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Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils in schools in the UK: inclusion and ‘good practice’

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This paper examines inclusionary processes and examples of ‘good practice’ in primary and secondary schools for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils in one inner London Borough in the UK. It will explore the role of the Traveller Education Service (TES) and argue that the support provided by the TES to schools is essential for the development of ‘good practice’, but at the same time it stresses that the TES is not a *substitute* for the school’s educational and welfare responsibilities. The paper will also argue that the commitment of the head teacher and senior management team to the inclusive ethos of the school is crucial in setting the tone of the school towards positive treatment of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils. Where an inclusive ethos works successfully it is often the result of a wider social engagement between the school and community. The paper will draw on qualitative interview data with parents, head teachers, deputies, heads of year, teachers, and classroom assistants at the schools.

Introduction

The poor attendance and underachievement of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GR&T) children within the UK education system has long been acknowledged as a source of concern (Plowden Report, 1967; Swann Report, 1985; Liegeois, 1998; Acton, 2004). The UK’s experience reflects that of wider international education systems that seek to offer inclusive and compulsory education (United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), 2004). This paper will examine inclusionary processes and examples of ‘good practice’ in two primary and two secondary schools in one inner London borough in the UK. It will outline who GR&T are and why they remain socially excluded in the British education system. It will also explore measures some schools are taking to improve the experiences of GR&T pupils in terms of inclusion, attendance

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and achievement. The paper argues that the Traveller Education Service (TES) is instrumental in providing support for GR&T children. However, the TES is not a substitute for the school's responsibilities towards these groups. The leadership and inclusive ethos of schools is also crucial in setting the tone of inclusion for all minority ethnic groups and this is linked to schools' ability to engage with these different communities. The paper draws upon qualitative interview data with professional educators and parents.

Background

'Gypsies', 'Roma' and 'Travellers' and ethnicity

There have been many problems with the usage of terms to define groups who are nomadic and travel. A number of generic terms including Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GR&T) are used to describe distinct communities who either are, or have been, traditionally associated with a nomadic way of life. These terms suggest homogenous groups of people, but this is problematic as such terms do not necessarily reflect descriptions given by communities to themselves, and do not reflect the diversity of communities in the UK. Traditional communities include English Romanies or Gypsies, Scottish Travellers, Welsh Kale, Irish Travellers, Roma/Gypsies from Eastern and Central Europe, Showmen (from Fairground or Circus backgrounds), Bargees (those living on canal boats), and, more recently, New Age Travellers. Whilst acknowledging the difficulties and impossibilities of such categorization, we use the term 'GR&T' as a generic category to encompass all these groups and to reflect wider societal understandings that do not differentiate between communities. When referring to individual communities we use terms that relate specifically to that group, usually the name they prefer to be called. Therefore, for example, the main group who participated in this research were English Romanies.

There is no specific UK-wide policy on GR&Ts. England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland have their own detailed (but different) countrywide policies. The Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 gives public bodies including schools a statutory duty to promote race equality. By monitoring the outcomes of policies on all minority ethnic groups, schools are better able to identify and remove any unintentional barriers to achievement of pupils from GR&T backgrounds. Since January 2003, 'Gypsy/Roma' and 'Travellers of Irish heritage' have been included as ethnic categories in data collected by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) in England and Wales (DfES, 2003). However, much research has demonstrated that GR&T families are often unwilling to declare their ethnic identity to schools for fear of being excluded or discriminated against (DfES, 2003; Bhopal, 2004; Derrington & Kendall, 2004).

There are no accurate national or regional data on the numbers of GR&T; estimates range widely from 100 000 to 350 000 (Bhopal *et al.*, 2000). Many GR&T live in mobile trailers on local authority and privately owned caravan sites or on their own plot of land. Although many GR&T families do not aspire to living in houses

(DfES, 2003) and exact figures are unavailable, increasing numbers of GR&T are housed (Clark & Greenfields, 2006). Approximately one-fifth of the non-housed GR&T population have no secure place to stay and are constantly moving between unauthorized encampments.

