Guidance for Supporting Gypsy Roma and Traveller children during the Foundation Stage
Traveller Education Early Years Team in Consortium with Brighton and Hove

Who we are:

We are practitioners from the Traveller Education team, working in partnership with other agencies and professionals to provide support for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller families with children up to the end of the foundation stage. We offer advice on reflecting and including Traveller culture in an early years setting or reception class and training to practitioners. We are part of Inclusion Support Services, which is part of East Sussex Children’s Services.

You can contact us for advice, direct support with GRT children and their families. You can also contact us to advice on borrowing and using resources.

Our number is 01323 464216
or e-mail traveller.education@eastsussex.gov.uk

Our Aim:

We aim to help and support you by offering you practical support, training, advice and information on how to successfully include Traveller children in your setting/reception class and how to include and reflect Traveller culture. Our aim is to raise the educational achievement of Traveller children in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
What do we offer?

• Support with transition into pre-schools and the first year at school.

• Training for staff in children centres, early years settings and reception classes.

• Advice on successfully including Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children and their families within early year’s settings and reception classes.

• Advice on resources (including a loan scheme for large items such as wooden play caravans) and how to include and reflect Traveller culture as part of equalities work with all children. This supports work around the Ofsted framework of inspection focusing on equalities, vulnerable children and closing the attainment gap.

• Targeted teaching support.
Different Traveller Groups

“Traveller” or “Gypsy, Roma and Traveller” (GRT) are umbrella terms covering distinct groups, which include Gypsy/Roma, Travellers of Irish Heritage, Showmen or fairground families, circus families and new Travellers.

Gypsy/Roma and Irish Travellers are defined as minority ethnic groups under the Race Relations Amendment Act 2000.

A Traveller family may retain their cultural identity even if the family have ceased to be mobile or have lived in a house for many years.

A Traveller is still a Traveller if they live in a house because they will still have centuries of shared history, culture and language.

Language

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Romany Gypsies</th>
<th>Romany</th>
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<tr>
<td>Irish Travellers</td>
<td>Gammon</td>
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<td>Scottish Travellers</td>
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Romany contains words from Persian, Greek and many other Eastern and Western European languages. A high proportion is still of Indian origin. Romany derives from ancient Sanskrit. Gypsy families may speak a mixture of English and Romany at home. Some examples of Romany: Hickory dickory dock, Kushti – good, chavvi – boy, son.
Working with Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children and their families

Some cultural information.

- Families are usually extended and very close knit. They often live and work together
- Important times – birthdays, weddings, funerals, horse fairs and first communions are considered very important and children may be absent during these times
- Languages such as Romany may be spoken as home
- Interests – China such as Crown Derby is highly valued, as is crystal glass
- There may be a flexible attitude to time which may cause confusion to a young child when asked to tidy up/pack away a task before it is completed

- Horses, dogs and chickens may be kept
- Animals are not usually kept as pets; they are often kept outside the home due to hygiene codes
- Cleanliness of the home is very important
- Sports such as fishing, boxing, and horse riding are likely to be popular

- Gold is a sign of status and being valued within the community; young children may wear earrings and bracelets made from gold.
Building a relationship with parents

“Building Futures: Developing Trust – working with Gypsy, Roma and Traveller families in the Early Years” DFE 00741-2009BKT-EN details how important it is to build up the relationship with GRT families. It has case studies from nurseries and preschools and examples of good practice. It is set within the framework of the Early Years Foundation Stage principles and commitments. Please e-mail the team to be sent a copy.

Some suggestions for building relationships with families.

- Find out about the parents experience and expectations of Early Years education
- Find out about the parents own experience of school
- Chat to the parent about their child and their interests and how they spend their time at home
- Chat to the parents about any fears and anxieties they may have about their child starting at nursery eg they may be worried about security and safety at the setting or what happens if their child has an accident
- Invite the parent to stay so they can watch their child settling and playing
- Phone the parent when they first leave the child to reassure them they are okay
- Use photos to show the parents their child’s experiences at nursery, particularly when they are settling
- Offer to go through policies and letters with parents
- Ask the parent about their culture
Why is it important to positively reflect Traveller culture in settings and schools?

“Traveller pupils are still the group most at risk in the education system. They are the one minority ethnic group which is too often ‘out of sight and out of mind’ “ OFSTED 2003, Provision and support for Traveller pupils.

“Discrimination against Gypsies and Travellers appears to be the last ‘respectable’ form of racism” 2003 Equality and Human Rights Commission

A culturally relevant and affirming curriculum

No child should be expected to cast off the language and culture of the home as he crosses the school threshold… and the curriculum should reflect those aspects of his life.” Bullock Report ‘A Language for Life’ 1975

Whether you have GRT children in your setting or school or not, it is good inclusive practice to positively include and reflect GRT culture. There are many resources available that can be used in a setting or school. You may choose to plan for specific activities about GRT culture but you don’t necessarily need to have separate activities. You can buy and make resources for your everyday learning environment.
Some tips on creating a positive learning environment to nurture and develop a positive attitude to difference, including our different cultures and backgrounds

- Respect and value difference and children in your care will too
- Celebrate similarities and differences
- Don’t be afraid of asking questions about culture, it is part of getting to know a family
- See difference as positive and respond to children’s questions in an enthusiastic and open ended manner
- Talk about difference – young children are very aware of difference. Small group time and story times can be a good time to explore and celebrate difference
Ideas and activities for all children which include and reflect GRT culture as part of good inclusive practice

Small group sound and number work
Practitioners can use books referenced here such as Come and Count with us or Shaun’s Wellies to plan small group activities eg making a sound box from the Shaun’s Wellies story and using this to develop sound awareness and attention and listening skills. Number games can be played using Come and Count with us finding and counting the objects in the book.

