



GRT Case Studies

E.D.I.T

The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Team



Successful Driving Force of a Vice Principal with Responsibility for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Attainment in a Secondary School

Context

The School is a smaller than average secondary school with 6.8% pupils from Minority Ethnic groups and 2.6 % declared Gypsy, Roma and Traveller students. The Vice Principal was given the responsibility for GRT inclusion when appointed to her post in September 2012.

Actions

An audit of the school's needs and baseline assessment of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils' progress was carried out. The Vice Principal met with the Virtual School for GRT children and young people to develop an action plan which highlighted the need for:

- In class observations to gauge level of support needed
- Individual and group work with targeted students
- Support with parental engagement and home/school liaison (on and off school site)
- Gypsy, Roma and Traveller cultural awareness training

- Advice to staff to ensure the successful integration of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils when they join year 7
- Curriculum planning group meetings with the majority of teachers.

Gypsy Roma Traveller History Month (GRTHM) celebrations were planned around a week of activities, culminating in an information assembly which was prepared by a working party of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller students working with The Virtual School for GRT Team. Following the curriculum planning meetings where ideas were suggested that could be incorporated into the secondary school's curriculum, all subject leaders took ownership of the preparation and delivery of lessons inclusive of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller culture. This resulted in raised awareness and respect for the Traveller community and increased the self-esteem of the Traveller pupils.

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"... our Gypsy, Roma and Traveller week was extremely successful. Staff have been on board throughout and have enjoyed incorporating Gypsy, Roma and Traveller culture and themes into their lessons." **Vice Principal**

The schools had some pupils from the GRT community in danger of permanent exclusion. A GRT Outreach Officer from the Traveller community mentored specific pupils for a year.

"This has made a significant difference... [for] students... at risk of permanent exclusion with issues such as: being unable to engage in class; rudeness to staff and aggressive outbursts. [Now there are]...much more minor offences such as lack of homework or chatting. The mentoring sessions have helped pupils manage their anger and given them something to look forward to".

There has been a massive literacy focus in the school and the Vice Principal is especially keen to improve the reading ages of the Gypsy Roma and Traveller pupils. Over the time of the project the Virtual School for GRT pupils' team supported a number of GRT students with their literacy during which time two pupils made over a year's progress in four months. The Vice Principal expects to see even greater gains when the cohort is tested again at the end of the term. *"Pupils are now enjoying engaging with books and the school has relevant books in the library"*. What's really successful was the fact that the Senior Leadership Team of the school recognised the importance of the initiative, took ownership and responsibility for outcomes and directed, managed and supervised every step of the project.

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Impact

The targeted students had goals tailored to their specific individual needs and covered such areas as attendance, behaviour, school-family links and attainment. All students made good progress and engaged enthusiastically in the project. By being given a chance to talk about their culture and share it with the whole school community, their confidence improved and they felt that their heritage was better understood, accepted, respected and celebrated. The rest of the school community really enjoyed learning more about the culture and taking part in the GRTHM activities. As a result, the attitudes of both children and adults toward this ethnic minority improved. In conclusion this work had a very positive impact on the whole school. This was thanks to the careful organisation, support and engagement of everyone involved in the project, namely the young people and their families, the Vice Principal and the school staff. However, what made this project

really successful was the fact that the Senior Leadership Team of the school recognised the importance of the initiative, took ownership and responsibility for outcomes and directed, managed and supervised every step of the project.

Next Steps

The School has taken responsibility for supporting their Gypsy, Roma and Traveller students by ensuring that these children are monitored to ensure that their needs can be identified and strategies can be put in place to close the gaps between these young people and others. The Gypsy, Roma and Traveller community is reflected in the school by the use of culturally appropriate resources within all school subjects and the richness of the culture is promoted by celebrating the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller History Month. They are now prepared to advise colleagues from other schools about Gypsy, Roma and Traveller achievement and inclusion.