GR&T and education

Educational inclusion is a focus of attention in international policy-making as highlighted by the United Nations (UN), which argues for an 'education for all' agenda. The UN convention of the Rights of the Child (1989 Article, 28) argues that education should be 'compulsory and free to all' (UNICEF, 2004). This was supported by the Jomtien Conference (1990) which launched its 'Education for all by 2000' programme. Most significantly this has been highlighted by the Salamanca Statement, which argues for inclusive education as a basic right for *all* children (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), 1994, 2001). From an international focus GR&T groups have been recognized by the European Parliament (Resolution 89/C) as being one of the most socially excluded groups in schools and as having the highest rate of illiteracy.

The DfES has shown that there is a need to tackle and understand the under-achievement of GR&T pupils in UK schools. In 2003, they published *Aiming High: Raising the Achievement of Gypsy Traveller Pupils. A Guide to Good Practice* which offered advice to schools on how to develop effective policies. Since 2003 the categories 'Gypsy/Roma' and 'Travellers of Irish heritage' have appeared in the Pupil Level Annual School Census data (PLASC), and, as a result, the DfES has been better able to analyse the performance of GR&T pupils. The DfES argues that these data show cause for concern and more help is needed for GR&T children to achieve their potential and succeed in schools. Schools and local authorities are obliged to comply with the statutory requirements under the Race Relations (Amendment) 2000 Act to monitor and assess the impact of their policies on children from GR&T backgrounds. Recently, the DfES has argued:

it is important that mobility and uncertainty of lifestyle do not deny children their entitlement to a full education. Each school they attend should offer them the same opportunities it does other children and if or when their education is disrupted the TES network will do all it can to maintain continuity.

(DfES, 2005, p. 4)

Schools in the UK receive funding for GR&T pupils, as they do for other children, through the Education Formula Spending Share (EFSS). In addition, GR&T children also benefit from the Vulnerable Children Grant (VCG). From April 2003, the VCG merged several Standards Funds Grants including the Traveller Achievement Grant and made a substantial increase on the grants it replaced. For 2005–06 the VCG allows local authorities to allocate funding based on local needs in order to provide support for a range of vulnerable children, including those from GR&T backgrounds. VCG funding for GR&T children goes to the TES whose staff work

closely with local authorities and schools to improve levels of attendance and achievement. The TES are also tasked with raising levels of understanding of GR&T culture within the educational community. Local authorities have a statutory duty to ensure that education is available to children of compulsory school age appropriate to their age, abilities, aptitudes and any special educational needs they may have. This duty applies to children whether they are residing permanently or temporarily and therefore includes GR&T children.

Recent research indicates that GR&T pupils can be treated less fairly and less equitably than other pupils because of policies and practices in place in some schools (Bhopal, 2004). This may lead to GR&T pupils being socially excluded within the school system as evidenced by their disproportionate representation amongst pupils excluded from school (DfES, 2006). The underlying trend appears to be that access to education for primary school GR&T children continues to improve, but this is not reflected in secondary school attendance patterns (Reynolds *et al.*, 2003; Derrington, 2005). A number of schools can be identified for their 'good practice' in encouraging the attendance of secondary school children, but nationally attendance remains a cause for concern. This needs to be understood in the context of GR&T values; some parents see secondary schooling as a threat to cultural, moral and traditional practices and the school itself may be identified as a dangerous space where racist bullying occurs (DfES, 2005).

A recent DfES data collection exercise recorded approximately 43 000 GR&T children in their statistics for England (DfES, 2003). The work of the TES over many years has resulted in an increase in the numbers of children attending primary schools, but there is concern regarding the numbers of children who are not attending secondary schools. Recent data reports there may be around 12 000 children who are not registered with any school (Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED), 2003). Whilst this figure is obviously a worrying one, it should be considered in the light of an increased trend towards participation over the last 40 years highlighted by Acton (2004, p. 4) (though he also notes that most school attendance figures for GR&Ts tend to be flawed). More recent research (Bhopal, 2004) has suggested that the traditional hostility towards schools from some GR&Ts has shifted with economic changes and, as a result, a growing number of parents are beginning to accept the value of schooling and education.