Small world play
Have cars and trailers in the car box and horses and dogs in the animal box. A Traveller site can easily be made using a large tray and gravel with cars, trailers, dogs, horses and play people.

Lotto games
There are lots of pictures around homes on the internet. Using downloadable pictures reflecting Traveller culture, practitioners can make matching lotto games.

Book corner/area
Have books out which positively reflect Traveller culture that children can access independently.

Story sacks
Make up story sacks for popular books reflecting Traveller culture.

Home Corner
Make your home corner into a caravan.

Creative activities
Practitioners can use lace as threading material. Boxes can be used to make caravans. Crown Derby plates can be made using paper plates and paint.

Persona dolls
Use a persona doll from a Traveller background. Persona dolls are an incredibly powerful for looking at difference in a positive way with young children and developing empathy skills. The Traveller education team have persona dolls which reflect Traveller culture (please contact us for more details).

Equality in Action by Babette Brown, is a useful book with advice and ideas around using persona dolls.
Themes/focus within setting or reception class

These can be planned from following the child's interests

Homes, ourselves, animals, transport, wheels, nursery rhymes, fairgrounds, circuses, babies, holidays, weddings and other celebrations. In all these areas Traveller culture can be incorporated using resources listed and printing pictures from websites.
Suppliers and Resources that reflect Gypsy, Roma and Traveller cultures

NATT [www.natt.org.uk](http://www.natt.org.uk) supply a catalogue with a whole section on resources – early years books, puzzles and small world toys which reflect Traveller culture.

![Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Resources Catalogue](image)

**Early Learning Centre**
Happy land Pink Gypsy wagon with horse and people.
Happy land Happy camping set with car and a trailer
Happy land funfair – a set with a carousel ride, swing boats and rocket ride.

**Play Mobil [www.playmobil.com](http://www.playmobil.com)**
Have scenes and models with horses and a circus

**Ptolemy Toys [www.ptolemytoys.co.uk](http://www.ptolemytoys.co.uk)**
Wooden caravan and truck.

**Still ‘roamin’**
Beautiful wooden handmade play trailers with furniture which can be bought in addition too or as an alternative to a dolls house.
Steve Davies, 18 Ramsey Close, Forest Town, Mansfield, Notts NG19 ONS
tel 0162365012

**Sylvanians [www.sylvanianfamilies.com](http://www.sylvanianfamilies.com)**
Traditional Gypsy wagon and horse
Car and caravan

**The Parrotfish company, [www.parrotfish.co.uk](http://www.parrotfish.co.uk)**
multicultural resources for curriculum areas: dressing up clothes, Persona Dolls, jigsaw puzzles, shadow puppets and musical instruments to name but a few
Mantra Lingua www.mantralingua.com
a multicultural and multilingual wall frieze depicting different homes including a Gypsy wagon, a narrow boat and a New Traveller bus – very colourful.

Business Development, Buckinghamshire Services for Children and Young People
4th Floor, County Hall, Walton Street, Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire HP20 1UZ
Bender Tents and Bumper Cars - Celebrating Gypsy, Roma and Traveller cultures in the early years. Provides Early years practitioners with practical ideas for raising children’s awareness of GRT cultures through day-to-day resources and activities. Very comprehensive and useful printable resources and ideas.

“Knockabouts” Tel. 01842 762560
They supply wooden toys such as cars and trailers and tray puzzles

Department For Education
Building Futures: Developing Trust. A document looking at strategies and practices nurseries have developed to positively include GRT children and their families in settings. A useful and informative resource based on case studies; it is downloadable from the TEALS learning platform at http://www.thelifecloud.net/schools/TEALS
Useful websites for further information and resources

www.natt.org.uk
www.grthm.co.uk
www.gypsy-traveller.org
www.romasupportgroup.org.uk
www.irishtraveller.org.uk
www.showmensguild.com
www.travellerstimes.org.uk
www.grtleeds.co.uk

For downloadable materials to support inclusion

www.earlylearninghq.org.uk free printable resources around areas of interest and PSE eg feeling fans and posters)
www.mumsnet.com free printable pictures of caravans and wagons
www.communication4all.co.uk free printable resources eg counting cards 1-5 with pictures of different homes on
www.activityvillage.co.uk useful printable resources around areas of interest eg animal matching game
www.parrotfish.co.uk they have a Horse Fair resource pack
Recommended Books

Come and Count with us
A counting, colours and textures spiral bound board book in the shape of a trailer. The book shows photographs in and around a trailer on a site. ISBN 0955216206

Shaun’s Wellies
A flap picture book told in simple question and answer sentences. Detailed illustrations provide many talking points about Shaun’s home on a Traveller site. Shaun wants to join his class on a trip but has mislaid an essential item! ISBN 1899728017

Travellers

Jell Akai Chavvies
Traveller nursery rhymes by Kathleen Cunningham, email Margaret.wood@cambridgeshire.gov.uk, published by Cambridgeshire Team for Traveller education, tel 01223 508700.

Monday Morning
This book is particularly appropriate for reception classes. Three children start school one lives in a flat, one lives in a house and one lives in a caravan. ISBN978899662012 MECSS Traveller Education Service, Hertfordshire County Council.
In June each year GRT history month is celebrated. This is an opportunity for schools and settings to explore and celebrate GRT culture. There are national competitions and information and advice can be found at www.grthm.co.uk. Also NATT at www.natt.org.uk produce a downloadable booklet called “Gypsy, Roma and Traveller History Month, information and ideas for school and other educational settings. You can contact our early years team at jennie.hill@eastsussex.gov.uk or 0791922751 for ideas and support and to borrow resources.
Please contact us with comments and ideas at: 
traveller.education@eastsussex.gov.uk

Or by phone on 01323 464216 or 07919227571

Or by post to

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