforming groups and teaching and learning is appropriately contextualised to raise achievement for all children.

By rigorous analysis of performance data the school was able to identify that, despite a strong foundation of working with Gypsy Traveller families, the children's attainment in literacy was considerably below that of other groups in the school.

This information provided the basis for the identification of a target group of Year 1 Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils for literacy intervention personalised to their needs. A two-term phonics programme, set within their cultural background and including support and activities for parents resulted in an accelerated rate of progress in reading and writing for the targeted Gypsy Traveller pupils at the end of the programme period.

Additional assessment considerations in the secondary phase

A primary school can sometimes offer greater flexibility than a secondary, in regard to incorporating the process of initial assessment as part of the class curriculum. Additional considerations may need to inform assessment within the secondary context. The National Strategies *New Arrivals Excellence Programme Guidance* provides secondary schools with indicators of good initial assessment practice. These may be equally applicable to Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils.

Assessment should be carried out in a situation that is familiar to the learner in order to avoid undue stress. It is helpful to allow the new arrival a period of time to settle in before carrying out an assessment. Teachers should be prepared to use a range of methods over a period of time to ensure that their initial assessment accurately reflects the pupil's proficiency.

New Arrivals Excellence Programme Guidance (DCSF 2007)

To meet the pastoral and social needs of the pupil, the school should have in place a system that covers:

- the initial interview;
- initial assessment;
- provision of a trained buddy or mentor;
- tracking and monitoring over a period, post-introduction, to cover settling in and progress made.

In the secondary school context, when covering the initial assessment for a mid-term admission, it is sometimes useful to incorporate all this within an identified period of initial induction that is overseen by an induction tutor. However, any such period of induction should not prevent wider access to the curriculum nor prevent the pupil from having the opportunity to learn alongside peers. Indeed, the sooner peer friendships are made, the more quickly a newly arrived secondary Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupil will settle into the new school environment. Pupils arriving into Key Stage 3 will benefit from having access to mainstream education, the wider curriculum and the opportunity eventually to achieve at GCSE.

One of the benefits of viewing initial assessment as part of a wider, initial induction period is that, in addition to academic assessment, consideration can be given to assessing and meeting the pupil's pastoral or social needs.

Schools that have developed an approach to induction for newly arrived pupils, which addresses their social as well as academic needs, have been most successful with Gypsy Traveller pupils.

Aiming High: Raising the Achievement of Gypsy Traveller Pupils (DfES 2003)

The induction period can then be developed to meet a multi-functional set of assessment needs by:

- rapid assessment of pupils' competencies and learning experiences;
- identifying gaps in learning;
- focusing the support of additional adults in the classroom;
- monitoring pupils over time;
- targeting and evaluating appropriate intervention strategies.

Pupils arriving in Key Stage 4 present different challenges. Educational provision for these pupils should be personalised and tailored to individual needs, based on initial assessment, while ensuring the greatest possible access to the mainstream curriculum and future educational and training opportunities. A personalised learning approach is the key to success for new arrivals at this point in their educational career.

This is achieved through taking a structured and responsive approach to each pupil's learning, in order that they can progress, achieve and participate. It depends on engaging pupils as active and curious partners in their learning. It also hinges on assessment, both formative and summative, arrived at through techniques such as open questioning, peer assessment and shared objectives and success criteria.

New Arrivals Excellence Programme Guidance (DCSF 2007)



The use of data in our school is an absolutely fundamental tool in everything we do. It informs teaching and learning and everyone is involved in both the collection and the analysis of the data. Collecting data on the attainment of the pupils – where they are at one specific time allows us to assess and analyse different groups and their performance in the key subjects.

Deputy headteacher

Initial assessment will give an indication of where the child is, in relation to age-related learning expectations. The Primary and Secondary Frameworks provide the systematic structure for the ongoing planning of the child's learning. Throughout this stage of a Gypsy, Roma and Traveller child's induction, it is useful to bear in mind advice appertaining to other Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) groups that applies equally to Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children:

It is important that teachers are familiar with the cultural experience and expertise of their pupils and particularly take into account the diverse range of experiences of Black children, so they can best match their teaching to prior learning. Teachers should be clear about prior knowledge of children before embarking on new teaching and learning and have processes to assess the ongoing progress of individuals and groups of pupils. Ongoing observation of children's learning will provide early warning of lack of appropriate progress of any individual or groups of children. Timely intervention and support can then be provided to ensure these children do not fall behind their peers.

Excellence and Enjoyment: learning and teaching for Black children in the primary years (DCSF 2008)

The teacher may have to track back from age-related expectations in each strand of objectives to identify the most appropriate starting points for learning. If this is the case, further and ongoing learning targets must have built-in accelerated progress in order that the child will have the best chance of closing gaps and reaching national expectations at the end of the key stage.

If targets are based purely on prior learning without considering what children need to achieve to accelerate progress in line with national expectations, then the attainment gap...will never be closed.

Excellence and Enjoyment: learning and teaching for Black children in the primary years (DCSF 2008)

This is even more so the case for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children because of the large attainment gaps between many of them and other groups of children.

Points for reflection

- Does the period of induction allow for academic assessment as well as the assessment of pastoral and social needs?
- Look carefully at any initial assessment tool that you use. Does it enable accurate assessment across the curriculum? Is it at the right stage of learning for the individual? Be careful to avoid cultural bias within initial assessment and remember to make the experience positive for the pupil.

Assessment for Learning (AfL)

Teachers cannot make personalised teaching offers to Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils if they do not know these pupils' individual and group learning strengths, weaknesses and needs.

AfL includes the use of evidence and dialogue to identify pupils' learning needs, so there is clarity on where pupils need to improve and how best they can do so, to inform priorities for learning and hence teaching.

AfL has been defined as:

The process of seeking and interpreting evidence for use by learners and their teachers to decide where the learners are in their learning, where they need to go to and how best to get there.'

Assessment for Learning 8 schools project report (DCSF 2007)

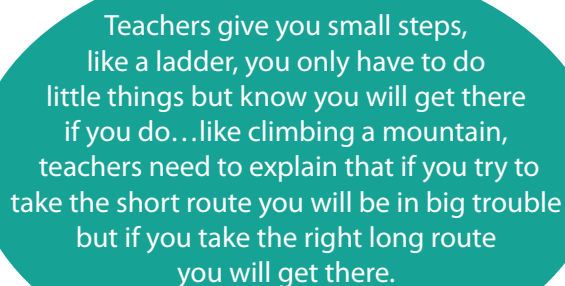
The three interlinking features of AfL are as follows.

- Day-to-day assessment provides a wide range of evidence of learning in specific contexts, which shapes immediate next steps. Characteristics are: learning objectives made explicit and shared with pupils; peer and self-assessment in use; pupils engaged in their learning and given immediate feedback.