There has been comparatively little research that looks at GR&T's own experiences of education and how these have been affected by the often hostile perceptions of GR&T lifestyle and culture. Such perceptions are commonplace within wider society and also reflected within the attitudes of educational institutions themselves (Jordan, 2001). Instead most research has concentrated on GR&T's relationship to the systems and institutions of education concentrating on the workings of the school and other official bodies (O'Hanlon & Holmes, 2004). Therefore, for example, the DfES (2003) has recognized that many GR&T parents have little or no education or had poor quality experiences especially in secondary schools. Such research has not, however, explored how this affects the social exclusion and marginalization felt by GR&Ts. The most recent research into successful practice (Bhopal *et al.*, 2000;

O'Hanlon & Holmes, 2004) demonstrates that low attendance, access to curriculum and achievement levels of GR&T children can be successfully addressed by schools, Local Education Authorities and the TES.

The difficulties of this divergence between needs and provision are further compounded by GR&T expectations of the education system. Recent research has identified the anxieties GR&T parents face when sending their children to school (Derrington, 2005; DfES, 2006). The literature also emphasises the importance of establishing trusting relationships between GR&T parents and the non-GR&T community in order to secure access and achievement for GR&T children in schools. A common thread that runs through the literature questions whether it is possible to achieve integration in mainstream education whilst preserving cultural identity for GR&T groups.

Research design and analysis

The research was carried out in one London borough in the UK where there has been a large population of English Romanies for several hundred years. In the last 50 years many of the families have lived on a single official site and there has been a well-established history of children from this community attending the local primary and secondary schools. A smaller number of families live in housing in the immediate vicinity of the official site.

Two secondary and two primary schools participated in the research. A total of 60 interviews were carried out in the four schools with head teachers, deputies, heads of year, teachers and classroom assistants. Ten interviews were carried out with members of the TES and ten with mothers of children who attended the schools. The interviews were tape-recorded (with the permission of the respondents) and the data transcribed. All of the interviews were carried out during school time and on school premises. We took a case study approach in which the focus of analysis was the school; the main aim being to develop as full an understanding of the case as possible (Punch, 1988). The specific focus of the case study was 'good practice'.

The research identified aspects of 'good practice' based on what schools felt were effective measures to include GR&T pupils within schools. Discussing definitions of inclusion, Ainscow notes how different institutions have different and unique definitions, 'because of the need to take account of local circumstances, cultures and history' (Ainscow, 2005, p. 118). We found this also to be true when pinning down what was meant by 'good practice', particularly in relation to GR&T pupils. Recognizing the circumstances and characteristics of GR&T culture in the locality of schools was itself a marker of 'good practice' along with a range of other measures. These included factors influencing access to school (relationships with GR&T pupils and parents, arrangements for admissions policies); factors influencing attainment (recognition of ethnic status of GR&T groups, how bullying/racist incidents are dealt with, learning and study support, support with homework activities); staff responsibilities (collective responsibility of the school towards GR&T pupils, implementation of behaviour policies, designation of sanctuary territory for GR&T pupils); and the

role of the TES (relationship of TES with GR&T community and school, raising awareness through training and informative documentation). Attendance patterns and achievement levels were measured by examining school and TES records, it was felt that the TES were able to provide more accurate data than PLASC figures as they included some pupils who did not officially identify themselves to the schools as having GR&T origins.

The present data analysis used the process of grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Data were indexed in relation to particular themes and categorized under topics and headings from which to build analyses. We were able to make sense of events in order to build a picture of 'good practice' in schools.

