Policy and Guidelines for the Education of Traveller, Gypsy and Roma Children in Haringey

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Haringey Education Service

Policy and Guidelines for The Education of Traveller Children

1. Introduction

1.1 Haringey recognises that the UK is a multi-racial, multi-faith and multi-cultural society and places great value on the rich cultural diversity within its own community.

1.2 Haringey welcomes all cultural communities, including Traveller communities, into our schools, nurseries, colleges and all other learning establishments.

1.3 In recognising the inequalities and injustice that exist in wider society, Haringey Education Services acknowledge the important role it has to play in challenging prejudice and discrimination wherever it occurs, and in improving the opportunities and achievement of all learners. Haringey Education Service will challenge racism, stereotyping and low expectations.

1.4 Haringey Education Service have a statutory duty under the Race Relations Act (Amendment) 2000 to promote race equality and eliminate racial harassment.

For the purposes of this document, the word Traveller is used to encompass all members of the Travelling communities.

2. Policy Statement.

Haringey Education Services will ensure that:

- Traveller children, as with all other children, have unhindered and full access to their legal entitlement to education.
- All Traveller children are afforded opportunities that will enable them to become participant adults in a democratic society.
- Those working within the Education Service promote positive attitudes to cultural diversity and challenge prejudice and discrimination in order to ensure access to learning for all.
- All educational establishments and services in Haringey develop practices, procedures and activities that promote awareness, acknowledgement and celebration of our culturally diverse society, including that of Traveller cultures.
- All educational establishment and services within Haringey create an environment which accords respect to all pupils whatever their ethnic, racial, religious and cultural backgrounds and have high expectation of all pupils.
- All educational establishments and services within Haringey monitor the opportunities available to pupils through policies and practices, and monitor achievement with reference to ethnic, linguistic and cultural background.

3. Guidelines

The purpose of these guidelines is to ensure that all those working with Travellers are aware of the shared responsibility towards the education of Traveller children and their families. The guidelines set out the framework within which Haringey will work and suggests features of good practice for all educational establishments that are applicable to children and families of all ethnic and cultural backgrounds, including Travellers.

3.1 Responsibility for the education of Traveller children:

3.1.1. The Education Act 1996 (Section 13) places local education authorities under a statutory duty to ensure that education is available for all school age children in their area, appropriate to their age, ability and aptitude, and any special education needs they may have. This duty extends to all children residing in their area, whether permanently or temporarily. It thus embraces in particular Travelling children. (DES Circular 1/81).

3.1.2. The School Standards and Framework Act 1998 (Sections 117 – 124) additionally places a statutory duty on local authorities to ensure that the provision of nursery education for children of a prescribed age is sufficient for their area. Local education authorities therefore have a duty to provide pre-school education for four-year-old children whose parents wish them to access it.

3.1.3. In accordance with these obligations, the Haringey response to Traveller children who live within its boundaries, however temporarily, is to afford them the same entitlement as any other child, mainly that of full time education within a strongly held philosophy of equality of opportunity. Travellers, including the highly mobile population, will therefore be fully supported in taking up their educational rights, including the right to access pre-school provision, school or further/adult education entitlement. To this end, Haringey has instituted the Traveller Education Team (TET).

3.1.4. Education establishments should take full responsibility for the education of Travellers once they are on roll.

"The characteristics of good management within schools which have Travelling pupils on roll includes the recognition that the education responsibility for the pupils rests not with the Traveller Education Teams, but with the school in general and the classroom teacher in particular."
(The Education of Travelling Children, OFSTED, 1996).

4. The Traveller population in Haringey.

4.1 The Swann Report, 'Education for All' (HMSO, 1985) recognised Travellers as one of the minorities most discriminated against. Similarly, the DfES and OFSTED have also identified this group as one which is at risk of serious underachievement.

4.2 The term 'Traveller' is an umbrella term covering a number of groups:

- Gypsy/Romany Traveller of English, Scottish or Welsh origin
- Irish Traveller
- European Roma
- Fairground/Showmen
- Circus Traveller
- New Traveller
- Bargee (Travellers on waterways)

A brief history and background to these groups is given in Appendix 1.

4.3 Travellers from many of the above groups resort to, or reside in the Borough of Haringey. The population in Haringey comprises of the following:

- Families living permanently on the Borough's Traveller sites.
- Families living on sites within neighbouring authorities whose children attend Haringey schools.
- New 'Age' Traveller families residing in the Borough, both on site and in housing.
- Highly mobile Travellers resorting to the Borough during the course of the year. These may be Gypsy/Romany, Irish Travellers or Circus and Fairground families. Many families resort to the Borough each year for a short period of time. Circus children may be bi-lingual.
- Roma families residing in the Borough and usually seeking asylum.
- Traveller families living in housing. Although living in housing, families still maintain their cultural identify, values and expectations.

5. The Traveller Education Team.

5.1.1. The Traveller Education Team has been established to support the achievement of Traveller children residing and resorting to Haringey, and to ensure realisation of their entitlement to appropriate educational provision.

