2024 – 2025

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**Emotionally Based School Emotionally Based School**

**Gypsy Roma Traveller (GRT)**

**Guidance for Schools**

**The Gypsy Roma Traveller Service sits in the Education Directorate’s Inclusion Service Area within the Blaenau Gwent Local Authority. The service works cross team with other areas including Additional Learning Needs 0-25, Education Welfare Service, Health Promoting Schools. In addition, GRT Service also links with the Inclusive Practice Service, SenCom and GEMS.**

**GRT service is led by a GRT Officer and there is access to a specialist teacher where applicable.**

**AIM**

This guidance is intended to support our schools in Blaenau Gwent in exercising their duty to meet the needs of children and young people from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) communities. The document aims to support practitioners so that they feel more confident and informed about issues that impact on Gypsy and Traveller pupils and their families and therefore are able to provide support and source additional external support where appropriate.

**Parent/Carer Education and Aspirations**

Many Gypsy, Roma and Traveller parents have had little or no education or have had poor quality experiences, especially in secondary school. They often have very limited literacy skills making it difficult for them to know how best to support their children. In addition, some parents do not appreciate the relevance of the secondary curriculum to their children’s future and see it as undermining their own values and aspirations for their children.

**The Experience of Racism and Social Exclusion**

Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils can be treated unfairly and less equally than others, often without intent and knowledge of the culture. Gypsies, Roma and Travellers are protected under the Equality Act 2010; they are classified as a minority ethnic group. They are therefore protected against race discrimination. We expect all allegations of bullying and racism to be fully investigated by education settings. We also expect appropriate action to be taken to address the matter and prevent further instances from happening. Education settings are expected to record, monitor, and act upon all instances of bullying and racism within their setting.

**Teacher Knowledge and Expectations**

A lack of knowledge of the GRT communities, lifestyles, cultures and languages can lead to schools being unaware that it is beneficial for pupils to see their home culture reflected in a positive way in the school curriculum and respected in school settings. Low expectations or unchallenged stereotypes can lead to Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils not reaching their full potential.

**Interrupted Educational Experience**

Families may be working seasonally or are subject to unpredicted forced movement, hindering access to school or to a lower priority given to school attendance.

The experience of successful schools is where the following has been particularly important in supporting the engagement, inclusion and achievement of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils:

**Informed Leadership and an Ethos of Respect**  
This creates a school culture in which the needs of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils are effectively addressed. Head teachers, Governors and senior managers have a clear understanding and commitment to promoting equality; the barriers facing GRT pupils can be overcome by clear positive leadership of the school.

**Training**

This is essential so that the school can take collective responsibility for challenging negative stereotypes and promoting good practice. A culturally relevant curriculum is important for all pupils and must be seen as a whole school approach. It is particularly important for children and young people from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller backgrounds to see that their culture, history, language and values are reflected in their school experience. All schools, regardless of pupil status i.e. if Gypsy, Roma and Travellers are/are not on roll, should have resources in classrooms and libraries which give a positive view of their culture and lifestyle. This means that schools are also prepared for any GRT arrivals.

If support is required to source resources school can contact the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Service in Blaenau Gwent.

Having resources adds to the quality and accuracy of knowledge for all children and young people. Schools that have developed approaches for induction for newly arrived pupils, which addresses their social as well as academic needs, have been most successful with Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils.

Effective approaches for schools include:

* A key named person designated for the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller/Multilingual pupils to contact about any issues which arise for them within or outside school.
* Headteachers/GRT, ML link should contact the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Service in Blaenau Gwent to ensure that the GRT service is aware of any new arrivals. This allows for support to families and schools and to develop an appropriate plan for support.
* Administrative staff are welcoming to parents and pupils and sensitively offer help with filling in forms if needed, due to limited literacy skills.
* The Headteacher/GRT, ML link meets parents and pupils prior to admission to share and discuss school policies and procedures, particularly Attendance, Health and Safety, Bullying/Positive Relationships/Equality and to agree how the school and family will communicate. This could include via mobile phone calls or via the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) Service.
* Pupils are allocated a buddy to support them at break times and explain school routines.
* Pupils are paired with others in the classroom who will offer peer support for curriculum access if needed.
* Access to resources, materials and support service staff to ensure that the class teacher is able to offer the pupil access to the curriculum as soon as placement at school is commenced.
* Staff are fully informed of the pupils’ status and training may be given if necessary.

As a result of the above approaches, an open, welcoming atmosphere is generated which affirms the pupils’ culture and respects their lifestyle. As an example, culturally reflective resources are used in the teaching and learning for pupils.

Raising the profile of race equality within the school will lead to more effective practice for all pupils and promote respect for minority ethnic groups, including Gypsy, Roma and Travellers.

Providing equal educational opportunities for these pupils presents a challenge to ensure that differences in culture and lifestyle are not seen in negative terms. For example, Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils should not automatically be regarded as having Additional Learning Needs (ALN). Many Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils are under achieving and have gaps in their learning owing to poor access and lack of opportunity to learn, rather than an underlying learning difficulty.