Results

Identifying 'good practice'

GR&T experiences of education are the subject of a significant amount of research and one constant to emerge is the need to establish trusting relationships with GR&T parents and the community (Bhopal *et al.*, 2000; Derrington & Kendall, 2004). Acton stresses how continued progress is:

absolutely dependent on the multi-cultural respect which welcomes Roma/Gypsy/Traveler children as who they are with a culture that is also valid content for the education of other children.

(Acton, 2004, p. 10)

Beyond practical considerations such as the availability of school places and the distance from school to home, continuing access to school education depends on families having sufficient interest and confidence in schools for them to trust the institutions with the care of their children. Churchwood Secondary School¹ had developed a reputation amongst GR&Ts in the locality as the one school that had an interest in the community and it was noticeable that measures of 'good practice', such as the attendance and achievement patterns of pupils were high, and the number of exclusions low. The school had built excellent links with the parents and community over a considerable period of time. The head, deputy head and some other teachers were well known to families and were knowledgeable about their longstanding presence in the wider community. This sense of knowledge gained over time was important to appreciate the tensions that marked some children's engagement with the school. For example, our research uncovered racism on the part of English Romany children towards newer immigrant groups in the locality. Such racism was better understood in a context of their community's feelings about these immigrants and its seeming reflection of the majority white community in the locality. Whilst in many respects the need for teachers to demonstrate awareness of the communities they teach seems almost too obvious to be worth stating it was a particular concern that in some schools there was very little awareness of GR&T culture and pupil's lifestyles. Many teachers at the schools were not residents in the locality and their sole dealings

with issues around English Romany pupils were in the workplace. To be successful these relationships required building a cultural knowledge that was often beyond the teacher's own daily experience. In many cases the means by which teachers could expand their knowledge of GR&T culture were quite straightforward; talking to members of the TES, making time to speak to parents and children, or arranging to visit families on the site would all pay dividends. However, in most schools, teachers had not visited the site and had not built relationships with the families that would make a visit to the site feasible. A story was told (by teachers in one school), of a party of trainee teachers deciding to visit the official site armed with cameras and notebooks, arriving unannounced they were duly chased off the site by large men and dogs. The story seemed to underline the fears and uncertainties felt by some teachers about GR&T culture generally; it suggests the need to keep a distance from the culture or be faced with violence and hostility. By keeping such a distance the engagement between schools and community is compromised. One important means of initiating and maintaining communications between schools and GR&T communities is through the work of the TES.

Traveller Education Service (TES)

The TES is an integral component of a triangular set of relations that determines lines of communication between GR&T families and schools (Figure 1). Some of the services the TES offer to schools include advisory skills, which focus on policies and practices for the inclusion of GR&T children; and teaching and learning materials, such as culture specific material which challenge the traditional stereotypes about GR&T groups. The TES also supports the local education welfare services to establish 'good practice' regarding the attendance and achievement of GR&T children. In particular the outreach family liaison role of the TES ensures that any gap between the school and families can be positively reduced so that schools can communicate successfully and directly with families. Where communications between schools and families are not working well or are non-existent, the TES can operate as a third party instigating communications, and, relieve families and schools from the onus of making first contact. At Churchwood School the relationship with the TES was clear, positive and deeply embedded and this relationship was acknowledged and understood by GR&T parents.

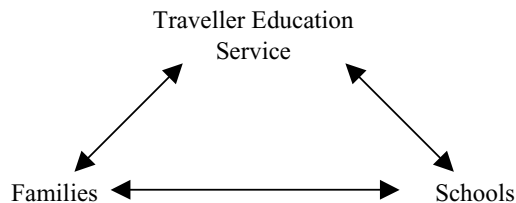


Figure 1. Relationship between the Traveller Education Service (TES), schools and families