5.1.2. The team is funded through the DfES Standards Fund Vulnerable Children's Grant and will continue to maximise future available grant income.

5.1.3. The Team will report annually on progress and submit such returns to external funding agencies and other bodies as may be required.

5.2 <u>The Team aims to:</u>

- Raise awareness of all people within the educational community to Traveller culture and thereby promote practice that recognises and values all cultures. The Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 gives public bodies, including schools, a statutory duty to promote race equality. Romany Gypsies and Travellers of Irish heritage are recognised ethnic groups under the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000.

- Support education providers, children and families in order to raise the achievement of Traveller children.

- Ensure access to appropriate, unprejudiced and inclusive education and services for all Traveller families with children.

The Team is available to provide advice and support for Traveller children and their families, educational establishments and staff, other directorate and agencies within Haringey and other agencies providing services in Haringey.

5.3 <u>Support for Traveller children and families:</u>

The Team will:

- Assist Traveller children residing or resorting to the Borough, however temporarily, in accessing their legal entitlement to full time education.

- Ensure Traveller children receive an education appropriate to their needs, in order to realise their potential through access to the full curriculum.

- Visit authorised and unauthorised site to form sensitive relationships with families, in order to facilitate and support effective home/school communication.

- Visit unauthorised sites within the Borough to assess the educational needs of the families and children residing there, as part of Haringey statutory duty outlined in DoE Circular 18/94.

- Endeavour to ensure enrolment and attendance for new arrivals, including highly mobile Travellers on unauthorised encampments, within two days for Primary aged pupils, and three days for Secondary aged pupils.

- Ensure teaching support for the children of Traveller families who are carrying distance-learning packs.

- Provide information and assistance to families regarding welfare advice and network with other agencies to improve Travellers' access to services, including Lifelong Learning.

- Undertake outreach work to encourage Traveller families to make a commitment to education including pre-school and further education, whether they are officially or unofficially sited.

- Encourage and support parents to complete procedures that ensure transfer from one educational phase to another.

- Where necessary, support Traveller families during the admission appeals procedure.

- Where necessary, support Traveller families during the statutory assessment procedure if their child has special educational needs.

5.4 <u>Support for schools and other educational establishments</u>

With regard to the functions of Traveller Education staff supporting Schools, **DfEE Circular X98** stated:

> "Though clearly needing to spend part of their time supporting individual Travellers, the main focus of their work should be on the overall school support – i.e. helping school staff as a whole properly to take on responsibility for Travellers as for other pupils".

5.4.1 With this in mind the team:

- Completes a School-Service Partnership Agreement at least termly, agreeing the responsibilities of both school and TET during the support period. This will ensure that TET support is addressing changing needs across both the school and the Borough, in the most effective and workable way. (Appendix 3).

- Ensure that early years settings, schools and other educational establishments understand the Team priorities for supporting Traveller pupils.

- Support the assessment of highly mobile short stay pupils, so that the educational experiences offered are appropriate to their needs, irrespective of their length of stay.

- Support early years providers and schools at all stages of the Code of Practice when working with pupils having special educational needs.

- Afford teachers of Travellers the opportunity to discuss related issues with other teaching colleagues, through the running of support groups for both the primary and secondary phases.

- Endeavour to facilitate positive home-school communication.

- Provide professional developments opportunities to early years settings, schools and other educational establishments, to promote awareness and understanding of Traveller culture.

- Provide guidance on the inclusion of Traveller culture in the curriculum from the Foundation Stage to Post 16, in order to reflect the cultural diversity in Haringey.

- Advise and support educational establishments in the preparation and monitoring of distance learning packs for children whose families are seasonal Travellers, or have informed the school of their intention to travel.

- Advise on cultural resources which can be purchase or produced, and provide information regarding sources of these materials.

- Loan cultural resources to early years providers, schools and other educational establishments.

- Provide advice and guidance to staff regarding the needs of Traveller children and effective use of appropriate resources to support their integration and attainment.

- Provide guidance and advice on good multicultural education practice and effective anti-racist strategies.

- Assist with the development of policies that enable establishments to meet the needs of Traveller pupils and families.

- Provide integrated teaching support in collaboration with early years practitioners and class teachers, to include planning, delivery and

evaluation. The guidance 'Working Towards Inclusive Education: Aspects of Good Practice for Gypsy Traveller Pupils (DfEE 2000)' stated that this support should be "in addition to any SEN provision".

- Provide advice and support during Section 10 inspections, including the provision of information for the Registered Inspector regarding Traveller education.

- Facilitate transfer to educational records and therefore continuity of provision for Traveller pupils, by contacting Traveller Education Teams in other LEA's where pupils may have previously accessed education.

- Advise on initiatives by local and national government, and other agencies (for e.g. National Association of Teachers of Travellers) which may impact on the quality of educational opportunities afforded to Travellers.

5.5. Support for other Haringey Directorate, and agencies and other organisations.

The Team will provide advice and guidance as appropriate including:

- Advice on issues relating to Travellers and good practice.

- Advice on inclusion of Traveller issues in policy writing.

