Overcoming barriers: ensuring that Roma children are fully engaged and achieving in education

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Aims

The aims of the research were to investigate barriers to education for Roma children and challenges for particular schools and local authorities, and to report on successful strategies for engaging Roma children in education.

Methodology

- Visits to 3 local authorities (Derby, Sheffield and Manchester) were conducted. These areas were chosen because they had all experienced an increase in their Roma population. Ofsted inspectors met key personnel including

senior leaders and officers, headteachers and coordinators for English as an additional language and/or coordinators for Gypsy/Roma and Traveller pupils. They also spoke to Roma parents and young people, voluntary organisations and visited community activities.

- Visits to 11 schools in these areas. Inspectors spoke with headteachers, senior leaders, governors, EAL coordinators and/or coordinators for Gypsy/Roma and Traveller pupils and other staff. They met parents and pupils, and observed lessons.
- 9 additional schools from the three areas participated in a telephone survey.

Evidence from inspections of other schools, and discussions with agencies, also informed the report.

Key issues

The local authorities and schools that had experienced the greatest success in terms of improving engagement and attainment for Roma children had developed effective partnership working with other agencies, and developed specific strategies to meet the needs of this group. Schools reported some issues in terms of behaviour and observing school routines for Roma children who had little experience of formal education. Those who were well integrated tended to make good progress. However due to pupils' low starting point, overall attainment stayed low. Schools reported not having enough resources to fully meet the needs of Roma pupils. For example there was not

sufficient EAL support. It was noted that the process for schools accessing relevant funding, such as pupil premium, was too slow. High levels of mobility of pupils was another challenge, with high dropout rates being a particular issue for secondary schools. It was reported that the achievement of existing school pupils was not adversely affected by the increase in Roma pupils. The report expresses concern that Roma numbers are under-reported: Roma parents consulted often reported not wanting to state their children's ethnicity due to fearing discrimination.

Recommendations

The report set out recommendations for local authorities, DfE and schools. Local authorities were asked to develop partnership working between key services; ensure that specialist advice and support is made available to schools; work with schools to ensure that Roma pupils receive an initial assessment and ongoing support; review strategies for improving the attendance and attainment of Roma pupils. Recommendations for DfE were to look at how to encourage more accurate reporting of pupil groups, and to consider how the funding allocation process can take account of changes in pupil numbers during the school year. There were several recommendations for schools, including: assigning a named member of staff to lead on improving Roma children's achievement; recruit teachers able to provide high quality support to Roma pupils needing EAL, including having fluency in English; strengthening links between

primary and secondary schools to improve the transition and make dropout less likely.

Web Link
https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ensuring-roma-children-achieve-in-ed…
Migrant Group
EU migrants
Topic
Children
Children and young people
Education
Roma
Place
Sheffield
South Yorkshire
Year
2014
Resource Type
Report

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