Unusually, Churchwood School was seen to work *alongside* the TES and also *independently* of the TES with families. This reflected both the confidence of members of staff to engage with the community and a depth of knowledge about GR&T culture. One criticism of working relationships between the TES and schools that is often raised by the TES nationally is that too often GR&T children are seen as being the TES's sole responsibility and not the school's responsibility (Derrington & Kendall, 2004). In particular if there is a problem with a GR&T child, that pupil will be described by the school as 'one of yours' (i.e. the responsibility of the TES) (Bhopal, 2004). In many cases the burden of resolving problems is left entirely with the TES without input from the school. At Churchwood School pedagogic knowledge and practice of teaching GR&T children is well established. The TES acts as a resource that can be used by both the school and by the GR&T community, whilst also retaining its third party role (if for example it felt it should intervene or act independently). In other schools in the borough there was a greater dependence on the TES to provide more of the day-to-day teaching and administrative work with GR&T pupils, for example resolving issues such as arguments over infractions of minor rules. As a result the TES lost some of its independent role and became more overtly placed as the representative or spokesperson for GR&T families in schools. Where schools were not engaging with families successfully this reduced the quality of work the TES were able to deliver.

In Churchwood School the TES were able to promote a number of initiatives that went beyond their work in other schools in the borough. The TES had worked with the school to produce some learning materials to be used in the classroom by *all* pupils at the school. These included history projects on the arrival of GR&Ts in the UK for younger children (aged 12–13), and, the GR&T experience of the holocaust for older children (aged 15–16). The TES also secured funding for a photography exhibition of work produced by pupils about their lifestyle. Whilst noticeboards in many schools are used to present positive images of GR&T culture and lifestyle, often with photographic contributions from their pupils, the work at Churchwood went considerably further. The funding that had been secured for the project was used to present the work in a significantly more professional manner, but perhaps more importantly the photographs were exhibited alongside the curriculum materials produced at the school. The exhibition was seen outside of the school at a number of education conferences and in the local town hall; in this way the work produced by the school was influencing wider discourses outside the school gates. The 'multi-cultural respect' described by Acton (2004) was being generated through the collaborative work of community, TES and school. Such work acts within a wider social context and as Ainscow (2005) suggests, by doing so, generates greater leverage in promoting processes of social inclusion.

For many GR&T parents schools are seen as a threat to both their children and their family's way of life. The designation of a TES 'named person' within schools is vital in securing a trusting relationship with the parents, ensuring that children and families have a clear point of familiarity within the school. Jackie,² a TES team member, explained:

The success has to do with the stability of support we offer to parents. It takes years to build trust and this has to happen over time. Reputation is then founded with the Travellers, they can trust and respect you. Acceptance is also important, not letting them down. If you say you're going to do something, you have to do it.

The open and communicative relationship between the TES and Churchwood School contributed to parents' views about the workings of the educational establishment and the relationship they could have with the school. Jane, a mother of one child who attended Churchwood School said:

Because Cheryl (TES team member) gets on with the people at the school and we trust her, we know we can tell her things and she will not talk about these things if we don't want her to. We trust her and because of this we trust the school.

It was also reassuring and useful for the teaching staff as Robert, a Head of Year said:

The Traveller teacher comes here and we know who she is and we know we can contact her if we need to and she is always ready to talk to us. We have regular meetings with her anyway about the progress of the children. These meetings are very useful because we can sit down and decide what we have to do with a particular child.

At other schools in the borough less open relationships existed between the TES and school and these seemed to coincide with schools that had less comfortable relationships with GR&T pupils. This was reflected in the comments made about the TES by teaching staff:

Sometimes they can be very difficult children to teach. They have a lot of issues with the school. The Traveller teacher is very useful if there's a problem, she will talk to the children and the parents.