- Periodic review of this evidence gives a clear profile of children's achievement across a whole curriculum area and informs and shapes future planning and targets for improvement. Characteristics are: a broader view of progress across the subject for teacher and learner; use of national standards of attainment and progression in the classroom; improvements to medium-term curriculum planning.
- When required, these judgements and insights can be more formally shared by children, parents and teachers at transitional points between year groups, schools and phases. Characteristics are: formal recognition of pupils' achievement; positive reporting to parents/carers and next teacher(s); use of information from external tests or tasks.

AfL is founded on a set of principles, many of which are especially important and relevant to the learning of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils.

- AfL is embedded as an essential part of learning and teaching.
- It involves the sharing of learning goals with pupils and parents; where mobility has interrupted a Gypsy, Roma or Traveller pupil's learning, this instils 'ownership' of that learning and forges links with parents.
- It helps pupils to know and understand the standards they are aiming for, again, emphasising the pupil's control over their own learning.
- It involves pupils in self-assessment and peer assessment; the latter will have additional, inclusive advantages of developing pupil-to-pupil relationships.
- It leads to feedback so pupils recognise next steps and how to take them; for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils, oral feedback might be particularly helpful.
- It promotes confidence that pupils can improve; if the pupil has negative self-perceptions based on their own (or parental) previous experiences, this will help to allay them.
- It involves teachers and pupils in review and reflection on assessment data.



Teachers give you small steps,
like a ladder, you only have to do
little things but know you will get there
if you do...like climbing a mountain,
teachers need to explain that if you try to
take the short route you will be in big trouble
but if you take the right long route
you will get there.

Secondary pupil



Clear objectives and success criteria, shared with the child, followed by feedback on learning with a focus on identifiable next steps and how to take them, are all essential to Gypsy, Roma and Traveller learners. Teachers can then build on learning to observe, question and analyse talk and written work, to identify strengths and areas for development and future targets. This, combined with future day-to-day formative assessments and summative assessment, will give the overall framework needed for informed planning and teaching.

Assessing Pupils' Progress (APP)

APP materials are extremely relevant to Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils and give coherence to their ongoing and future learning, which often is lacking.

The APP materials provide teachers with assessment criteria to define National Curriculum levels of attainment for each assessment focus (AF) within a subject – see *Getting to Grips with Assessing Pupils' Progress* (DCSF 2009). It is recommended that a separate assessment guidelines sheet is used for each Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupil. These sheets provide a common scale throughout a key stage, thereby giving teachers the tools accurately and confidently to focus their assessments of pupils' learning. For Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils this is particularly important because APP:

- quickly ties initial assessment into National Curriculum levels, AFs and schemes of work;
- gives the opportunity to focus on learning targets for progression that can then inform teaching;
- enables the accurate identification of where a pupil's learning should be focused in order to speed up that learning and thereby close any achievement gap;
- gives the opportunity to communicate accurate learning targets within and beyond the school, for example to parents;
- provides tools to transfer learning targets across schools and authorities if a pupil travels.

The information gathered from the use of APP materials is much more detailed than a simple test score. It gives teachers the opportunity to ensure that subsequent planning meets the needs of all the children in their class, especially those for whom it is important to close an achievement gap. Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils are a nationally underperforming group. Therefore, it is particularly helpful to use APP materials to chart a course that includes a progressive rate of progress, thereby closing any achievement gaps.

Our department explains the National Curriculum levels to the children in ways they will understand, with statements on the walls. We also display samples of good work by pupils in classrooms and corridors, as models of good practice.

Secondary subject leader



For Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils, APP enables their learning to be assessed by exemplifying them with a profile of attainment. This provides valuable information that can support discussion with the pupils themselves in order to inform their next learning steps. Also, possibly for the first time for some, it gives a structured and informed opportunity for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller parents to understand clearly the current level of their children's education and, crucially, where it needs to be.

Case study 3: Raising writing standards

In a North-West England unitary authority primary school, teachers set out to promote respect and understanding for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller lifestyles and raise cultural awareness of the communities by using Traveller culture within the context of writing. This was to take place in line with whole-school targets to raise writing standards of all pupils via AfL, using APP.

Lead and team teaching were used, one morning a week for three terms. The lead teacher initially assessed an unaided piece of writing, using APP guidelines sheets, which were then shared with the pupils and their class teachers. Over the first two terms, the aims were to develop the four basic skills of using ambitious vocabulary, connectives, varied sentence openers and a variety of punctuation. Work was assessed both day-to-day, where each lesson identified good practice and worked on areas to be improved, and periodically, at the end of each term.

Teaching then progressed to develop and consolidate an internal understanding of the basic pattern for a story: opening, build-up, dilemma, resolution and end. The Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils were particularly responsive to talk for writing at this stage, clearly and carefully structuring writing orally, first. Stories were then planned from a Traveller perspective, for example, based on living in a trailer, using cultural names for families and positive Gypsy identities within stories. To encourage peer assessment, positive characterisation and the development of the school's own bank of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller resources, the teacher wrote a story for the class, called 'The Rescue' and featuring one of the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils. This modelled all the aspects of literacy that were being targeted in class.

The third term focused on higher-order writing skills, breaking away from formalised story structure to a more creative and independent approach.

The final assessment each term was based on an independent piece of work.

The school felt that the work has a more wide-reaching impact than they had envisaged, with:

- greater awareness by pupils and staff of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller lifestyles;
- positive identities of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities used in literature;
- positive attitudes to writing;
- clearer focus on shared and understood learning targets;
- raised standards in writing, with all Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils being assessed within level 4.

Tracking pupils' progress

Teachers and schools use individual pupil-tracking systems to track the rates of progress for their Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils. Due to the relative poor attainment of these pupils and the need to accelerate their progress in relation to their peers, these tools have proved to be very effective.

Characteristics of effective tracking tools and systems include:

- individual, cohort and group progress is tracked;
- strengths and weaknesses are identified to support planning and interventions;
- data is collected on a regular, termly basis and shared with pupils and staff;
- pupils have regular opportunities to discuss progress;
- teaching, intervention and revision programmes are adjusted in the light of progress made;
- parents are regularly updated to provide additional support and encouragement.

Personalised Learning – a practical guide (DCSF 2008)

Points for reflection

- How do you track, monitor and support the progress of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils as part of your Quality First teaching?
- How is initial and ongoing assessment identified as part of a continuum within APP?
- How do you use APP guidelines sheets for each of your Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils? Are the sheets used to plot progress and then plan future learning targets? How would you address any areas of interrupted learning that become apparent?
- Are learning targets shared with your Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils in an appropriate way, ensuring understanding and comprehension?
- Are learning targets shared with Gypsy, Roma and Traveller parents? If not, what are the potential barriers and how can they be overcome?

