

**Improving Educational Outcomes for
Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children and
young people in Lincolnshire**

**Traveller Education Policy
December 2010
Updated August 2011**

Lincolnshire Children's Services Traveller Education Policy

The **Children's Services Traveller Education Policy** provides a framework focused on raising the achievements of children and young people from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities. There are long standing records showing the poor educational outcomes for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children. Some of the contributing factors are limited flexibility in terms of meeting the needs of these communities, limited recognition of the wider achievements of the children and continual experiences of discrimination, victimisation and social exclusion.

Key Principles

Lincolnshire County Council's response to improving educational outcomes for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children and young people, considers **4 key principles**.

1. No child should be left behind in achieving good education outcomes because of their culture and lifestyle choices.
2. We have a duty under the Race Relations Amendment Act (2000) to monitor the effects of a school's race equality policy including monitoring equality of access to education.
3. We have a duty to monitor unlawful discrimination, promote equality of opportunity and promote good relations between people of different racial groups in response to the RRAA2000 but also as part of a pan-European mission to protect the human rights for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller families, Europe's largest minority ethnic community.
4. There is no inherent reason why a child from a Gypsy, Roma or Traveller community should not achieve as well as any other child.

Communities and cultural context

'Gypsy, Roma and Traveller' has been adopted by the Department of Education as the most appropriate terminology to describe the different ethnic and cultural groups previously defined as 'Travellers'. Gypsy Roma, Travellers of Irish heritage and Scottish Travellers are considered as distinct ethnic groups and are therefore entitled to the rights and protections given to other minority groups under the Race Relations Amendment Act 2000. Ascription as Gypsy Roma, Irish or Scottish Traveller is irrespective of whether communities are nomadic, semi-nomadic or living in static accommodation.

New Age Travellers, Occupational Travellers (circus and fairground families) and Bargee Travellers are considered under this policy because of their particular and special circumstances and the demands and constraints placed on them in relation to their nomadic lifestyle.

Lincolnshire Context

In Lincolnshire there are currently;

- **4** "official" sites provided by the council; Gainsborough, Boston, Lincoln and Grantham
- **20** private sites
- **5** Showmen (Fairground) and Circus sites. The number of fairs and circuses can increase during the summer season (Easter to October)
- Around **12** "unofficial" sites or regular stopping place
- a large population of "housed" Travellers, possibly not ethnically ascribed as Gypsy, Roma or Traveller.

Based on current data (**July 2010**)

There are **257** Traveller children known to Lincolnshire County Council.

There are **125** children of primary school age, **81** of secondary age and **51** of nursery age.

There are **23** secondary schools, **57** primary schools and **3** special schools in Lincolnshire with Traveller children on roll.

There are **25** Traveller pupils in Lincolnshire who are Home Educated.

Some pupils from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller backgrounds achieve well at school. However, generally the educational outcomes for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children in Lincolnshire are in line with the national picture i.e. significantly lower than the national and local levels of achievement. 50% Gypsy and Roma pupils achieved level 4 in Maths and English for the academic year 2009/10 and 0% Gypsy and Roma pupils achieved 5 A*-C including English and Maths. Cohorts of eligible pupils are small and therefore analysis at individual level as well as through tracking of ethnic or vulnerable groups is needed.

How will better educational outcomes for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children be achieved?

Four areas for improvement have been identified as having, potentially, the biggest impact on educational outcomes for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children

- 1. Improving the safety of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children.**
- 2. Improving access to learning**
- 3. Supporting transition across all key stages particularly into secondary education**
- 4. Improving conditions for learning that reflect culture and lifestyle and value diversity**

The role of the local authority and its partners in raising the achievement of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children and young people

Lincolnshire local authority provides a community access service. The primary function of this service is **‘to improve access to appropriate educational provision for Ethnic Minority and Traveller communities through support, advice, partnership and empowerment’** Our vision is that Traveller communities will have equal and fair access to education that fulfils our legal requirements at the same time supports the culture and lifestyle of our Gypsy, Roma and Traveller families and children.