In this school the onus for responsibility for GR&T children seemed to be placed firmly with the TES rather than the school. The TES were expected to resolve problems associated with the attendance and behaviour of GR&T pupils, they were not expected to further understandings of GR&T culture amongst the teaching staff. A key element in the development of 'good practice' is the realisation that the school has the duty to demonstrate trust and this is frequently facilitated by a willingness to do regular outreach work with the families and the community. Paula a mother (at Churchwood School), made this clear:

I send my kids there, 'cos we trust them, we trust the school and we trust the head, she will make time for us and see us when we need to talk to her. That means she listens to us and cares about what we think.

Such relationships can take many years to develop and often rely on the continuity of individual staff members' involvement over that time. The confidence of GR&T parents in a school is raised if they know and trust particular members of staff. Equally important the school needs to nurture and take ownership of relationships with the GR&T community; however important the TES's role may be in fostering relationships between the school and community, schools have the final responsibility for ensuring the conditions are in place to educate *all* the children within their care. The designation of a key TES person by itself has little effect

unless it is matched by a positive and welcoming attitude on the part of all the staff in the school.

Leadership and inclusive ethos

Typically those schools that built confident and ongoing relationships with GR&T families were those who were most successful in establishing regular attendance patterns and improving the academic achievement of children. To build such relationships required commitment from the head teacher and the senior management of the schools both to maintaining direct links with GR&T families and their insistence that the school should epitomise an inclusive ethos. Where head teachers or senior management maintained a genuine 'open-door' policy this paid enormous dividends. The head of Churchwood School explained her policy of always making time to see GR&T parents immediately if they arrived at the school to discuss arguably small concerns or worries about incidents at the school involving their children. By tackling issues immediately and face-to-face with parents, the families' concerns were generally alleviated and potentially explosive situations defused; typically the children would remain in school rather than being withdrawn for a period of time. Whilst it could obviously be argued that this approach would represent 'good practice' in dealing with many similar situations in many other schools and with children from other backgrounds, the head teacher explained its particular pertinence to dealing with GR&T families. The head had previously worked in other inner London schools with similarly deprived backgrounds, though typified by a greater mix of ethnic backgrounds. Having been at this school for eight years she had spent a great deal of time learning to appreciate the very specific culture of the GR&T families who used her school, in this respect she had worked very closely and established a good relationship with the TES. She had a clear understanding of the ambiguities in the relationship between school and families. These included parents' poor experiences of education and the fears these generated for their children. They also included specific cultural differences between sedentary culture and GR&T culture such as the heightened and different notion of what constitutes 'safety' at school. When discussing what parents would do if they were concerned about the safety of their children at the school one first response was to go immediately to the school (the other response would be to involve the TES). These understandings resulted in the implementation of a very literal 'open-door policy' by the head; if a GR&T parent came to the school without an appointment he or she would be invited into the head's office and the head or deputy head would make time to speak to them. Other schools in the borough also operated 'open-door' policies in which, as one deputy head explained, 'we will always make time to see any parent, that's part of my job'; discussing this further it became clear that making time to see parents involved speaking to the school secretary and arranging an appointment (almost invariably on the same day it should be noted). It would be wrong to suggest that schools and head teachers operating an 'open-door policy' that delays face-to-face meetings with GR&T parents by a few hours should be labelled as *bad practice*; however, the immediacy that was apparent at Churchwood School clearly

contributed to the positive relationship with parents. It was a relationship that was understood within the local community, according to Violet (mother of two children who attended Churchwood):

We trust the school and the Head is very good. She says we can come and see her whenever we want and she is always welcoming to us and makes time for us. That makes a difference to us and that's why we want to send our children here.

Regular interaction between the senior management at the school and the TES was a strong marker of 'good practice' demonstrating the school's commitment to understanding the very specific needs of GR&T families. Recognition and acceptance of the ethnic and cultural status of pupils contributes to the development of confidence and trust and in consequence, the breaking down of mistrust and fear of 'official' type institutions. By being proactive in ensuring that GR&T culture is recognised and celebrated within the school, pupils can develop a positive self and group image. According to the head at Churchwood:

I knew when I came to this school there was a big Gypsy Traveller population and as the head of this school it is my role to ensure that they are included. I make sure that all my staff know that. We actively do things such as assembly and the display we have in the foyer which can tell people about Gypsy Traveller culture. This means the school and its staff and pupils can move one more step forward in combating stereotypes and racism towards this group.