Next steps

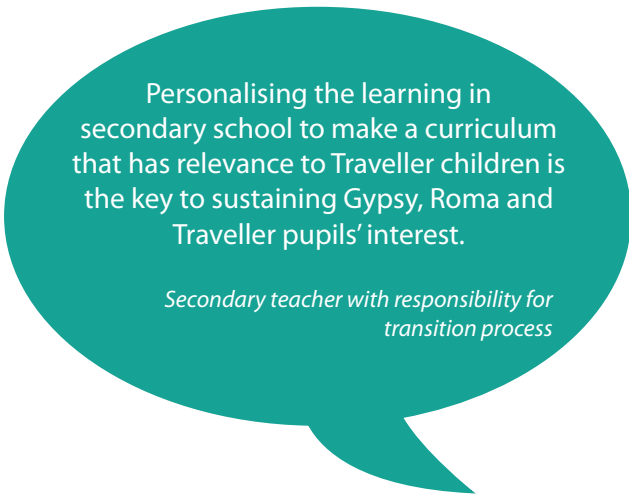
- Develop models of induction that incorporate initial academic assessment, social and pastoral needs.
- Use APP as part of initial assessment.
- Collect and analyse a range of AfL data, including day-to-day assessments and test data, to identify any attainment issues for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils; look, too, for differences across curriculum areas.
- Use appropriate tracking tools, to enable the monitoring and evaluation of progress of individual Gypsy, Roma or Traveller pupils.



Personalising learning

Put simply, personalising learning and teaching means taking a highly structured and responsive approach to each child's and young person's learning, in order that all are able to progress, achieve and participate. It means strengthening the link between learning and teaching by engaging pupils – and their parents – as partners in learning.

A Vision for Teaching and Learning in 2020 (DCSF 2006)



Personalising the learning in secondary school to make a curriculum that has relevance to Traveller children is the key to sustaining Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils' interest.

Secondary teacher with responsibility for transition process

The principles of personalised learning are particularly likely to underpin successful learning for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils. Personalised learning means that teaching, the curriculum and school organisation are designed to match the diversity of all pupils' needs, experiences and ambitions, thereby ensuring that all pupils, including Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils, will fulfil their potential as learners. By definition, personalised learning cannot be prescriptive and has to be developed within the context of each classroom.

For pupils, personalised learning means they:

- are treated as participating partners in their learning;
- have their individual needs addressed;
- have strengths and weaknesses identified – if they fall behind in their learning, intervention will follow to get back to expected levels of learning;
- receive support to succeed to the full;
- develop respect for others, self-esteem and the skills for collaboration.

The key issue to consider when reflecting on the effectiveness of teaching in your class, school or setting is the impact of your selected pedagogical approaches on children's engagement and attainment, and in this context, on the specific attainment and progress of Black learners.

Excellence and Enjoyment: learning and teaching for Black children in the primary years, Unit 2: Learning and teaching, planning, assessment and the curriculum (DCSF 2008)

The very same personalised learning analysis should apply to the attainment and progress of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils.

Case study 4: Personalising learning

A Midlands county primary school aimed to operate personalisation at both whole-school ethos and individual class and pupil levels. The culture of the school, as described by the headteacher, teachers, parent governors and teaching assistants, recognises and celebrates diversity and values inclusion while also maintaining high expectations of all its pupils. This overarching ethos is a crucial prerequisite for what happens in every classroom, where the main focus is the delivery of a personalised curriculum.

The school uses a variety of methods to achieve this. Initial assessment is important with a transient population. This initiates short, achievable, measurable, early intervention catch-up literacy programmes, where necessary, to accelerate progress. All children benefit from individual curriculum mapping. This mapping methodology is then underpinned by class activities that reflect the interests and backgrounds of different children. For Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children this includes a Year 2 curriculum with lots of practical hands-on experiences, recognising that pencil-and-paper activities alone might not be sufficient to engage pupils in learning. The curriculum uses obvious opportunities to reflect their lifestyle, in homes, for example, but goes beyond this to recognise and reflect the interest of the community, the family and hence the child. Parental liaison is vital here. Talking to parents about their work activities and the places they have visited means that family experiences can be reflected and utilised in the classroom, thereby valuing individual Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils and stimulating their learning.

The school is very good at sharing how different children live, what different things they do and accepting each other. That's the good thing about this school. It makes people feel comfortable and confident and there is a lot of trust.

Traveller parent governor

Points for reflection

- What does personalised learning mean for the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils that you teach?
- Do you personalise your teaching so that the needs of individuals, as well as groups of pupils, are recognised and then met?

Creating an inclusive curriculum



For all pupils, Quality First teaching should take place within the framework of an inclusive curriculum. This is particularly important for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils because their cultures are often portrayed (if at all) in a negative or stereotypical way. This can lead to low self-esteem and a feeling that their 'real' lives are not reflected in the school curriculum.

Successful schools are creative in their attempts to reverse these perceptions by valuing the history and culture of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils in the curriculum. This requires a commitment from the whole school to value, promote and celebrate diversity. Each teacher and practitioner has a part to play and, once achieved, this will significantly contribute to pupils' sense of belonging, self-esteem and self-worth.

A culturally relevant and affirming curriculum is important for all pupils. It is particularly important for children and young people from Gypsy Traveller backgrounds to see their culture, history, language and values reflected in their school experience. All schools, whether or not Gypsy Travellers are on roll, should have resources in classrooms and libraries which give a positive view of their culture and lifestyle. This adds to the quality and accuracy of knowledge for all children.

Aiming High: Raising the Achievement of Gypsy Traveller Pupils (DfES 2003)



A pupil affirmed by and reflected in the curriculum within which they are taught will be a more active, reflective and ultimately more responsive learner. Many Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils are motivated about learning when:

- their culture, history and values are reflected in their school experience;
- they can read books relating to their own culture;
- they are given the opportunity to display their wider knowledge to teachers and peers and feel their contributions are valued;
- they know stereotypes are challenged.

However, Derrington and Kendall (*Gypsy Traveller Students in Secondary Schools: Culture, Identity and Achievement*, 2004) noted that initiatives to celebrate Gypsy, Roma and Traveller cultures were less common in secondary schools than primary schools. In fact, they found that some secondary-aged Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils, in common with other adolescents, were sensitive to any initiatives that drew attention to their culture. Schools need to listen to pupils, involve them proactively and show sensitivity.

Derrington, C. and Kendall, S., 2004, *Gypsy Traveller Students in Secondary Schools: Culture, Identity and Achievement*. © Trentham Books. Used with kind permission.

All schools are responsible for preparing all pupils for life in a diverse society. An inclusive curriculum provides opportunities to celebrate and affirm different cultures and lifestyles, including those of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities. It provides opportunities to challenge misinformation and stereotyped views that can lead to prejudice and racist bullying. Due to the regular negative and stereotypical portrayal of these communities in the media, it is important for schools to aid community cohesion by incorporating those cultures within curriculum areas, displays and teaching resources even if there are no ascribed pupils from these communities in the school.

The majority of Gypsy Travellers now live in housing and many primary schools may have children from one or two such families attending their school. The cultural identity of those families tends to be under threat and it is important that all schools ensure that cultural diversity is reflected within their curriculum.

Aiming High: Partnerships between Schools and Traveller Education Support Services in raising the achievement of Gypsy Traveller pupils (DfES 2005)



It's great to walk into our school and see all the displays and pictures of trailers and that, it makes me feel at home.