The Community Access Service will consist of a community access team who will actively engage with our Travelling communities to reduce the risk of poor attendance, lack of engagement, discrimination and ultimately poor educational outcomes. The team will;

- build strong relationships between all Travelling communities including those who are resident on sites (private and unofficial), housed and roadside families
- support families to access appropriate educational provision for their children regardless of the period of time they are settled
- track and monitor to ensure the safety of children where there is a potential risk i.e. in relation to EHE, CME and highly mobile families
- ensure families are protected under the Race Relations (Amendment Act 2000)
- address community cohesion issues by widening knowledge and understanding of Travelling communities as well as supporting integration
- work with other services including schools to support Traveller’s access to all services that impact on the welfare of the children
- work in partnership with GRT communities to ensure they are instrumental in improving educational outcomes and employment prospects for their children.

It is the school’s responsibility to provide an appropriate education for all their children including those from a travelling background. This will include meeting the needs of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children within the mainstream provision, additional intervention programmes where appropriate and access to resources during periods of mobility. Their Professional Advisor for Schools (PAfS) will support schools to evaluate the attainment and achievement of their Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children and suggest appropriate strategies.

Partnership with parents, carers and the wider community

To begin to improve the educational outcomes and opportunities for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children, we need to recognise the importance of multi-partnership working. Our most significant partner in ensuring better outcomes are the parents, carers and wider community. Parents can sometimes be the biggest barrier to their children accessing school but with trust, support, respect and knowledge, they can be very encouraging and supportive. Schools and

supportive services that listen to parents about their anxieties and what their aspirations are for their child as well offering choices and flexibility are more likely to meet the needs of these families.

What are the key issues and challenges to achieving better educational outcomes for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children.

Issues and challenges for parents and their children

- Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children do not always have or want regular access to school due to their family and community values and/or high mobility.
- They may consistently face barriers, perceived or otherwise when approaching a school to seek admission for the short period they attend whilst travelling.
- Parents may feel anxious about sending their children to school and may not trust schools to care for and protect their children.
- They may not be offered an education that is flexible enough in terms of attendance and curriculum choices that their children require and are entitled to.
- They may perceive that the school does not want to know about their culture and lifestyle.
- Some families may find it difficult to access learning while travelling and lack of contact and feedback may result in lack of motivation to pursue this.

Issues and challenges for local authority and schools

- Low ethnic ascription makes it difficult for schools to meet the needs of pupils from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children.
- The high mobility of some Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children makes it difficult to track and monitor their attendance and progress. It is also unclear as to when a child is travelling and/or a child missing education.
- Schools are not always aware of how to provide a flexible curriculum for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children. Few implement the flexi-schooling approach or offer alternative provision for key stage 4 to suit the needs of these children.
- Concerns over the standards of home elective education are difficult to address.
- Some schools are unaware or do not give adequate attention to the rights and protections of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children and young people in relation to e.g. dual registration, recording non-attendance.
- The reporting of racist incidents is generally low and schools do not always report all racist incidents aimed at Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children. Due to a long history of racial prejudice and discrimination, parents are unlikely to report a racist incident for fear of victimisation and/or lack of resolution.

How will these issues be addressed?

Admission of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children into schools

Lincolnshire County Council will ensure that schools have up to date information on the rights of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children in relation to school admission, induction and addressing the mobility of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children (*appendix 3*). Schools will be advised to implement good processes and practices to provide an inclusive environment which is most likely to attract new families from these communities and ensure families return following a period of mobility.

Attendance of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children in schools

Lincolnshire County Council will monitor the attendance of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children. Schools will be supported by their school improvement advisor to analyse attendance data, address non attendance using sensitive and culturally appropriate strategies. They will also be advised to manage highly mobile families to ensure effective distance learning is provided. Regular attendance at school will continue to be encouraged and non attendance will be expected to be followed up speedily to convey the message that the pupil's presence is valued (*appendix 4*).

Flexible learning opportunities

Schools will be encouraged to provide a flexible curriculum which may include flexi-schooling (*appendix 2*) and attendance at alternative educational providers if appropriate. This allows the parents and school to negotiate a flexible timetable and take into account the cultural lifestyle of the family. Parents of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children are more likely to value secondary education when schools demonstrate a willingness to be flexible in its provision. Where appropriate, Lincolnshire County Council will support access to learning through part-time college places for those who have chosen Elective Home Education (*appendix 1*).

Transition into school particularly into secondary education

Lincolnshire County Council will ensure that parents are fully informed of the educational options that are available to their children. Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children will be monitored and tracked. Through the Children Missing Education process, Traveller children will be monitored and tracked. Good relationships with the communities will also enable us to identify children at risk of not transferring to the next stage of their education. Where there are particular issues in relation to continuing formal education, schools will be supported to provide ample opportunities for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children and their families to visit schools and share concerns and anxieties.