Churchwood has a diverse cultural and ethnic mix including many GR&Ts; its inclusive character is a reflection of the ethos of the school. Special efforts are taken to ensure that no groups are stereotyped and this is achieved, in part, by emphasising the importance of responding to accurately assessed individual needs. In part the school's richness in terms of its ethnic and cultural diversity makes it more able to cater for children's individual needs, while at the same time respecting cultural and linguistic differences. A deputy-head reinforced this:

What we try and do here is treat children as individuals and understand what their needs are but at the same time we try to recognise that there are many differences between them. We don't want children to think we don't understand their cultures, because we do. It's because of this that we may allow some children to bend the rules, like for instance wearing large ear rings for some of the Gypsy Traveller children, but also allowing some girls to wear a nose ring because we recognise that it is part of their culture. But at the same time, this can be hard to do because you end up wanting to please everyone, and sometimes this can't always happen.

'Bending the rules' was an issue at Churchwood for some members of staff who felt there was an element of favouritism in the treatment of GR&T children, in particular allowing girls to wear large ear rings in deference to their English Romany heritage. For parents there was an explicit linkage made between their girls wearing ear rings and Moslem girls wearing a veil. If a school did not tolerate the wearing of large ear rings this was considered an attack upon the culture, according to one mother: 'Our girls are born wearing ear rings'. At Churchwood it was clear parents felt comfortable sending their children to the school. A relationship existed in which the differences in

English Romany culture were recognised and this meant parents felt their children were safe, respected and looked after. A teacher at Churchwood explained:

I think because the parents know us and they know that we have a history of their children coming to our school, they trust us. And that is really important for us because we want to do what is best for the children. We want to do what is best for all the children who come to our school.

The recognition of the importance of GR&T children's culture within the school is made clear to everyone; pupils, teachers, parents and visitors by a prominent visual display board celebrating aspects of GR&T culture in the lobby of the main school entrance. There is a clear indication that the school is aware of differences between GR&T culture and other minority ethnic cultures. This difference is acknowledged and celebrated by the school. By operating an 'open-door' policy it is apparent that senior management within the school have made time and demonstrated an interest in understanding the different culture brought to the school by GR&T children. There is a very clear sense of children being welcomed to the school in an atmosphere of multicultural respect for the communities around and within the school.

Behaviour policies

Those schools showing 'good practice' all had sound and well-considered behaviour policies in place; they were seen as important in the context of dealing and confirming the rules and expectations implicit in the establishment of an ethos of inclusive education. The policies in the schools focussed more on the promotion of good behaviour and harmonious and respectful interpersonal relationships, rather than the imposition of discipline. The policies recognised divisions in communities and society at large and reflected a concern to provide a moral context for the response to, and management of any inherent tensions. The schools were very conscious about the negative and potentially damaging impact of name calling. When GR&T pupils are the recipients of this, it is unequivocally seen as racially abusive behaviour and totally unacceptable. The potential for bullying in relation to GR&T pupils is recognised in schools which demonstrated 'good practice'. One of the ways anti-bullying and anti-racist strategies are seen to be effective is by building the confidence of GR&T pupils and making them feel welcome and accepted in the school. Parents also have to be confident that if racist incidents occur, they will be dealt with effectively. It is at this holistic level of reassurance that the development of 'good practice', typified by Churchwood School, results in regular attendance and improved levels of achievement. One of the secondary schools has a Race Equality Officer who deals with issues of racism. All incidents were recorded and both parties interviewed. The data was sent to the local authority for monitoring purposes.³ He indicated:

We have had some incidents here of racism towards the Gypsy Traveller children and it has not been very nice. But I think because we put our foot down and we make all the children — no matter what their ethnic group — know that we will not tolerate this behaviour. One of the things we often try to do is to challenge the stereotypes and attitudes

that some of these children have and often you know it comes from the family and is the sort of attitude they have grown up with. But we have to try and change that.

