

Reflecting Traveller cultures in the school curriculum

The most important factor to consider when planning to reflect Traveller cultures in the curriculum is that there is no single “Traveller culture”. The generic term Traveller actually encompasses a number of different groups of people including Gypsy/Romany Travellers, Travellers of Irish Heritage, Occupational Travellers, Bargees and New Travellers. Within these groups again there are cultural variations, and individuals adopt different cultural identities, just as in any other group within society. To say that “Travellers all do this or that” is inaccurate, and actually serves to reinforce rather than challenge stereotypes.

Having said that it is important for all pupils to see aspects of their cultures reflected in positive ways in the curriculum, and it is also important that when planning, teachers ensure that their teaching reflects a variety of cultures, not just a majority culture in the class.

There are many areas of the curriculum where it is possible to plan for reflecting Traveller cultures. These include:

History

Areas such as the Victorians; including entertainment and the development of fairgrounds; the Tudors (as the history of Gypsy Travellers in Britain can be traced back to the start of the Tudor dynasty); and World War Two, as Gypsies are an often forgotten minority that were killed in their thousands during the Holocaust.

Literacy

There are many stories and poems, in addition to biographical accounts written by and about Travellers.

PSHE and Citizenship

Discussions with older pupils could focus on respect for others, living in a diverse world, and how the media can portray people from different cultures.

Geography

Links could be made when exploring with younger children different types of homes, and different methods of travel.

Design and Technology

Units of work on shelters and fairground rides could be used as opportunities to reflect Traveller cultures.

Further Information

Useful websites with details of resources that may be used to reflect Traveller cultures in the curriculum include:

<http://www.thegrid.org.uk/learning/mecss/centres/traveller/resources.shtml>

This is a link to Hertfordshire Traveller Education Project, who have produced a pack linking resources reflecting Traveller cultures to Literacy hour objectives.

<http://www.irespect.net/CIRCLE/TES/TravellerCulturescurriculum.htm>

Some ideas on including Traveller cultures in primary schools

<http://www.kented.org.uk/ngfl/subjects/literacy/traveller>

This link is to Kent Traveller education service, with a list of materials and references to the Year and Term of the National Literacy Strategy. This website has some direct links to resources which you can also download.

http://www.cumbriagridforlearning.org.uk/index.php?category_id=389

Find ideas here prepared by Cumbria's Race Equality team on a wide range of multicultural issues, including Traveller cultures