

Improving the way Ofsted inspects education

Where you work

Are you responding in an official capacity on behalf of an organisation?

Yes

About your organisation

Please provide the name of your organisation

Advisory Council for the Education of Romanies and other Travellers (ACERT)

About you

Please tell us in which capacity you are completing this survey (select all that apply):

Charity, third sector, academic, research or policy professional

Please tell us where you work:

Other (please specify):

We promote the education rights of Romany Gypsy and other Traveller communities in all phases and settings across the UK

Does your school or organisation have a faith ethos?

No

Part 1: how we report

What do you think about the layout of our new report cards?

We think the areas of focus are appropriate to improving the experience of children from our communities. Inclusive schools don't always get the best attainment grades. We're pleased about the move away from single word judgements.

Which specific evaluation areas would you like to comment on? (please select as many as you wish)

I want to comment on:

early years evaluation areas

state-funded schools evaluation areas

further education and skills evaluation areas

initial teacher education evaluation areas

general comments

Part 1: how we report

What do you think about our evaluation areas?

**early years
evaluation
areas**

-

**state-
funded
schools
evaluation
areas**

-

**independent
schools
evaluation
areas**

-

**further
education
and skills
evaluation
areas**

-

**initial
teacher
education
evaluation
areas**

-

**general
comments**

Inclusion is important to Romany and other Traveller communities but the only categories referred to are SEND, occasionally Pupil Premium and EAL. It is insufficiently strong to remind inspectors about our communities. They need to be persistent about individual children from nationally underachieving and excluded groups.

We welcome the focus on communication with "the local community" but we feel the toolkit does not recognise diversity within communities and their potentially conflicting interests. Romany and other Travellers frequently live in hostile local environments; schools that care and are proactive can be instrumental in promoting mutual understanding and securing the right to education.

When looking at Personal Development they should consider whether policies and practice are sufficiently robust to prevent and address discriminatory language and racist bullying, in all schools, whether or not they have identified Gypsy/Roma and Traveller of Irish Heritage pupils. The resources of the school should be such that children see themselves reflected in all schools.

Safeguarding is a key priority for Romany and other Traveller parents and often the reason given for withdrawing their children. Ofsted needs to check consultation arrangements with parents around sensitive curriculum areas such as RSE.

Transitions are a key issue to our communities; many children lose contact with formal education between phases or when they move. There is huge drop out particularly between primary and secondary phases as well as at other points. Transition and relationships between schools should be inspected. Highly mobile families, including Showmen and Circus Travellers, rely on distance learning; inspectors need to be mindful of the involvement of multiple schools with such children.

What do you think of our proposed 5-point scale for reporting our inspection findings? (the scale ranges from 'causing concern' to 'exemplary')

We welcome that fact that the proposed report cards separate achievement, attendance and behaviour from inclusion and community awareness. Some schools with a good record of including Romany and other Traveller pupils, may become the school of choice for families in the area, which may have an impact on levels of attendance and achievement.

What do you think about our approach to 'exemplary' practice?

We would like to see Ofsted recognising exemplary inclusion practice at the same time as judging attendance and attainment in that context. We encourage schools to set realistic high expectations for our children and to give them appropriate support to reach them; this is what we would like them to be judged on.

Do you have any other ideas we could consider?

Fundamentally, we feel that this review has not solved the problem it sought to address; the stress on teachers imposed by a snapshot inspection, with judgements which could have enduring consequences. In order to receive support, schools need to fall into the attention needed or causing concern categories; they need to be identified as failing by external judges. Educational improvement is an ongoing process. Most schools are aware of their strengths and weaknesses. If they must be judged, it should be on the efforts they are making to address the areas which they have identified as requiring improvement. Schools may need external assistance to give them ideas of how to move forward but it seems this will only be offered in response to an inadequate judgement in a two day inspection. The focus remains on spotting weaknesses rather than supporting improvement. In our view schools should be encouraged to identify the areas they want to develop and work in partnership with other schools, local authorities and community groups to achieve their objectives. Ofsted might have a light touch role to ensure these arrangements are working successfully.

What do you think about including data alongside report cards, for example information about how well children and learners achieve?

Data should be used to ensure children are making progress; publishing data based on SAT and GCSE tests will focus attention on these outcomes. The averaging of data encourages schools to avoid admitting or exclude pupils who might bring down their results. Ofsted should be judging what happens during children's schooling, not at the end of it. Outcomes for our children frequently reflect the challenges they have faced, not the contribution of a single school.