Conclusions

‘Good practice’ is not a simple set of measures, policies or procedures that can be implemented at will. Rather, it is a culmination of attitudes and behaviours that reflect the school’s ethos and the relationship that ethos fosters between schools and GR&T communities. Within this holistic view some identifiable trends can be seen to emerge that are symptomatic of ‘good practice’ and were seen to be embedded within some schools. Where these elements of ‘good practice’ are firmly in place, they clearly result in a marked and positive impact on the educational achievements of GR&T children. Those schools that were showing success with GR&Ts were those that worked alongside the TES as partners as well as independently. The support provided by the TES to schools is crucial to the development of ‘good practice’. The TES is not, however, a substitute for the schools’ educational and welfare responsibilities.

The commitment of the head and senior management to the inclusive ethos of the school was crucial in setting the tone of the school towards the positive treatment of GR&Ts. Outside the school gates GR&T culture is often misunderstood and misrepresented; within the school gates the commitment to providing an inclusive education requires an understanding of differences and sensitivity towards GR&T culture. Schools need to be flexible in their approach to meeting the needs of all pupils. This flexibility needs to be seen within a context of multicultural understanding and should be understood in terms of an ongoing discourse about culture and identity within the school. The motivation of GR&T pupils to attend school and to participate fully is strongly influenced by the quality of intercultural relations and the anti-racist policies and practices. Confidence and enthusiasm for learning is directly influenced by the extent to which the curriculum and resources reflect the reality of GR&T culture, language and history. All schools must be aware of the importance of an inclusive curriculum that reflects appropriate references to GR&T culture, language and history. The schools with the most effective practice invested significant management resources into the establishment of positive relationship with parents and pupils, these schools listened to parents and pupils and welcomed communication with them.

In schools that do not enjoy good relations with GR&T communities there is a need to develop wide-ranging, holistic approaches. One-off measures will not provide solutions to uncomfortable working relationships and will not result in improved educational opportunities for GR&T children. Schools must foster and maintain their links with the TES. This is important in order to spread an awareness of GR&T culture amongst education practitioners and also to develop positive relationships with GR&T communities. By doing this schools can learn to have the confidence to work not just alongside but also independently of the TES when dealing with GR&T families; if schools are unable to work independently then they are not delivering an

education that meets the needs of GR&T pupils. By becoming engaged in the wider social worlds of communities outside the school the processes of inclusive education have greater impact.

In the light of some of the anxiety in which GR&T parents and pupils may view the school, a member of the senior management team should be designated as the key link between the family and the school. Although a major part of this role is to ensure that trust and continuity of relationships are achieved, it should not detract from a whole-school approach in which all staff have to be accepting, supporting and welcoming to GR&T families. Schools have to take responsibility for fostering the relationship with GR&T communities and cannot rely on other parties to act as go-betweens. Where, for example, the TES are used to establish, maintain and monitor all relationships between school and community this effectively detracts from the full remit of their work and overloads the TES with work that is the schools' responsibility. Schools should provide training for all staff (both teaching and non-teaching) directly targeted towards the education of minority ethnic pupils, specifically to include GR&T pupils. The responsibilities of leadership and inclusion must involve the school governing body which should demonstrate commitment to all communities who are represented in the school. If schools are to ensure that they are engaging with inclusive measures, then they must take on board recommendations that reflect the needs of a diverse society. Schools must value cultural diversity and multicultural education has to make *all* children feel they have a part to play in the school community.

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Notes

1. The name of the school has been anonymised.
2. All names are pseudonyms.
3. All schools must provide this information since the publication of the Macpherson Report (Macpherson *et al.*, 1999), which argued that all organizations in the UK were marred by institutional racism.

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