- Where appropriate, assistance in the initial setting up of communication between the service/organisation and members of the Traveller community.

5.6 Priorities for school support.

5.6.1. The needs within the Traveller population are diverse and change as the population changes. It is therefore necessary for the Team to prioritise support to education establishments and children in order to fulfil the Team aim of addressing underachievement. The Following denotes the order of priority for support for the Traveller Education Team.

- Pupils of any age on authorised or unauthorised site that may have a highly mobile lifestyle, including Fairground and Circus children.
- Pupils of any age who experience a late start or fragmented experience of formal education.
- Pupils transferring to Secondary School.
- Pupils who have been excluded or are at risk of being excluded.
- Pupils settling into Secondary School.
- Pupils who are new to the area and need access to school places.
- Pupils in Primary School operating below level 2.

5.6.2. As pupils from a high priority group can arrive in the Borough at any time, TET needs to maintain a degree of flexibility when working with schools. If higher priority pupils arrive, the TET will endeavour to keep interruptions to the work already ongoing in schools to a minimum.

5.6.3. Travellers in housing still maintain their cultural identity, values and expectations. Parents may still feel wary of school because of their own experiences of education; families may still travel for periods of time; there may be a lack of literacy at home. Any of these or a number of other issues may result in barriers to accessing Education and TET maintain a flexible approach to housed Travellers and will offer advice to schools and other services if there are concerns.

6. Legal Variations & Guidance

Legislation has been passed in order to facilitate Traveller access to their educational entitlement. The following explain the legal variations that apply to Traveller families and their children.

7.1 Attendance

Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 stated that:

'If a child of compulsory school age who is a registered pupil at a school fails to attend regularly at the school, the parent of the child is guilty of an offence'.

However, the Section goes on to identify circumstances in which a Traveller parent is protected from conviction for the non-attendance of their children at school where it can de demonstrated:

a) that he is engaged in a trade or business of such a nature as to require him to travel from place to place,
b) that the child has attended at a school as a registered pupil as regularly as the nature of that trade or business permits, and
c) if the child has attained the age of six years, that he has made at least two hundred attendances during the periods of twelve months ending with the date on which the proceeding were instituted'.

This legislation is designed to protect Traveller parents from unreasonable prosecution for their child's non-attendance at school. However, it does not mean that part-time education for Traveller children is legally acceptable: 200 sessions should not be regarded as the norm.

7.2 Dual Registration

To protect the continuity of learning of Traveller children, the Pupil Registration Regulations were amended with effect from 1 January 1998 to facilitate dual registration of Traveller children. This means that if parents inform the 'base school' that the child is going to be away travelling but will return, or even if the school knows that the child comes from a Traveller family which regularly leaves the area for a time, then Regulation 9(1) (b) registration at another school, and (g) absence in excess of four weeks – unknown location, no longer require the pupil to be removed from the base school register.

While a Traveller child is away, the base school should hold the place open and record the absence as authorised.

7.3 Class size over 30

7.3.1 As of September 2001 legislation has been passed which limits infant Class size to 30 pupils. However, guidance from the DfES stated that there are to be a limited number of exceptions to the 30 limit once that limit is in force. Paragraph 10 (b), for example, permits an exception to the limit where a pupil moves into the area outside the normal admission round and there is no other school which would provide suitable education **within reasonable distance of his home**. In this case, such a pupil can be treated as an exception to the class size limit for the remainder of that academic year. Traveller children are most likely to fall within this category.

7.3.2 The guidance also points out (paragraph 13) that many LEA's will have Regular and predictable movements of Travellers and these will often count as excepted pupils. The guidance suggests that these movements be taken into account in the Authority's planning and that they set out the proposed arrangements for dealing with such pupils in their plans.

8. Monitoring of Pupil Achievement, Team Provision and Policy.

8.1 The TET is required to submit a report to the DfES detailing the use of the grant. It may be necessary for schools to supply information to the TET, as is required to fulfil this grant reporting process.

8.2 The work of the TET is included within the EDP, to raise achievement of ethnic minority pupils and those at risk of social exclusion. The EDP is monitored and reported upon annually.

8.3 HMI review the work of the TET's and schools with regard to access, Provision and achievement of school age Traveller children.

8.4 This document will be monitored regularly and evaluated by the Traveller Education Team Manager. There will be regular consultation with all interested parties.

9. Resources

A resource bank of background, learning and teaching materials has been collected and developed at the Traveller Education Team base. Details of these can be found in the Resources Catalogue available from the team and The School Library Service. However, schools will be encouraged to obtain a selection of books and materials reflecting Travellers as part of their multi-cultural education programme. This will be encouraged irrespective of schools having Travellers on roll.

10. Training and Development

The Team will continue to offer a programme of training and development regarding Traveller culture and strategies to raise achievement through the usual training programmes.

11. Conclusion

Haringey Traveller Education is committed to raising the achievement of all pupils and providing equality of access and opportunity.
They will continue to implement and evaluate strategies to enable all Traveller children to fulfil their individual potential.