

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 18

Ymateb gan : Comisiwn Cydraddoldeb a Hawliau Dynol

Response from : Equality and Human Rights Commission

We welcome the opportunity to respond to the Committee's Inquiry into the Education Improvement Grant: Gypsy, Roma and Traveller, and Minority Ethnic Children. Below are details of our recent reports and recommendations that the Committee may want to consider during its Inquiry.

Is Wales Fairer?

Last year, the Commission published [*Is Wales Fairer?*](#), which identifies seven key equality and human rights challenges that need to be addressed in Wales over the next five years. The education challenge relates to the Inquiry's topic. It is to:

Close attainment gaps in education

With priorities being to:

- Close attainment gaps by raising standards of children receiving Free School Meals, children with Special Educational Needs (SEN), looked-after children and Gypsy and Traveller children.
- Reduce exclusions from school and reduce bullying.

Is Wales Fairer? shows that there are significant attainment gaps between ethnic groups. Some children's attainment of five or more GCSEs at Grades A – C, including Maths and English or Welsh, remains strikingly low. Just 13% (2013/14) of Gypsy/Roma children achieved this level compared with 53% (2012/13) of all children.

Is Wales Fairer? states that between 20% and 50% of pupils in Wales are estimated to have experienced bullying at some point in their school lives. Bullying is identified as a particular risk for ethnic minority pupils.

Many schools' strategic equality plans were found to not 'pay attention to the full range of protected characteristics'. Schools' awareness and understanding of bullying and their policies and procedures were often found to be weak (Estyn, 2014).

The Welsh Government and many public authorities have set Public Sector

Equality Duty (PSED) objectives based on the Is Wales Fairer? education challenge.

The Committee may wish to consider how these objectives are being taken forward. Furthermore, the PSED in Wales requires Welsh Government and public authorities to assess the equality impacts of new policies and procedures. The Committee may want to examine the Equality Impact Assessment carried out in relation to the introduction of the new Education Improvement Grant.

Who do you see? and Not Just Another Statistic

The Commission's *Who do you See?* report revealed that Gypsies and Travellers are one of the four groups of people in Wales who face the most discrimination and prejudice (the other three groups are asylum seekers and refugees, transgender people and people with a mental health condition). Our follow-up report, [*Not Just Another Statistic*](#), explored the real-life experiences of Gypsies and Travellers (supporting report attached). The education system was identified as a major concern.

Many Gypsy Traveller parents that we interviewed were unhappy with the way in which their children were treated within the education system. Some Gypsy Travellers thought teachers had low expectations of Traveller children and did not push them to succeed. Discrimination was experienced outside of the classroom from other parents and children. Participants in our interviews reported feeling powerless and that Gypsy Travellers had few or no effective rights. The impact of these experiences and others led Gypsy Travellers to mistrust the education system and staff.

Not Just Another Statistic set out practical measures for improvement. These include raising awareness, building relationships within the community and the issuing of guidance to staff.

The Committee may wish to explore if and how the concerns raised in *Not Just Another Statistic* are being addressed under the Education Improvement Grant.

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination

This year, the [Commission made a submission](#) to the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination about how the rights of children are being promoted and protected in Britain in relation to race. Our report identified a number of concerns in relation to education. As a result, our recommendations included that the Committee ask the UK and devolved government to:

- collect qualitative and quantitative data on identity-based bullying across all the protected ethnic groups, and use the data to develop strategies to protect pupils
- take action and publish progress on addressing persistent issues experienced by Gypsy/Roma, Irish Traveller, Scottish Gypsy Traveller, ethnic minority children, including bullying, disproportionalities in exclusion, absences and attainment rates
- investigate the causes and take actions to address the consistent underperformance of pupils from particular ethnic groups.

The Committee may wish to consider these specific recommendations. Furthermore, the Committee may want to explore the impact of the Welsh Government's changes to its grant programme on the protection and promotion in Wales of the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination.

We look forward to contributing to the Committee's findings.

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Equality and Human Rights Commission

Annex

[Not Just another Statistic: Life in Wales for Gypsy Travellers](#)