Year 6 Traveller pupil

Lesson planning in an inclusive curriculum draws on the experiences and interests of all the children being taught. The examples that are used to illustrate concepts, ideas and themes should chime with the experiences and interests of the pupils. This makes it more likely that they will be enthusiastic and successful learners. It requires the development of professional knowledge and the acquisition of a range of relevant resources. Talking to pupils and listening closely to what they say contributes to making the lessons as relevant as possible.

In practice, seeing books and materials about 'people like us' is an important point of contact between the worlds of home and school. The same connection can be made through making books, with the added benefit of reflecting the day-to-day experience of individual families rather than generalised or possibly idealised versions. Exploration of cross-cultural themes, such as 'celebrations', can enable children from diverse cultural backgrounds to explore differences and similarities between their experiences.

Aiming High: Partnerships between Schools and Traveller Education Support Services in raising the achievement of Gypsy Traveller pupils (DfES 2005)

Excellence and enjoyment: learning and teaching for Black children in the primary years, Unit 2A: Learning and teaching: planning, assessment and the curriculum (DCSF 2008) identifies a well-constructed, culturally inclusive curriculum as having the following characteristics:

- teaching children about cultural and linguistic diversity ('our' cultures not 'other' cultures);
- providing opportunities in the curriculum for children to share each other's cultural experiences;
- providing opportunities for children to use their linguistic and cultural experiences to support learning and aid motivation;

- demonstrating that all children's and parent's cultures are valued by the school through events, displays and communications between home and school;
- devising curriculum content that counters stereotyping and challenges a solely Eurocentric approach;
- involving children in planning programmes of study;
- providing planned teaching about human rights, race and racism and other controversial or sensitive issues that allow children to challenge stereotypes, racism and prejudice;
- affirming all children's identities and raising self-esteem through PSHE and citizenship programmes;
- creating links with sections of the wider community in the locality to enrich the range of experiences for all children.



Developing an inclusive curriculum should be tackled strategically and involve the whole school community. This supportive and far-reaching approach to the development of the inclusive curriculum avoids the results becoming:

- tokenistic or one-off events;
- stereotypical representations of other communities;
- unplanned and under-resourced classroom activities.

Although the annual Gypsy, Roma and Traveller History Month in June is an ideal opportunity to showcase and use artists, speakers and storytellers from these communities, it would be tokenistic to see this as the only way in which an inclusive curriculum may be built. To avoid these pitfalls, the issues and aims described above should be discussed and ultimately actioned by the whole school.

Specialist information regarding Gypsy, Roma and Traveller lifestyles and cultures should be available locally. In this way, an inclusive curriculum including, for example, Gypsies in the Holocaust, can be resourced and developed. The LA's TESS can support schools with their planning to embed Gypsy, Roma and Traveller cultural awareness across many aspects of the curriculum. This support can highlight the most accurate and up-to-date resources and provide useful contact points and sources of further information.

Case study 5: Capturing interest, raising standards

In a North-East primary school, 12 per cent of the pupils on roll are from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller backgrounds. The attainment of these pupils is below that of other groups in the school, so a target group of these pupils was identified and a baseline assessment was undertaken to identify gaps in learning. A personalised ten-week intervention programme was developed to improve speaking and listening skills as a basis for raising attainment in writing. Existing in-school literacy interventions were employed, complemented by a personalised programme, using the book *Fly with Me*, which has as a central character a hobby-horse. This captured the imagination of the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils, their older siblings and their parents too. Real hobby-horses were created and the story was transported to the local Traveller site. Alongside the programme, a family learning course was developed for parents and children to learn together.

- All pupils exceeded their end-of-year predicted levels of attainment in writing.
- Comparative rates of achievement were higher than for many of their peers.
- There was increased understanding for parents of ways in which they can support their children's writing, with greater understanding of targets and national expectations.
- Crucially, there was an increase in joint parent and child trust, motivation and sense of joint responsibility for the children's learning.

If it is possible to engage Gypsy, Roma and Traveller adults as practitioners as part of the school's staff, this reaps many dividends for both school and pupils alike, including:

- offering a role-model for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils' own success and achievement;
- enabling pupils to see their culture embodied in their own school's staff and not therefore being taught solely by non-Traveller ('gorgio') adults;
- providing a source of information and knowledge for the school regarding local Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities that can be reflected and incorporated within the curriculum.

Points for reflection

- How much do you know about Gypsy, Roma and Traveller culture and lifestyle? Have you used professional development opportunities to gain more insight and information?
- Does your school have resources that include positive images of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities? Are these visible in classroom and corridor displays?
- Has a curriculum audit taken place as part of the school's Race Equality Action plan, to embed Gypsy, Roma and Traveller cultures into schemes of work?
- Do you select activities and resources that will engage, motivate and reflect Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils?
- Does the school provide a range of opportunities for curriculum enrichment, for example through visits from members of the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities, using the parents' knowledge to extend the pupils' experience of the world?

Next steps

- Work in partnership with the LA's TESS and undertake a curriculum audit in order to embed Gypsy, Roma and Traveller cultures into the curriculum.
- Check the environment of the school, including books and other resources, for positive images of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller cultures.

- Plan and teach a unit of work with a specific focus on meeting the needs of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils and monitor their responses.
- Promote positive models and images of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities through the collection, dissemination and publicity of any notable achievements by individuals and groups.

The extended curriculum

By the nature of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities and families, many additional factors will affect and impact upon the achievement of their children while they are in school. Attitudinal and experiential factors will cause schools to consider broader curriculum engagement issues and examine how and where the curriculum may be extended beyond the classroom, particularly at the secondary phase. In some circumstances schools will need to draw upon the support of other agencies.



Flexibility

Research suggests that, to maintain the engagement, respect and involvement of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils and their parents, especially in the secondary phase, a flexible approach is most appropriate. This requires schools not to change or ignore rules, regulations or codes but, rather, to take a flexible attitude towards them.

There can be a delicate balancing act between maintaining high standards and expectations for all students whilst respecting individual needs and differences. As one headteacher explained: 'Our willingness to be flexible is quite important. It is a bit like...it's not an oak tree, we are not rigid...we are more like a willow, prepared to bend a little bit. But we're not going to go too far. I think we get the respect of parents because of that and we get the respect of children.'

Derrington, C. and Kendall, S., 2004, Gypsy Traveller Students in Secondary Schools: Culture, Identity and Achievement. © Trentham Books. Used with kind permission.

This willow and oak analogy reflects a general ethos of flexibility and judgement that is echoed by other headteachers who have had success in retaining and enabling Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils to achieve, especially at Key Stages 3 and 4.

We never knowingly compromise our policies but we can and do adopt a flexible approach to school rules and procedures. This is the key to our sensitive provision for Travellers.

Tyler, C. (Ed) (2005), Traveller Education: Accounts of Good Practice. © Trentham Books. Used with kind permission.

