

Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru | National Assembly for Wales

Y Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc ac Addysg | Children, Young People and Education Committee

Grant gwella addysg: Plant Sipsiwn, Roma a Theithwyr, a phlant o leiafrifoedd ethnig | Education Improvement Grant: Gypsy, Roma and Traveller, and Minority Ethnic Children

EIG 07

Ymateb gan : Canolfan Cymru er Cydraddoldeb mewn Addysg, Prifysgol Cymru y Drindod Dewi Sant

Response from : Wales Centre for Equity in Education, University of Wales Trinity Saint David

1. From 2015-16, the Gypsy Children and Traveller Children Grant and the Minority Ethnic Achievement Grant were merged into the new Education Improvement Grant. What impact has this had on the levels of educational support available to Gypsy, Roma and Traveller and Minority Ethnic children, and their educational outcomes?

It is too early to say whether there has been an impact and what this impact has been, especially for educational outcomes.

2. How effective are other Welsh Government policies and strategies for supporting the education of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller, and Minority Ethnic children?

- There is a lack of strategic direction and of a clear policy framework which addresses educational outcomes of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller, and Minority Ethnic children.
- There is a greater sense of lack of direction from Welsh Government as the MEAG no longer exists as this has meant no clear focus on Gypsy, Roma and Traveller, and Minority Ethnic children.
- Education policy reforms are not doing enough to address different ethnic groups and their specific needs. There is a tendency not to distinguish between different minority groups and to generalise in policy discourse.
- We need to be mindful of ethnic diversity in Wales as we develop and implement educational reforms and ensure that we promote an inclusive approach to learning. For example, the implementation of Successful Futures should acknowledge the diversity of modern Welsh culture and identity.

Due to the above issues we find ourselves facing the following kinds of challenges:

- Gypsy, Roma and Traveller and Minority Ethnic groups are reported as being the most disadvantaged when it comes to education, employment and income.
- Findings suggest that students, as well as parents, from these groups have very high aspirations when it comes to education but results are showing us that they are not achieving as well as they could be, and this is more prominent in secondary school (EALAW, 2003).
- Black Caribbean pupils are not making good progress throughout their schooling experience. Pakistani, Bangladeshi and African pupils perform poorly at the early stages of education but progress enough to outperform their White peers at key stage 4. (Briggs et al., 2006)

It is important to note that we cannot assume it is government policy alone that is driving the above. Further research is needed.

(If this is a concern to you, how should this be addressed?)

Ethnic minority children are not a homogenous group; each group has different needs and face unique challenges this needs to be recognised and addressed in policy and strategy documents and in the data collected by local authorities and WG.

It is important that policies distinguish between the different support needs of refugee and asylum seeker children, EAL new arrivals from within the EU, and British born ethnic minority groups. Not all have EAL and this needs to be made clearer.

The large influx of migrants and refugees needs to be addressed by national policy. On average, we find that newly arrived children perform worse than their peers so there is a lot to be done to understand how the learning and performance of these children can be enhanced to narrow this gap. This can have also have a knock-on effect for support for British born minority ethnic children if we do not distinguish between these groups.

The education of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller, and Minority Ethnic children needs to be promoted through sharing of good practice as well as being integrated into existing policy initiatives. There is a need for a leadership in this area which will ensure the prominence needed and make these issues a priority.

3. What more could be done to support the educational attainment of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller and Minority Ethnic children:

- in schools;
- by Local Authorities;
- by regional consortia; and
- by the **Welsh** Government.
- Funding for Family and Community Engagement Projects; we find that parents from these ethnic groups, especially migrants of 1st

generation parents, tend to have limited knowledge of how to support their child's education and this can be linked to relying on informal networks where the information they receive isn't always of high quality. They also feel they can't access certain services due to cultural barriers or language skills. If we look into this deeper then we find there are gender and cultural norms that dictate these kinds of things (EALAW, 2003).

- Initial Teacher Education and Continuing Professional Learning & Development; It is very important that cultural awareness of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller, and Minority Ethnic groups is incorporated into training and learning for practitioners. Not only will this help tackle negative stereotypes but will also help build respect and understanding between teachers, children and families. Minimising the possibility of racism and discrimination is crucial and teachers need to have the confidence and competence to deal with these issues effectively in schools.
- Cultural inclusivity within teaching and learning; Pupils see little of their own cultures and backgrounds reflected positively in the curriculum. There are plenty of opportunities for this to be promoted and implemented given the curriculum reforms in development.
- Mentoring programmes; positive role models are needed, from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller, and Minority Ethnic backgrounds, in and out of school to help raise aspirations and to develop positive perceptions towards learning.
- Language support for families with EAL; this is important so that from the early stages of education parents have the opportunity to play an active role in their child's education and develop a good understanding of school expectations. It is important that community organisations and schools are working alongside each other to promote and manage this support for families and children. We cannot assume that the responsibility lies with one organisation if we want to achieve the best outcomes.
- High quality careers advice; this is also important for parents to understand careers advice given to their children as the main areas of difficulty concern language, lack of cultural understanding and conflicting values.

(Do you know of examples of good practice or successful policies? If so, what are they?)

The Wales Centre for Equity in Education based at the University of Wales Trinity Saint David is conducting research exploring the educational experiences of Black Minority Ethnic groups in Wales and is funding a PhD on this issue. It will help shed light on issues such as the aspirations, behaviour, engagement and challenges faced by BME children, families and communities in relation to education. The research also explores how the school, home and community interrelate and shape educational experiences.

Once findings are analysed, it will help us understand what more is needed to help support the learning and educational outcomes of minority ethnic children.

4. If you could recommend to the Welsh Government one thing it could do to improve the educational attainment of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller, and Minority Ethnic children, what would it be?

Initial Teacher Education & Continuing Professional Development on issues such as the culture, race, community and challenges faced by Gypsy, Roma and Traveller, and Minority Ethnic children and families is crucial. Levels of training and confidence amongst teachers in dealing with cultural diversity and racism are far too low (EALAW, 2003).

This will help teachers understand the backgrounds of their children better and help develop mutual respect between them if this knowledge is used to improve their experiences at school. Children need to feel that their culture and identity is respected and valued by their school and teachers. Their specific needs and beliefs need to be considered and catered for in order for children to feel part of their school community and to develop and maintain a positive attitude towards learning. This is something that University of Wales Trinity Saint David would be happy to explore how it can support further.

5. Do you have any other concerns about the amalgamation of the other previously separate grants into the Education Improvement Grant? If so, please provide details.

6. Finally, are there any other issues relating to the terms of reference that you would like to draw to the Committee's attention?

Things are changing quickly in this area and policies are finding it hard to keep up. Leadership is needed to ensure the promotion and prioritisation of these issues.