For children from EU Roma communities there can be the added challenge of language acquisition. Children may be new to the English or Welsh languages and may not have had access to formal education in their country of origin. They will therefore need support to acquire English or Welsh to enable them to access the curriculum. Support can be sought from the GEMS Gwent Education Multilingual Service for further advice and guidance.

Involving Gypsy, Roma and Traveller carers/parents and the wider community positively and imaginatively in the life and development of the school is vital in raising aspirations and expectations. Supporting parents to be involved in the school provides positive role models for all.

**Examples of Strategies Known to Encourage Regular Attendance**

* First day follow up of non-attenders, which conveys the message that the pupils’ presence is valued.
* A high level of positive contact between schools and parents.
* Specialist training and advice for school staff on the varied circumstances faced by pupils, encouraging sensitive responses.
* Study support and targeted teaching and mentoring support which create a quick experience of success.
* A pastoral support system which alerts staff to potential difficulties.

**Promoting Continuity of Learning**

* Having flexible school structures in place to facilitate continuity of schooling, including allowing children to start school as soon as practicable, liaising with Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Service staff to pre-arrange access to schools and provide support during their early days/weeks in school; support for the pupil to allow access to the curriculum without undue interruption including liaison between families, schools, Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Service staff over the transfer of educational information.
* School based distance learning is particularly successful in minimising the effects of discontinuity, where school attendance is not possible, for example, when families have relatively predictable patterns of movement. It allows teachers to respond to pupils’ diverse learning needs as in the curriculum, to maintain interest and continuity of learning for pupils who may be absent for extended periods of time.

**Pre-school and Early Years Education**Many of the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils currently in schools have not had the opportunity to attend any form of pre-school or early years setting. Any child without any pre-school experience is already at risk of under achievement. Gypsy and Traveller families who move seasonally are likely to miss out on the usual early years’ experiences. A flexible approach will be needed to consider any gaps in pupils’ learning resulting from missed or interrupted schooling.

**The Blaenau Gwent Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Service**

Gypsy, Roma and Traveller support staff to work with schools, Governing Bodies and other professionals to promote educational approaches which are inclusive of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller heritage, experiences and lifestyle. Staff can provide practical advice and support to schools to establish good communications with families, explain the importance of regular attendance on their child’s progress at school and support work to build up successful relationships with Gypsy, Roma and Traveller families and the wider communities. Training is carried out to raise awareness of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller culture for all stakeholders to support a better understanding of GRT culture and to improve relationships.

**FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

**Q. We have never had GRT children in our school before and a family has just moved into the local area, what support is available to help us?**

A. The Gypsy Traveller Service will be able to offer you practical advice, guidance and support to help you liaise with the family and settle the children into your school. If the children have had an interrupted education, they may be able to provide some individual support for the pupil.

**Q. A Gypsy Traveller family has requested places at school for their children even though they are camped on the roadside and may not be here long. Do I have to admit them?**

A. Yes. They should be admitted on the same basis as any other child. LAs have a statutory duty to ensure that education is available for all children of compulsory school age in their area appropriate to their age, abilities, aptitudes and any additional learning needs they might have. This duty applies to children regardless of permanent or temporary residence in the area and therefore includes Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children.

**Q. We had a child on the school roll for a few months, but they seem to have left the area as we have not heard from them for a considerable time. Can we take them off roll?**

A. Please let the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Service know about any attendance issues as soon as they arise as they will be able to offer advice and liaise with the Education Welfare Officer. It would be reasonable to expect parents to let you know if the family are going travelling and if they expect their child to return to your school. If they have not done so and the child has been continuously absent from school for a period, a child missing education (CME) form will need to be completed for the Education Welfare Service.

**Q. How do we record the absences of Gypsy Traveller children?**

A. The Educational Welfare Officer will work closely with the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Service to assist the school in liaising with the family to improve attendance at school.

Gypsy, Roma and Traveller parents are protected from penalty for non-attendance of their children at school, where they can demonstrate the following:

* That they are engaged in a trade of business of such a nature that requires them to travel from place to place.
* The child has attended a school as a registered pupil as regularly as the nature of that trade permits; and
* They have attended school for at least 200 half day sessions during the year.

The concession is designed to protect Gypsy, Roma and Traveller carers/parents from unreasonable prosecution. It does not relieve parents of their legal duties to ensure that their children are receiving efficient, suitable, full-time education even when not at school.

**Q. Under what circumstances is a school able to receive support from a Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Service.**

A. Support from the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Services is targeted towards the most vulnerable children and the priority criteria includes:

* Pupils with additional needs relating to socialising, behaviour and learning
* Highly mobile children to secure access and attendance at school
* Pupils transferring to secondary school; and
* Maintenance of attendance at secondary school.

When a Gypsy, Roma and Traveller child enrols in a school the child “belongs” to that school, not the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Service.

Schools located near sites and that have Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children on roll usually develop their own expertise in this area of work and have become beacons of good practice for other schools who admit Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils less frequently.

Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) Officers can always be contacted to discuss specific issues and are able provide a wide range of practical help and advice. The Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Service has recently developed criteria for accessing support for pupils to make sure that support is allocated in line with the needs of pupils.



For support and guidance:

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