This approach is most effectively applied at school management level but can also be operational at agreed classroom and curricular level. For example, flexibility can be applied to the choice of adult helpers, readers, artists and visitors invited into the classroom or school. Taking a proactive, inclusive approach to encourage Gypsy, Roma and Traveller adults (and practitioners) into school is a demonstration of this approach. Similarly, flexibility in the choice and range of the curriculum and its resources (see above) responds to this need to adapt and reflect the cultures of pupils.



Case study 6: Retaining pupils in Key Stage 4

A community college in the South-East has 1200 pupils on roll, 14 of whom are from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller families. As the college has a long history of working with Traveller pupils and their families, the headteacher has a clear understanding of the issues that may prevent them from achieving their potential. Particular success has been achieved in engaging and retaining these pupils into Key Stage 4 by personalising their education, with support from local FE providers. Some Key Stage 4 pupils pursue academic programmes, while others follow accredited courses in subjects such as hairdressing.

Pupils' achievement is tracked and recorded termly. Specific attention is paid to the first-wave teaching and learning of pupils through consultation with the LA's advisory services. In line with recommendations for schools in the DCSF's *The Inclusion of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Children and Young People*, the school has appointed, from the Traveller community, a School Support Officer (SSO) attached to the pastoral and literacy development teams, with specific responsibility for support for Gypsy Traveller pupils. The SSO monitors attendance, behaviour and achievement, runs a 'Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Culture Club' for Gypsy Traveller pupils once a week and liaises with families. Alongside academic activities the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Culture Club has visited a Romany cultural museum. It has also worked with Kent County Constabulary to look at various policing methods and has produced a DVD-ROM, with a local housing association, examining the issue of settling in 'bricks and mortar'.

- There are many individual success stories, such as one Year 12 pupil following a BTEC National Diploma in art who, when in Year 13, will mentor younger Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils and work as a classroom assistant.
- There is a shared understanding by college staff of the talents, experiences and needs of their wider Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities.

The key extension to the curriculum, beyond the classroom, is homework. It is worth remembering that there may be difficulties for some Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils in completing homework tasks.

Reasons for this include:

- parents' poor literacy skills mean they cannot support their children;
- parents' limited school experience may mean they cannot reinforce the content of the homework;
- space at home is often limited, particularly for those living in trailers (or caravans) and this is not conducive to home study;
- parents may not understand the purpose of homework, believing that all school work should be done at school.



Even if parents have difficulties with literacy, every effort should be made to involve them in their children's learning. Showing an interest in what the child has been learning, and talking through ideas are just two ways of doing this. For further suggestions see *Booklet 4: Engagement with parents, carers and the wider community*.

Issues such as the relevance and importance of homework can be addressed through effective home-school liaison. Homework needs to be relevant, adding value to learning, and not rely on support from home, access to books, the internet or a computer; it should be used to reinforce personalised learning. Supervised homework clubs held before or after school or at lunch-times have been shown to be successful in overcoming many of these barriers.

There is a correlation between those pupils in Key Stages 3 and 4 who are retained in school and their active participation in extra-curricular activities. Efforts should therefore be made, firstly to personalise these pupils' learning, clearly identifying their interests and motivations, and secondly to translate this into their learning

experiences and wider, active involvement in activities beyond the classroom.

Schools might find that Gypsy, Roma and Traveller parents have concerns about their children's participation in off-site visits and activities such as swimming. Many parents are also reluctant to allow their children to go on school trips. This arises from fear based on limited information sources, social isolation and a highly protective parenting style. Schools might also encounter parental fears about their children's exposure to education about sex and relationships. This stems from the close, protective communities from which the majority of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils come. Schools need to make extra efforts to discuss the educational requirements with parents. Again, there should be a flexible approach as schools clearly explain the educational aims of such curricular and extra-curricular activities; for example, do not assume that parents understand the key learning outcomes derived from an educational trip. Similarly, explain clearly how and why parents can support and motivate their children in these areas of education through, for example, provision of the correct equipment and resources.

Vocational studies and post-16

Drop-out rates for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils at Key Stages 3 and 4 are high; secondary schools need to pay particular attention to creating an environment that will help to reverse this trend. The development of positive home-school links is important for:

- providing opportunities to describe and explain fully the secondary curriculum pathways to parents who may not have experienced them themselves;

- establishing a system for the early identification of concerns regarding curriculum content (for example, about sex education);
- offering clarification of linkage between the world of education and school, and the world of work.



Pupils who stayed on in school until the age of 16 were most likely to be from homes where parents expressed a sustained positive attitude about the value of secondary education and an aspiration for their children to gain qualifications in order to gain employment.

Wilkin, A., Derrington, C. and Foster, B. (2009). Improving the Outcomes for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Pupils: Literature Review (DCSF Research Report 077). London: DCSF [online]. Available: www.dcsf.gov.uk/research/data/uploadfiles/DCSF-RR077.pdf. Used with kind permission.

In many ways, these connections between the school, work and vocational paths offer a heightened reflection of concerns expressed by many parents about the perceived relevance of the secondary curriculum. It is important that Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils can see that there is 'something in it' for them in regard to preparation and training for their own work activities. Similarly, it is important for parents and the wider Gypsy, Roma and Traveller community to see that the activities in which pupils engage at school will play a part in helping to equip them for their adult work roles. When this occurs, there is more likelihood that parents and children will remain committed to education until the full statutory school age limit.

Therefore, from the beginning of Key Stage 3, a school's transfer and transition activities, especially those linked to employment, further education and training options, should be strongly focused towards the needs of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils. Those following academic routes should be encouraged in every way; vocational studies should not routinely be identified as the only Key Stage 4 and post-16 routes for all Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils. Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils who receive support in developing a clear post-16 pathway are more likely to stay at school and attain qualifications.

To support this planning, schools need to call for help, advice and support from outside agencies. The LA's TESS can help schools to establish broad, parental support relating to Key Stage 4 and post-16 options and to explore networks for links to providers of extended curricula. Schools can also use established links with their local Connexions Service for advice and development of pathway planning. The ultimate aim is to support individual Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils, with a personalised focus, to provide a coherent, structured and relevant plan for their future.

Case study 7: Working with other agencies at Key Stage 4

At a West Country secondary school, a Year 10 Gypsy/Roma pupil was at risk of alienation due to pastoral issues relating to friendships. Her mother was concerned that her daughter was unhappy and was questioning the value of education. Both mother and daughter expressed a desire for a clear vocational outcome from secondary education.

In partnership with the LA's TESS, the school held discussions with the pupil and her mother. This led to a clear programme of support.

The school was prepared to be flexible. Connexions worked with the school to secure a weekly one-day work placement for the pupil. The pastoral issues were resolved and the school maintained regular liaison with the family. The pupil's progress was monitored throughout her two-year work experience programme.

As a result of sensitive interventions and support, this pupil remained in school and completed a successful vocational study programme alongside several GCSEs. She is expected to achieve five A–C grades and then to complete a two-year post-16 apprenticeship. The school's work with other agencies has ensured access to an appropriate educational package, leading from school to the world of work.