The ethnic identification of Gypsy/Roma and Traveller of Irish Heritage pupils has highlighted the historic educational disadvantage of our communities but has been largely ignored by policy makers. We understand that it is not the role of Ofsted to make policy but we feel that, as many of the functions of local authorities have been devolved to schools and academy trusts, inspectors have a heightened responsibility to monitor the experiences of most vulnerable groups. Not only are these groups the lowest achievers, but they experience the highest rates of exclusion and high levels of SEND identification.

Part 2: how we inspect

Would you like to give your views on these proposals?

Yes

Part 2: how we inspect

Would you like to give your views on what our proposals mean for early years settings?

Yes

Part 2: how we inspect

Which evaluation area would you like to comment on? (select as many as you wish)

General comments about the toolkit

Part 2: how we inspect

What do you think about the toolkit for early years in relation to:

General comments about the toolkit	Early Years Inclusion is key to the educational opportunities of our children. National data suggests that high proportions of Gypsy/Roma and Traveller of Irish Heritage children fail to achieve the Early Learning Goals and many of them continue to underachieve through their education careers. The judgements of inspectors may not do much to improve this situation but collaboration between settings and our communities should be recognised and encouraged. Resources reflecting our communities and ways of living should be in all settings.
Leadership and governance	-
Achievement	-
Curriculum	-
Developing teaching	-
Behaviour, attitudes and establishing routines	-
Children's welfare and well-being	-
Inclusion	-
Safeguarding	-

In relation to early years, what do you think about our working definition of inclusion, and how we will inspect inclusion?

You propose that in Secure setting "Leaders have established a culture that welcomes all children, regardless of their background, circumstances and/or individual needs." We do not wish our culture to be disregarded; we feel welcome in schools and settings where the culture of the school embraces the cultures of the pupils and their families.

Social exclusion can start early in a child's educational career, but good early years practice can reverse it. Inspectors need to consider how the setting promotes itself to parents in the local area. Are any parents hard to reach and have they gone the extra mile to make families feel welcome. Gypsy/Roma and Traveller of Irish Heritage communities are seriously underrepresented in the education work force. The employment of community members within the school workforce is often the key to a school being able to improve outcomes for our children and raise understanding and awareness of our cultures and identities. Early Years settings can be a good starting point for building a workforce to reflect diverse communities.

Part 2: how we inspect

In relation to early years, what do you think about our proposed changes to how we carry out an inspection?

Early Years education is very much about cooperation with families, other providers and community organisations. We would prefer to see a model that encourages self-improvement through collaboration rather than external judgements based on standardised criteria.

Part 2: how we inspect

What do you consider are the likely workload and well-being implications of these proposals for early years?

Partnership will be less stressful than judgements.

Part 2: how we inspect

Would you like to give your views on what our proposals mean for state-funded schools?

Yes

Part 2: how we inspect

Which evaluation area would you like to comment on? (please select as many as you wish)

General comments about the toolkit

Developing teaching

Behaviour and attitudes

Personal development and well-being

Inclusion

Part 2: how we inspect

What do you think about the toolkit for state-funded schools in relation to:

General comments about the toolkit

Our main concern is what information about the experiences of our children in school will an inspector get using this toolkit. Some schools will be proud of their work cooperating with our communities and their organisations, celebrating cultures, employing a workforce that reflects the community and being flexible to include our children. But other schools try and keep us below the radar, suggesting we stay at home on inspection day or even find ways to off-roll us.

Leadership and governance

-

Curriculum

-

Developing

Romany and other Travellers are seriously underrepresented in the education workforce. Employing community members can improve awareness and understanding within the

