



Response to the Estyn thematic report on Provision for secondary school-aged Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils

Report title:

Provision for secondary school-aged Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils

Report details

The report was commissioned by the Welsh Government's Education Directorate following a recommendation arising from the 2017 inquiry by the National Assembly's Children, Young People and Education Committee into the *Education Improvement Grant: Gypsy Roma and Traveller and Minority Ethnic Children*. The recommendation was that:

Recommendation 7. The Welsh Government should remit Estyn to undertake a thematic review of educational provision for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller, and Minority Ethnic learners, providing an update on the position since its last thematic report in 2011. Estyn's review should consider the impact of the new funding arrangements since 2015-16 and also consider the wider issue of how well the "middle tier" of education (regional consortia and local authorities) monitor and evaluate outcomes for particular groups of learners. Estyn should be remitted to undertake this review in 2017-18 or the earliest year in which this is practical.

The report reviews how effectively schools and local authorities in Wales provide support to Gypsy, Roma and Traveller learners in high schools in Wales. It contains examples of good practice and identifies progress against the recommendations made in its previous review of 2011.

The report focusses only on Gypsy, Roma and Traveller learners, as that was the scope of Estyn's original 2011 report.

Summary of Main Findings

Transition

Only half of Year 6 Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) GRT learners move on to secondary education in Year 7. Around half of local authorities make arrangements to improve transition rates, but these have had little impact. Since 2011, the numbers of GRT learners in secondary schools has increased by 35% although caution must be exercised around the data, numbers are small and a minority of parents do not identify themselves as being from these communities for fear of persecution or bullying.

Recognising culture

Only around half of schools' anti-bullying and equality policies take account of the specific needs of these learners, for example around how their culture may affect attendance. Many schools raise awareness of culture and lifestyle via assemblies and PSE lessons and celebration of events, for example GRT history month. Overall, schools do not sufficiently promote GRT culture throughout the formal subject based curriculum.

Attendance and transport

Attendance at secondary schools has improved over the past few years, but overall their attendance is well below the average for secondary school-aged pupils. Around half of schools and local authorities believe the transport difficulties impact on attendance. A few sites are away from normal transport routes and near main roads with no footpaths where walking to school may be dangerous. A minority of schools and local authorities provide transport which results in higher attendance and engagement rates.

Attainment

There have been some significant improvements in examination performance at KS4, although overall attainment continues to be lowest of all ethnic groups.

Local authority support

A majority of authorities and schools have pastoral support plans (PSPs) for GRT pupils. Most use PSPs to support attendance including setting realistic targets. Pupils, parents, schools and other agencies agree strategies for improvement which are monitored by the local authority.

Most schools and local authorities collect and analyse data on attendance and attainment but do not use the data to evaluate the effectiveness of their improvement strategies. Most local authorities continue with the same types of support without evaluation of which are most effective. A few schools and local authorities use the data well and make amendments to their strategies.

Most local authorities provide useful school-based support through a traveller education services. Staff from these liaise with families and help pupils improve attendance and attainment. Most deploy their specialist staff to schools based on the number of GRT pupils. A few local authorities lack clarity on how they allocate these staff.

Where the literacy and numeracy skills of GRT pupils need strengthening, most schools offer support through their standard interventions such as catch-up programmes. When a GRT pupil is identified as potentially having an additional learning need, liaison between local authority staff and the school's

additional learning needs co-ordinator and the traveller education service generally ensures that the pupil undertakes relevant assessments that lead to suitable support being provided.

Funding

A majority of local authorities do not believe that the merging of the Gypsy Children and Traveller Children Education Grant into the Education Improvement Grant (EIG) for schools in 2014 was effective. This is because they think there was an overall reduction of funding that had a negative impact on the services that they were able to provide. Whilst the overall level of funding provided by the Welsh Government via the EIG was maintained, within the EIG there was discretion for local authorities to allocate funding at a level they considered appropriate based on local need. In some cases, local authorities allocated additional funding for these groups of pupils through their core budgets.

The Welsh Government should:

R7 Update the 2008 guidance 'Moving Forward – Gypsy Traveller Education' Welsh Government response:

Accept. Work is underway to update the 2008 guidance. It will be published for public consultation later in 2019.

Local authorities and schools should:

R1 Ensure that they evaluate the effectiveness of their strategies to improve the achievement, transition and attendance* of GRT pupils and make improvements when strategies are not bringing about the desired outcomes

R2 Ensure that anti-bullying and equality policies take account of the specific needs of GRT pupils*

R3 Ensure that schools promote GRT culture throughout the school curriculum*

R4 Ensure that GRT pupils have opportunities to express their views about their learning experiences

R5 Work collaboratively to deliver and enhance services for GRT pupils

R6 Explore ways of building the confidence of GRT pupils and parents to self-ascribe their ethnic identity accurately

* Recommendation in the 2005 and 2011 Estyn reports

Welsh Government response:

Officials in the Education Directorate will write to local authorities to draw their attention to the recommendations placed on them and on schools by this report.

Publication details.

The report will be published on 3 April 2019 and will be found on Estyn's website: <https://www.estyn.gov.wales>

Mae'r ddogfen yma hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg.
This document is also available in Welsh.



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