Points for reflection

- How flexible is your school when it comes to engaging with Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils?
- What are the post-school ambitions for the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils in your school?
- Which Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils are engaging in extra-curricular activities and clubs? What are the potential barriers and how can they be overcome?

Next steps

- Identify where and how you could involve a member of the Gypsy, Roma or Traveller communities in your curriculum planning and make contacts with the appropriate agencies to put this into action.
- Encourage the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils in your class to explore their preferred work pathways. Enlist the support and advice of parents and then other appropriate agencies.



Intervention strategies

Given that, nationally, Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils underachieve in comparison to their peers and that there is a marked deterioration in this achievement as they move from Key Stages 1 and 2 into Key Stages 3 and 4, with achievement rates at Key Stage 4 being particularly low, intervention strategies are important in closing these achievement gaps. However, it is important that the right interventions are used, at the right time and to the best effect for these pupils. Some Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children with gaps in their learning, due to past mobility, lack of early learning or lack of parental ability to support their learning, will benefit from access to Wave 2 and 3 interventions.

It is important that schools allow Gypsy Traveller children the opportunity to take part in any initiatives, including intervention programmes, that will support their access to the full curriculum.

Aiming High: Partnerships between schools and Traveller Education Support Services in raising the achievement of Gypsy Traveller pupils (DfES 2005)

Teachers therefore need to address these issues.

- Which intervention strategies have been tried in the past?
- Why might an intervention strategy be applicable?
- How might an intervention strategy be applied?
- Which intervention strategy should be applied?

Focus on literacy

Literacy is at the heart of the curriculum; it is a fundamental prerequisite to learning. Due to the achievement gaps of many Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils, literacy is the focus of most intervention strategies. If pupils are to move confidently through each key stage into the world beyond school, fulfilling their potential and contributing fully to their communities, they need to secure skills in the key aspects of English.

Focused questioning by the teacher can help to improve their Wave 1 Quality First teaching and also help to identify why and how an intervention strategy should be used.

Does the pupil have experience of books, letters or other forms of written text and understand that text is integral to everyday life?

- Explicitly demonstrate the reasons for reading, for example stories, messages, information giving, communicating with each other, following a timetable.
- Provide opportunities to share and enjoy reading.
- Provide a rich learning environment for the pupil in order to compensate for previous missed opportunities.
- Invite parents to visit the classroom and observe the learning environment.
- Encourage parents to access adult learning, preferably in school.
- Send books home and involve and support parents.



Is the pupil motivated to read?

Pupils with interrupted learning may find their peers have had more opportunities to develop their reading skills. As a consequence, these pupils may feel self-conscious and embarrassed about their own ability, in comparison. This may lead to lack of motivation and coping strategies, for example distraction activities, overconfidence.

- Sensitively, without naming or labelling specific children, reinforce a classroom ethos of support for pupils who struggle with learning.
- Using AfL, supported by APP, include the pupil in the learning process and discuss their learning needs, what motivates them and the strategies to be used.
- Provide access to the curriculum through differentiated learning.
- Establish opportunities for private learning.
- Explain the importance of reading in the context of real-life situations to make reading relevant to the pupil.
- Ensure the pupil is rewarded for progress.
- Maintain high expectations of progress and share this vision with the pupil.
- Plan opportunities for talk before any writing activity.

Has the pupil had sufficient time to begin the stages of reading and progress through them?

- Ensure you are aware of, and are using, current reading pedagogy to support the pupil.
- Provide reading material that is of interest, age-appropriate and culturally relevant, for use in class and at home.
- Ensure a structured phonic reading programme is in place, with short-term targets, rigorously monitored to ensure progress.
- Establish one-to-one daily reading sessions.
- Provide regular opportunities for the pupil to encounter good modelling of reading.



Has a realistic amount of time been allowed for the pupil to show progress?

Due to learning gaps caused by past mobility, lack of early learning or lack of parental ability to support learning, Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils may not make progress at the same rate as their peers and may need more time to develop the appropriate stages. Interrupted learners will need time to relearn basic reading skills and sensitivity should be shown when re-engaging pupils who may have experienced this stage many times.

- Non-readers entering school after Key Stage 1 will need explicit teaching of reading, including phonics.
- Reception and/or Key Stage 1 materials will support late arrivals but every effort should be made to adapt these to make them age-appropriate.
- Explore the creative use of pupil-centred topics and media studies; relevant magazines and newspapers will be necessary.
- Create books based on the pupil's interests.
- Use peer support to model reading and support in lessons.
- Establish one-to-one daily reading sessions.

Does the pupil understand the reasons why writing is a necessary skill?

- It is important to model reasons for needing writing skills and place them in a real-life context. Teachers will need to demonstrate how writing can be used in a variety of situations and to make this explicit.
- When teaching how to write letters, be aware that this may be outside the pupil's experience. Therefore, ensure the context has meaning, for example by suggesting the pupil writes to a friend in the class to say what they have been doing when travelling.
- Promote Gypsy, Roma and Traveller languages such as Cant or Romani in the classroom context.
- For all pupils, and particularly boys at secondary school, make explicit that Traveller pupils need to be able to write to pass exams and gain vital qualifications to support them in their livelihood. For example, qualifications will help in the field of construction, to obtain a licence to operate fairground machinery or to qualify for essential health and safety certificates.
- Create opportunities for parental audiences who will play an important role in supporting pupils' learning.

Does the pupil have sufficient vocabulary to make a meaningful start?

- Assign children with talk partners and encourage the Traveller pupil to express their ideas orally before attempting to write them.
- Use writing frames to scaffold sentences.
- Use words books and/or key word cards to support the pupil in using new vocabulary. Make sure the pupil is able to use the new vocabulary orally before attempting to extend their writing.
- Use strategies such as story boards and key features for various genres so that pupils are encouraged to include specific detail and structure in their writing.
- Use draft writing as a basis for extending ideas; use this to extend writing, while valuing the pupil's initial attempts.



Can the pupil sequence events and ideas orally or pictorially?

- Ensure pupils understand the concept of sequencing events.
- Plan opportunities for pupils to reconstruct stories.
- Plan opportunities for pupils to talk about events, in order.
- Plan opportunities for pupils to rehearse sequencing.

Are speaking and listening sufficiently supported?

Best practice in planning for the development of speaking and listening is based on understanding the pupil's starting points and previous experiences. When developing the oral skills of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils, it is important to be aware that community experiences might vary from occasional use of Romani or Cant words through to English as an additional language.

- Plan for pupils to engage with talk-partners to discuss and develop ideas.
- Plan drama activities before undertaking written work.
- Provide stimulation for ideas, through both example and concrete resources.
- Value Gypsy, Roma and Traveller oral traditions through use of appropriate resources and models.

