

Inclusive Practice in Action - How two schools are successfully working with the travelling Showmen Community

Thorntree Primary School, Glasgow

The Showmen consider themselves to be a distinctive group within the travelling community with their own cultural traditions and history. They choose schools where they feel accepted and included and will travel to get to them. One inner-city primary school, Thorntree Primary in Glasgow, has a significant population of Showmen children, around 10% their roll. The school works closely with the local authority education officer with responsibility for travelling families.

The school has seen a reduction in the amount of time children from the Showmen community spend travelling due to a change in business activities. This has increased attendance at, and engagement with, school for the children and their families. The school is proactive in its efforts to celebrate the travelling community and creates an annual display showcasing work related to their way of life. The achievements of the children are recognised and celebrated, for example the skills for life and work which the children develop when they are travelling and supporting their community at fairgrounds

The Showmen children like to know each other so the school enables them to get together and talk, play games and plan what they think would be good for the rest of the school to know about them. They are positive and valued members of the school community. The children are proud of their school and have taken part in a documentary for BBC and have worked on a project at the Riverside Museum in Glasgow.

Families who continue to travel are often away from school between November and February and the school works hard to build positive relationships and good communication with their learners and families prior to and during this time. In order to ensure the pupils are able to access their entitlement to education appropriate planning and support is put in place. Learning resources are provided and extra support for catch up is available when the children return. The Pupil Equity Funding will be supporting a homework club for all children which will be helpful for pupils who experience interrupted learning.

Some families have requested that their children temporarily join a primary school while they are visiting the town with the Fairground. Local authority and school support is provided and communication shared to enable a smooth transition and positive experience for the children, their families and the school. One example of support is the loan of school uniform to help reduce costs and for the children to feel included with their peers. In some cases families have a 'range' of school uniforms which they use as they travel.

There is an open door policy in the school which Showmen parents make good use. The school tries hard to ensure that the children and families feel included and that they are listened to if they have any worries or concerns. The families are confident they will be listened to and enjoy the opportunity to talk about their experiences.

They have participated in projects which have plotted the places the children travel to in Scotland, a photographic project with Cranhill Arts called "It's a Wonderful Life" and a range of other smaller projects including creating displays in the public areas of the school and talking at assembly.

Thorntree Primary School is proud of the contribution the Showmen make. The Showmen parents who are part of the Parent Council offer support and advice to the school on their particular needs and get involved in the life of the school and help at the popular Family Film Night and reading events. During the school's "Fun Day" stalls are run by all the children in the school including the Showmen. They also hire bouncy castles and two little rides for children from one of their Showmen families.

The school is invited to attend the Showmen's Guild Scottish Section annual luncheon. Each year they take a group of older pupils who either present a project they have made or wear a badge inviting other guests to ask them about being a showman. For example, a group of children took photographs of all the showmen children and made a display highlighting family names and talked to the guests about their family. This is a very positive experience for all involved and the children network with members of their wider community and family.

Transition planning for secondary school - East Bank Academy, Glasgow

Most of the children move on to a local secondary school, East Bank Academy, which fosters good relations with the Showmen community through the provision of an inclusive education for their children which has enabled the development of parental confidence. The children are identified as Showmen by Thorntree Primary School, but if there are no identified additional support needs they experience a supported transition in the same way as everyone else. Families who travel are identified so the secondary school can ensure planning and support is put in place when required. Should there be any difficulty, the education officer with responsibility for travelling showmen is contacted. The transition year starts for all the P7 children in October/November with a project at secondary school which is followed by a parental showcase. Children who have been travelling are offered an alternative visit to high school before the summer holidays and have access to enhanced transition if necessary. The Showmen children go on to high school with confidence and self-esteem. An example of this is one Showman family whose children have been head girl and head boy.

East Bank Academy has, over an extended period been able to build positive relationships with families of the Showmen community. This has greatly benefited the achievement and attainment of the young people and has been a significant factor in the increase of the number of young people moving into further and higher education from this community. The intensive support which the school provided in previous years for literacy to the young people and their families is now enabling those who were involved then to engage with and support their own children's and grandchildren's learning today. More children and young people attend the school on a regular basis and the school has developed a variety of approaches and support. Examples include:

- The extra support made available to the children and young people when they return from a period of travel to enable them to catch up with their course work.
- Curriculum accessibility and flexible approaches - work is provided for and to the family when they are traveling and a range of technologies are effectively used in order to provide, assess work and maintain a connection with the school and the teachers.

Other examples of flexible pathways which help to support pupils from travelling families or with interrupted learning include working collaboratively with community learning, school, the college sector and voluntary agencies. For example, a flexible pathway for a young person from the travelling community to achieve an accredited qualification in hairdressing is provided through a class led by a local college in partnership with the school. Young people are encouraged and supported to gain SQA accreditation using a flexible pathway approach. Local engagement events enable the community to share a range of activities and information on a range of learning opportunities.