Partnership with parents

Parent cooperation is a key element to improving access to learning for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children. They need to be confident that schools and the local authority are prepared to be flexible to ensure their child receives an education. At the same time they need to be reassured that attendance at school will not erode their values and sense of identity. Lincolnshire County Council will ensure that parents are regularly informed of the options that are available to their children. Where necessary, we will

advise schools to ensure that Gypsy, Roma and Traveller culture is represented within the school environment and the curriculum. Parents will be encouraged to participate and contribute throughout their child's education.

Tracking and monitoring

The local authority will track and monitor the progress of all Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils through national performance tests and additional tracking procedures if required. Unique Pupil Numbers will allow us to track pupils and their progress across the country. Schools will be advised to set targets for achievement of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children as part of their narrowing the gap agenda.

Addressing racism in schools and the community

The local authority has a duty to report on number of racist incidents in schools. In order to establish a better picture of number and types of racism, schools will be encouraged to report using the established system. The local authority will liaise with schools, parents and community police to ensure that all incidents of racism directed at Gypsy, Roma and Travelling communities are captured. Schools will be supported to address these incidents as a necessary action to ensure continued attendance and progress at school.

Valuing diversity and promoting community cohesion

The local authority will maintain the strong links currently in place with the Travelling communities. Their culture and diversity will be welcome and celebrated. Schools have a duty to promote community cohesion by preparing their pupils to have good race relations with all ethnic groups within the local and national communities. Schools will be considered a valuable partner in addressing community cohesion issues within the wider community.

Listening to the voice of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children and young people

All pupils, including Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children, need to be valued and respected, have their views heard and be able to make a positive contribution to their education and the school. The voice of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children is underrepresented in a range of forums i.e. school councils, Youth Cabinet etc. The local authority will monitor the participation of vulnerable groups including Gypsy, Roma and Traveller, encouraging and supporting all partners to increase the current low participation.

ELECTIVE HOME EDUCATION

Legal Basis for Elective Home Education

Some Gypsy, Roma, Traveller families may elect to educate their children at home rather than enrol them at a school. The reasons for this are varied but may, for example, include a view that they can offer their children a more suitable and appropriate education that captures their cultural beliefs and traditions.

The Education Act 1996 Section 7 states that the parent of a child who is of compulsory school age has a legal duty to see that their child receives efficient full time education suitable to:

- his/her age according to ability and aptitude and
- to any special educational needs s/he may have

either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

A parent's right to choose the way in which their child is educated is further strengthened by Section 9 of the 1996 Act which establishes the general principle that:

“So far as is compatible with the provision of efficient instruction and training and the avoidance of unreasonable public expenditure, pupils are to be educated in accordance with the wishes of their parents”.

The Children Act 1989 places a duty on Councils with Social Services Responsibilities (CSSRs) to promote and safeguard the welfare of children in need in their area. The Children Act 1989 Section 17(1) states that:

It shall be the general duty of every local authority –

- To safeguard and promote the welfare of children within their area who are in need; and
- So far as is consistent with that duty, to promote the upbringing of such children by their families, by providing a range and level of services appropriate to those children's needs.

This procedure is underpinned by both the above legislation, and the Local Authority will make every attempt to work in partnership with parents who electively home educate, in order to achieve a balance between safeguarding children and respecting parents' rights and choices.

Lincolnshire Traveller Education Services will work in partnership with the Out of School Team, Education Welfare Officers, CfBT and other Children's

Services staff to facilitate communication and contact with Traveller families to ensure that Traveller children have access to appropriate educational provision.

Lincolnshire Traveller Education Service will continue to promote the benefits of a formal education through the school system but where Gypsy, Roma Traveller parents decide to exercise their right to home educate, they will receive appropriate support, advice and assistance.

FLEXI-SCHOOLING

Legal basis for Flexi-schooling

For some parents and children from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller backgrounds, flexi-schooling is a preferred option between full time and elective home education.

In a flexi-schooling arrangement the child is a registered pupil at the school and is deemed to be "absent with leave" under **sections 39(2) and 39(5)** of the Education Act 1944 during periods when he is being educated away from the school.