The three waves of intervention

In-class high-quality teaching, taking place within the inclusive curriculum described above, should remain the key deliverer for closing any achievement gap for the school's Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils. A continued and sustained emphasis upon this Quality First teaching will ensure the greatest impact upon pupils' outcomes. However, many Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils will require additional focused intervention. The National Strategies advise viewing the Quality First teaching as the first of three 'waves of intervention', each wave building upon the previous one.

Wave 1: Quality First teaching

This comprises inclusive, Quality First teaching, supported by effective whole-school policies and frameworks, targeted at pupils' needs and recognising prior learning. It is based on planning and schemes of work designed to move all pupils from where they are to where they need to be. **For Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils, this requires a curriculum that reflects their cultures, histories and experiences and allows pupils opportunities to reflect and discuss their cultural identities; teaching must take account of learning targets identified through AfL and be structured, using APP materials.**

Wave 2: as above, plus additional time-limited, tailored intervention support programmes

This increases rates of progress and secures pupils' learning so that it is on track to meet age-related expectations. It takes the form of tight, structured, small-group programmes, carefully targeted to meet required learning objectives. This can occur outside of, but in addition to, whole-class lessons, or be built into mainstream lessons as part of guided work. Crucially, interventions need to help pupils apply their learning to mainstream lessons. The emphasis is upon those who can get back to national key stage expectations. **For Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils, focused literacy and mathematics**

interventions may be required in order to narrow larger attainment gaps; rates of progress may need to be faster.

Wave 3: as above, plus increasingly individualised programmes based on independent evidence of what works

This accelerates and maximises progress and minimises performance gaps via one-to-one tuition or work in very small groups, delivered by a specialist teacher, highly trained assistant or academic tutor. The programme is designed to meet very specific, personal targets, based on close, previous assessment.

Academic tutoring for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils aims to empower them to become effective and independent learners, thereby maximising attainment in mainstream classrooms; this intervention supplements learning – it can never replace it.

No wave of intervention in this model should operate in isolation, exclusive of the other two. Rather, each should be seen as building on the previous wave and should relate closely to it. Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils must not be taught exclusively in isolation, as this would deny their rights of access to Quality First teaching.

Which intervention strategy?

For some pupils, a tightly focused catch-up programme will be sufficient to allow them to attain at an appropriate level. For other pupils, especially those who are highly mobile, the intervention programme may need to be more sustained. Additional, time-limited and well-targeted small-group, Wave 2 interventions will benefit many Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils and accelerate their rate of progress. It is essential that this intervention support helps pupils to apply their learning when they return to mainstream lessons, to ensure their progress is sustained. Applied at the right time for the right pupils, small-group and one-to-one Wave 3 interventions can help prevent children falling behind their peer group. This needs to be developed within the context of whole-school intervention planning, with full participation of parents and the support of the senior leadership team.

Every Child a Reader (ECaR)

The ECaR programme provides a suite of early literacy interventions to support five- and six-year-old children (Year 1) who are struggling to learn to read. The approach is based on the three waves of teaching. Children most in need receive one-to-one support, using the proven Reading Recovery programme. This programme assumes that all pupils have received and benefited from early years Quality First teaching but, for some pupils, this is not sufficient. By the end of the Reception year, many Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils have begun to fall behind their peers in acquiring early literacy skills.



Case study 8: Every Child a Reader

A southern-county LA provided Wave 2 intervention sessions for 44 Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils in nine primary schools across a confederation partnership. The pupils, all from 5 to 7 years old, received 30 minutes of literacy teaching daily for up to 100 sessions (20 school weeks). The programme aimed to accelerate literacy skills to slightly above the average level for the class; this allowed for some 'drop back'. The class teacher and ECaR specialist teacher jointly monitored the pupils' performance and progress. Before the pupils were accepted on the programme, parents were consulted and they agreed to ensure good attendance during this time. The programme was delivered by one LA-based and two school-based teachers, all of whom undertook continuing professional development in order to deliver the programme.

Of the 44 pupils who began the programme, all had reading ages below their chronological ages; of these, 50% had a reading age one year below their chronological age; 25% had a reading age more than one year below. By the end of the programme:

- 62% of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils had a reading age equivalent to or higher than their chronological age;
- of the pupils whose reading age was still below their chronological age, all had increased their reading age by more than one year;
- 80% of pupils had increased their reading age by at least one year;
- 47% of pupils had increased their reading age by two years or more;
- two pupils increased their reading age by more than three years and one of these pupils is currently the top-performing pupil in his year group, according to recent school assessment.

Typically, books that pupils are able to read at the start of the programme contain about 20 words; most pupils are able to read books containing 250+ words by the end of the programme.


Many interventions are available. The school should apply the appropriate interventions to the appropriate pupil.

At Key Stages 1 and 2, in addition to ECaR, other programmes that may be suitable for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils include:

- Every Child Counts (ECC);
- Every Child a Writer (ECaW).

At Key Stages 2 and 3, interventions include:

- Learning Challenge – a Wave 2 or 3 intervention to help support pupils to improve organisation of themselves and of their learning, thereby enabling them to take better advantage of Wave 1 teaching;
- Literacy Progress Units – aimed at pupils entering Year 7 but below level 4, covering writing organisation, information retrieval, spelling, reading between the lines, phonics and sentences;
- Reading Challenge and Writing Challenge – Wave 2 or 3 interventions aimed at pupils whose reading or writing skills are two years below expectations;
- one-to-one tuition – schools will want to use their attainment assessments of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils to establish their need for one-to-one tuition. It is strongly recommended that Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils are included in one-to-one tuition where appropriate.



Finding the right intervention to use, with the right child, at the right time has been a challenge for us as a school but seeing the results, especially with our Traveller children, has been really rewarding.

Primary school headteacher

Learners of English as an additional language (EAL)

Roma pupils from Central and Eastern Europe are likely to be learners of EAL. Extensive guidance and professional development materials are available to support teachers in teaching EAL.

Excellence and Enjoyment: learning and teaching for bilingual children in the primary years (DCSF ref. 0013-2006PCK-EN)

These materials support learning and teaching for bilingual children in Key Stages 1 and 2, who are conversationally fluent in English. They provide strategies for developing speaking and listening as tools for learning English, approaches for using pupils' first language to access the curriculum and strategies for developing reading and writing comprehension.

Access and engagement: Teaching pupils for whom English is an additional language (DCSF ref. 0609/2002 (English); 0251/2002 (mathematics); 0610/2002 (science); 0611/2002 (ICT))

These guidance booklets focus on how Key Stage 3 principles apply to learning and teaching for pupils learning EAL, suggesting strategies to help teachers provide access for pupils at different stages of learning English.

New Arrivals Excellence Programme: Guidance (DCSF ref. 00650-2007BKT-EN)

This guidance focuses on supporting teachers in all key stages in meeting the needs of newly arrived pupils who are beginners in learning EAL. The focus is on assessing pupils' prior learning and building on this to develop learning and teaching in the mainstream classroom.