teaching	workforce and outcomes for all children. We are aware of members of the teaching workforce who have Romany or other Traveller heritages, yet choose to conceal them for the same reasons as pupils with those heritages; fear of discrimination and prejudice. Schools with exemplary inclusive practice have identified community members and employed them as Teaching Assistants or mentors, and some of those have gone on to qualify as teachers. We would like some recognition in the toolkit of the steps schools take to reflect the communities they serve.
Achievement	-
Behaviour and attitudes	Gypsy/Roma and Travellers of Irish Heritage have some of the highest exclusion rates. Families report racist abuse from pupils and teachers. Their children do not have confidence in behaviour policies to protect them. We agree that schools need to have high expectations, but they also need to recognise that good behaviour is learnt and that ill-informed comments and abuse are the school's responsibility. Schools who have good relationships with Romany and other Traveller families are usually able to resolve behaviour issues quickly.
Attendance	-
Personal development and well-being	When looking at Personal Development inspectors should consider whether policies and practice are sufficiently robust to prevent and address discriminatory language and racist bullying. In all schools, whether or not they have identified Gypsy/Roma and Traveller of Irish Heritage pupils. the resources of the school should be such that children see themselves reflected.
Inclusion	<p>The overarching statement "Across the school's work, inclusive practices are secure, so that all pupils feel welcome, valued and a sense of belonging to their school and community" for a Secure judgement is a worthwhile objective, although we would argue, difficult to assess meaningfully. Other statements in this section tend to be more specifically about SEND and disadvantaged pupils. While many of our children may be in these categories, we also need to be included as communities and cultures, through recognition in the resources of all schools and through our contributions in the history, art and music curricula. There needs to be persistent reminder to inspectors about individual children from nationally underachieving and excluded groups.</p> <p>We welcome the focus on communication with "the local community" but we feel the toolkit does not recognise diversity within communities and their potentially conflicting interests. Romany and other Travellers frequently live in hostile local environments; schools that care and are proactive can be instrumental in promoting mutual understanding and securing the right to education.</p> <p>Safeguarding is a key priority for Romany and other Traveller parents and often the reason given for withdrawing their children. Ofsted needs to check consultation arrangements with parents around sensitive curriculum areas such as RSE.</p> <p>Transitions are a key issue to our communities; many children lose contact with formal education between phases or when they move. There is huge drop out particularly between primary and secondary phases and well as at other points. Transition and relationships between schools should be inspected. Highly mobile families, including Showmen and Circus Travellers, rely on distance learning; inspectors need to be mindful of the involvement of multiple schools with such children.</p>
Early years in schools	-
Sixth form in schools	-
Safeguarding	-

In relation to state-funded schools, what do you think about our working definition of inclusion, and how we will inspect inclusion?

Inclusion in this toolkit appears to be mainly about SEND and disadvantage; not about schools Public Sector Equality Duty to protect our children from discrimination and promoting equality.

Part 2: how we inspect

Would you like to give your views on what our proposals mean for independent school inspections?

No, take me straight to the closing questions

Public sector equality duty (Equality Act 2010)

Please tell us how you think our proposals may or may not impact equality.

The Equality Impact Assessment text offers a vision of how inspection could promote equality. In our view, however, the education toolkit fails to accurately reflect these values. Gypsy/Roma and Traveller of Irish Heritage Pupils are among the lowest achieving and most excluded groups; we experience, what has been described as the last acceptable form of racism and many families do not trust schools to protect their children from racist bullying and abuse. Nothing in this inspection framework will change this situation. A two day visit is unlikely to highlight our concerns and negative judgements won't address them. Some schools work well with our communities, reaching out to us, respecting our cultures, constructing realistic educational pathways and cooperating with us to solve problems. We want to see this good practice recognised and shared. The threat of an Ofsted visit fills many schools with panic and forces teachers to prioritise the areas identified in the tool kit, rather than responding to the needs of our children. In order to check whether a school is complying with its duty, we would suggest that schools with Gypsy/Roma and Traveller of Irish Heritage pupils on roll should be asked about the barriers faced by these pupils and the steps the school is taking to dismantle them. It would be valuable if some of the schools considered exemplary were selected for their practice in promoting equality of Romany and other Travellers.

Feedback

We are committed to making sure that our consultations are accessible. To enable us to improve our consultation processes and reach, would you be willing to tell us a bit about yourself and how you found this survey?

Yes

How did you hear about this consultation?

Coverage on broadcast news (for example TV news)

From my union/representative groups

I found the consultation information clear and easy to understand.

Disagree

I found the consultation easy to find on the Ofsted website.

Disagree

I had enough information about the consultation topic.

Agree

I would take part in a future Ofsted consultation.

Agree

Is there anything you would like us to improve on or do differently for future consultations?

This was a very complex consultation and difficult to make the views of our communities clear.

Sex

Prefer to self-describe:

Organisation

Age

Prefer not to say

How would you describe your ethnic group?

White

Gypsy or Irish Traveller

Other ethnic group

Romani Gypsies, Roma, Showmen

Sexual orientation

Prefer to self-describe:

Organisation

Religion/belief

Other (please specify):

Different faiths and none

Do you consider yourself to have special educational needs?

No

Do you consider yourself to have a disability?

No