Section 444 (3) of the **Education Act 1996** states;

The child shall not be taken to have failed to attend regularly at the school by reason of his absence from the school (a) with leave

and section 444(9) further defines

In this section 'leave', in relation to a school, means leave granted by any person authorised to do so by the governing body or proprietor of the school.

If parents want their child to attend school on a part-time basis, they must first have the consent of the school for this as the child will be a registered pupil at the school. Schools do not have to give this consent; they have discretion as to whether to authorise absence, and unlike with full-time home education, parents have no absolute right in this respect.

Parents will need to consider how their child will feel about relationships with friends, and how they will keep up with school work. Unlike totally home educated children, a child registered at a state school must satisfy the requirements of the National Curriculum so parents will have to work closely with the school. If the child covers the National Curriculum in school hours this will allow greater flexibility at home.

The parents and school are recommended to produce a formal agreement in the form of a learning contract or personal learning plan. This will prevent the arrangement breaking down and would outline information such as when the child will attend school, how liaison will take place, access to records, participation in school trips and conditions for ending the agreement by either side.

Funding to those attending part-time is exactly as for a full-time student and the school returns are not affected.

ADMISSION AND ASCRIPTION OF GYPSY, ROMA AND TRAVELLER CHILDREN

Legal basis for school admission

Parents, carers and children from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller families have the same rights as any other family in relation to access to school places, even if they are only staying temporarily within the LA and many not have a postal address or be living in housing or on an authorised site.

Lincolnshire Children's Services fully embrace The School Admissions Code (2009) by operating an in-year fair access protocol that ensures suitable education is secured quickly for all pupils who arrive in the area and have no school place.

With effect from September 2010 all admissions to Lincolnshire schools, regardless of their timing, will be managed and coordinated through the Admission team. Travelling children who arrive in Lincolnshire may approach a school and a school may put a child on role with immediate effect. Appropriate forms will still need to be completed and submitted to the central admissions team.

To protect the continuity of learning of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children, the Pupil Registration 1998 allows for dual registration of Traveller children. This means that if a parent informs the **base school** (*the school of ordinary attendance*) that the child will be going away travelling but will return or if the school knows that the child is from a Traveller family which regularly leaves the area for a time, then Regulation 9(1) (b) and (g) no longer requires the pupil to be removed from the base school register. During the period of absence the base school should hold the place open and record the absence as authorised.

In some cases, class sizes for reception and key stage 1 can be increased to enable a child from a Gypsy, Roma and Traveller family to attend a local school near to where they are staying.

Ethnicity ascription

When Gypsy Roma and Irish Traveller families enrol their children in school, they should feel confident and comfortable in declaring their ethnicity. Past experiences of bullying, racism and discrimination may mean that some families are reluctant to ascribe to their ethnic origins. It is important therefore that they feel safe and secure in ascribing as personal and family identity promotes confidence and self esteem which not only enriches individual learning but also the cultural experiences within the school environment.

Further information can be found in:

Attendance advice: Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Children (DCSF 2008) and Managing Pupil Mobility: A Guidance Document (DfES 2003)

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

Appendix 4

School attendance law in relation to children from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller families

The law recognises that Gypsy, Roma and Traveller families may have an additional reason to keep their children away from school, which is different from non-Gypsy and Traveller families. This is that children are of 'no fixed abode' and their parents are engaged in a trade or business that requires them to travel from place to place and therefore prevents them attending school. However, each child must attend school as regularly as that trade or business permits, and children over six years old have to attend at least 200 sessions in each rolling 12 month period.

The law does not automatically reduce the number of days that children from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller families are expected to attend school; schools and Local Authorities should seek to secure the regular attendance i.e. 380 sessions each school year.

The law makes no reference to a physical dwelling; a Gypsy, Roma or Traveller family that lives in a house but travels in the course of their trade or business, can be classes as of no fixed abode. Prior to taking any action in relation to non school attendance, the Local Authority will seek legal guidance.

Schools should use the full range of interventions and parental responsibility support measures with Gypsy, Roma and Traveller families including the use of legal interventions for unauthorised absence through the Education Act 1996 and applications for Education Supervision Orders under The Children Act 1989.