**The Romany language**

Increasing numbers of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils have knowledge of the main Gypsy, Roma and Traveller language, Romani, and its English derivative pogadi jib (see 'Appendix 1: Communities and cultural context' in Booklet 1: Introduction). This knowledge may vary from occasional use of interspersed vocabulary within their first language to a full, working knowledge of Romani; the majority of the latter will be Central and East European Roma. Schools need to give these languages the importance that they merit, using them within the construct of their fully inclusive curriculum; not to do so would be a missed opportunity.

The literature shows evidence of Gypsy Traveller pupils using their own language in school, but little recognition and acknowledgement of their bilingual skills among school staff.

Wilkin, A., Derrington, C. and Foster, B. (2009). Improving the Outcomes for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Pupils: Literature Review (DCSF Research Report 077). London: DCSF [online]. Available: www.dcsf.gov.uk/research/data/uploadfiles/DCSF-RR077.pdf. Used with kind permission.

However, these languages have far from general usage and acceptance and schools need to act sensitively in regard to any incorporation of them into the curriculum.

The use of Romani words in reading materials designed for Gypsy Traveller children has caused much debate. Some teachers see it as a natural extension of culturally relevant reading materials, and some parents and children have been delighted to find words from their own language in books in school. Indeed, Gypsy Travellers have published their own stories for use in school. Other Traveller parents, however, have expressed annoyance at the use by outsiders of what they consider a private language. As always, teachers need to communicate with parents and to take account of the feelings of the families with whom they work.

Danaher, P. A et al, Teaching Traveller Children: maximising learning outcomes, 2007. © Trentham Books. Used with kind permission.

Distance learning

A unique feature of the pedagogy underpinning the teaching and learning of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils is the acceptance of and preparation for the pupils' periods of mobility and the development of interventions to mitigate the potential resultant impact upon learning.

The effective education of Traveller children must include rehearsal and acceptance of the scenario of their moving. Effective, coherent and trusting ongoing home/school liaison is essential, so that families have the confidence to announce their travelling patterns well in advance...In some circumstances, Distance Learning programmes should be prepared.

Tyler, C. (Ed) (2005), Traveller Education: Accounts of Good Practice. © Trentham Books. Used with kind permission.

Mobile pupils' education can be interrupted in different ways, including involuntary movement due to inadequate site provision, movement as families seek seasonal work, attending important family events and annual traditional events such as horse fairs. If schools are to minimise the affects of discontinuity and cater for families' planned travel patterns, where regular school attendance is not possible, school-based distance learning is essential. This can be considered as part of the personalised learning on offer for mobile Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils. The main responsibility for the preparation of the learning materials lies with schools.

The aim of distance learning is to continue the interactions between teacher, pupil and learning content (described by Amundensen, 1993), but at a distance. In school, the bonds between teacher, learner and learning content are strong; however when pupils are travelling, away from the teacher, the bonds become weaker. Schools have sought to overcome this, and to strengthen these lines of interaction, by providing distance learning packs. Generally, these packs are paper-based, containing learning that the pupils will miss while travelling.

These packs have their limitations in terms of motivating pupils, giving them adequate support and feedback and in exchanging work with the school. The principle way in which schools have overcome these problems is through the use of ICT. This may include the use of mobile phones to keep in contact, fax machines to send and receive work and, crucially, exploring the potential of using computers and internet links to connect pupils to their teachers and base schools.

This has been most successfully achieved in the Electronic Learning And Mobility Project (ELAMP), funded by the DCSF and coordinated by the National Association of Teachers of Travellers (NATT) and other educational specialists. However, introduction of ICT-based distance learning requires careful preparation.

Success depends on careful consideration of three interdependent themes. These relate to an understanding of the needs and contexts of pupils and their families, to effective school-based arrangements to support distance learning, and to the planned mix of materials and messaging options.

School Supported Distance Learning (DfES 2006)

Where successfully introduced, ICT-based distance learning can have remarkable benefits in:

- developing the organisation and presentation of pupils' work;
- providing access to interactive coursework to reinforce learning;
- safely providing access to internet resources to extend and enhance learning;
- improving pupils' (and parents') ICT skills;
- enabling electronic communication between schools and pupils;

- maintaining pupils' levels of achievement, even when school attendance is interrupted by periods of travel.

It has been staggering just how much pupils' confidence has increased. They are much more motivated to write and record ideas generally and have made the transition back to school better than ever.

Teacher involved in ELAMP distance learning

I carry on with my schoolwork whenever I want. I know if I've done it correctly, and I know quickly. If I'm stuck, I don't need to wait for a teacher to come and help as I can just email. It helped me a lot with my spellings and stuff like that.

Fairground pupil involved in ELAMP distance learning



No more nagging the children to do their homework, now they are keen to use the laptop.

Traveller parent

Case study 9: Electronic distance learning

At a West Country primary school, the headteacher and staff worked with two girls from a Travelling family to provide continuity of education. With support from ELAMP, the school enabled the pupils to have access to learning and teaching during their travelling time, which takes them away from school for up to six months of the year.

Initial assessments showed that the pupils were working below age-level expectations. The LA's TESS helped the school to launch ELAMP. Meetings were held with parents to outline the learning initiative and to identify travelling periods during the school year. An LA advisory teacher and the headteacher trained the pupils and their parents in the use of the necessary ICT.

The school developed individualised pupils' work schedules, with recorded lessons, which the girls could access via their laptop. They were also able to use attached lesson activities to follow instructions for the completion of the tasks. They were then able to record the tasks and submit them to the relevant teacher.

Support was provided for the girls, on their return to school, as part of their individualised learning programmes.

The school has used ICT to include parents and pupils through exchanges of information via email and its established intranet, to which parents may subscribe to receive newsletters automatically. Close working with the pupils' family has been essential to the success of this distance-learning initiative.

One of the girls has recently transferred to secondary education. Before transition, the TESS and headteacher liaised with the secondary school to plan continuity of e-learning. This will enable the previous successful supportive e-learning system, developed by the primary school, to continue.

I am really glad that my teacher has been able to teach us in this way as it keeps me in touch with the school and I can email my friends at school and they can email me. I feel glad that I am able to continue my learning when we are travelling.

Year 6 pupil

Points for reflection

- Does your analysis of attainment data lead to the selection of effective interventions for identified pupils?
- How is intervention tailored to meet the needs of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils at risk of underachieving?
- Which pupils in your school require distance-learning materials? Who takes responsibility for their preparation, development, communication, marking and feedback?
- Is the material personalised to the learning objectives and targets, culture and learning styles of the pupils?
- Is it well designed, using a variety of resources? How do you use ICT in your distance learning? Do you enable pupils to stay in touch with peers?

Next steps

- Plan the continuity of your intervention programmes so that they meet identifiable needs.
- Read the ELAMP project reports and consider the use of ICT to improve the quality of distance learning in your school.

- Research the key elements of effective distance-learning materials and consider how these may be useful to support independent learning in the classroom.
- Create a working group, including representation from your LA's TESS or equivalent, to improve the quality of your distance-learning materials.

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