Further information can be found in :

Attendance advice: Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children (DCSF 2008)

Improving Educational Outcomes for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children and young people in Lincolnshire

**Traveller Education Action Plan
December 2010
Updated August 2011**

Action Plan to improve educational outcomes for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children

Areas for improvement:

1. Safeguarding of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children
2. Access to learning for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children
3. Supporting transition across all key stages particularly into secondary education
4. Conditions for learning that reflect culture and lifestyle and value diversity

Our Actions

	Progress	Complete/ Stop/ Continue	Date of completion (if relevant)
1. Safeguarding Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children			
1.1 Improved recording of all Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children in schools and pre-schools	Data on number of children in schools is available through school census. Children who are GRT but do not ascribe to these ethnic groups are known through liaison with communities, schools, other agencies	Action complete	n/a
1.2 Sharing of specific information to agreed agencies/LCC	Sharing of information has improved through strategic meetings i.e. TAC Improvements to the process for tracking children missing education will support action	Continue	End of September 2011
1.3 Sharing of information on mobile families to other authorities			
1.4 Improved awareness of the high risk of racism and discrimination for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children	There have been improvements in the recording of racist incidents	Continue	March 2012
1.5 Better use of current racist incident reporting procedures			

(LCC, Hate Crime reporting)	through school exclusions but no information on the victim and no specific work related to GRT.		
1.6 Improved liaison with schools, police and locality teams to identify areas of racial tension			
1.7 Better access to information on e-safety to pupils and parents from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller backgrounds	Training has been given to a selection of children. Information on e-safety to be given to families during CfBT EHE inspections	Complete	
1.8 Elective Home inspections to feed into current safeguarding monitoring procedures	Outcome of recent EHE visits has led to improved sharing of information and migration of EHE data to ICS	Complete	
1.9 Implementation of Children Missing Education procedures where appropriate	Review of CME procedures is currently in place	Continue	End of September 2011

2. Access to learning for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children			
2.1 Improve awareness of admission criteria for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children	Schools have access to admission guidance (GRT)	Complete	
2.2 Monitor attendance of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children and actions taken by schools to address attendance issues	Change of action: Review data in light of new DFE target for persistent absence	Continue	September 2011
2.3 Work with schools where flexible-schooling is an option for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children	No progress. Particular issue in Gainsborough area.	Continue	July 2012
2.4 Provide parents with informed choices of education provision	Change of action: Improve relationships between schools/academy and Traveller community in Gainsborough area		
2.5 Provide alternative provision through e.g. college, Traveller Initiative for key stage 4 pupils where agreed appropriate	Alternative provision provided through Gainsborough Traveller Initiative has informed EHE education inspections.	Complete	
2.6 Support school to provide appropriate resources and	Schools have been supported	Continue	January 2012

guidance for mobile pupils including via virtual learning platform	by the former TES team. New action, Families have access to supplementary packs while travelling		
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3. Monitored transition across all key stages particularly into secondary education

3.1 Identification of all Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children at risk of not transferring into key stage 1	Improvement to the CME procedures will support identification of GRT children who do not transfer. Through work with communities, children at risk of not transferring will be identified early and liaison with school will take place	Continue	December 2011
3.2 Identification of all Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children at risk of not transferring into key stage 2			
3.3 Identification of all Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children at risk of not transferring into key stage 3			
3.4 Identification of all Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children at risk of not transferring into key stage 4			
3.5 Identification of all Gypsy, Roma and Traveller school leavers			
3.6 Individual plans for all identified children above	Change of action: Monitoring process in place for GRT children at risk of not transferring into next key stage	Continue	March 2012
3.7 Work with schools to provide early transition programmes e.g. from year 4.	No longer role of LCC. School responsibility	Stop	
3.8 Use of advocacy service to ensure children's rights to an education are provided for all Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children	No progress. Action no longer relevant	Stop	

4. Conditions for learning that reflect culture and lifestyle and value diversity

4.1 Provide culturally relevant information that will impact on teaching and learning	No longer role of LCC. School responsibility	Stop	
4.2 Support schools and communities to celebrate the identity of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children			
4.3 Provide guidance and advice to schools in relation to the			

inclusion of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children in key policy areas e.g. behaviour, homework, assessment, intervention			
4.4 Support schools in use of data to ensure appropriate conditions for learning			
4.5 Support schools to monitor the use and appropriateness of intervention strategies			
4.6 Support schools to implement flexibility into their extended curriculum at key stage 3/4			
4.7 Support schools to celebrate all achievements in school, alternative provision, community and during travelling			