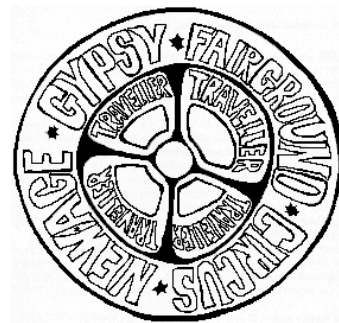


# **Devon Consortium Traveller Education Service**

**Serving Devon, Plymouth and Torbay**



## **Newsletter 15: Summer Term 2005**

### **Restructure of the Traveller Education Service**

Over the past 12 months the Traveller Education Service has been restructured to enable us to respond to DfES priorities which require us to move away from the 'pupil support service' model of provision and towards greater mainstreaming of services for Gypsy and Traveller pupils.

With this in mind, our structure needed to focus more clearly on the needs of schools and teachers who are seeking to include Traveller pupils fully in mainstream provision and in moving the focus away from making provision for individual Traveller pupil/s within the classroom.

This does not mean that the Traveller Education Service will be making an immediate withdrawal from supporting Traveller pupils, however, DCTES teaching staff will be using time in the classroom to plan and prepare with school staff for the full inclusion of Traveller pupils within a school curriculum that meets the specific needs of individuals and groups of pupils.

The approach is based on three main principles of Inclusion:

- Setting suitable learning challenges
- Responding to pupils' diverse learning needs
- Overcoming potential barriers to learning and assessment for individuals and groups of pupils

The approach is intended to assist in the creation of effective learning environments in which all pupils can participate fully. In this first year we have focussed on assisting schools with assessment and target setting. As we develop this approach, we will be offering:

- Greater support to develop learning activities which challenge prejudice and negative attitudes of children towards difference;
- Supporting with inclusion in the National Strategies
- Developing support which seeks to provide greater continuity of learning for mobile pupils.

There is recognition nationally that Travelling families have difficulty accessing education and that home school liaison plays a key part in building the confidence of the Traveller community. However, Traveller Education Services are being told that they should refocus their work to ensure that the link between home and school is more direct and less mediated by Traveller Education Staff. To put it succinctly, Traveller Education Services need to withdraw from 'ownership' of Traveller issues and assist schools and mainstream services to develop greater 'ownership'. This is a great challenge to the sense of responsibility that TES staff feel towards the community but the development of successful strategies in this area of work will promote greater inclusion of the Traveller Community in mainstream education.

The service has always supported schools in all of these areas and these new demands only represent a change of emphasis in the work of the service.

### E-LAMP 3

(Electronic Learning and Mobility Project)

Inclusion and mobility is always an issue for the highly mobile pupils and their schools. Many of our mobile pupils travel during the summer months; this is the traditional fairground run time, or to festivals or for seasonal occupational work. Many pupils return to the same schools during the winter when it can be a challenge for both schools and pupils to bridge the learning gaps in the knowledge that sometimes the time in school can be very short before the pupils travel again. Most pupils who travel on a regular basis have some form of distance learning. This is usually in the form of instruction sheets and worksheets, together with basic equipment in order that they can carry out the tasks combined in the pack. The packs are prepared by the schools usually with Traveller Education Service support and reflect both the curriculum planning and the pupils' own needs. These are in 'bite-sized' chunks so that the students are not daunted by a whole terms work. The new packs are prepared in response to assessment when the completed work is returned to the base school.

The missing factor in the equation is obviously teaching input. The nationwide Traveller Education Services on site support is a noted factor in the continuity of education for Fairground pupils but it is less easy to access the pupils at festivals and where the families are engaged in occupational work.

As the Travelling season progresses the sense of isolation increases for the Travelling pupils. Many schools do have strategies for keeping in touch with the pupils and some families will return to the base schools for a few

days. But generally the line of communication with the pupils is a perennial concern.

For many years the DfES has supported initiatives for combating this problem. The latest project is **E-LAMP**. The project enables Travelling pupils to use laptop computers for their work, and software to support their educational needs. The key factor in this project is a data card. The data card is a wireless device which allows the pupils to access e-mail and the internet just using the laptop power. (Mobile phone technology) Consequently lines of communication between the base school and the pupil are as immediate as the technology allows. In Devon we have three Key Stage 3 students who are working with this project and one pupil due to transfer from Key Stage 2 to 3. The project began in February and is due to end in November, roughly the parameters of the Travelling season.

Two of the pupils engaged in the project attend **Stoke Damerel C.C**, Plymouth for a few weeks only in the spring term. The Community College has been outstanding in its ready acceptance of the project and enthusiastic participation to the extent that the two pupils have their own portal on their learning environment. The school is developing work for them to access using the mobile technology. And there are exciting possibilities for GNVQ course work that the two pupils will be able to access on line.

The school's vision is clear- every child matters and they have the vision to realise that such projects enable inclusive practice. The development of the schools' learning environment as a provision for the continuity of education is well underway with the recognition that not all pupils have daily access to school.

### **E-Lamp from pupils' point of view**

Michael Y.7 attends Cullompton Community College and has been really enthusiastic about E-LAMP.



“It’s been really interesting and I have learned much more than using the (distance learning) packs.”

What it has meant for Michael is that he has been able to complete science and geography work delivered in lesson sized modules paralleling the work his class would be doing. He has also been able to use materials from the internet to support his learning. Michael can send the completed work back to school as soon as he has completed it.

Angela, his mother, thinks that this project has meant a whole new way of learning and engaging Michael in his work. “He has always found it hard to be motivated and work independently on his paper based packs. But this has seen him inspired and has opened new doors for him. He doesn’t have to be told to work, he does it himself and I can see the satisfaction on his face every time he finishes his work. He can work for several hours and has learned so many useful skills using the computer.”

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Charles is due to transfer from Pinhoe Combined School in Exeter to Clyst Vale Community College next term. It is always difficult for Travelling pupils to make this transition. Charles like so many other children of Showmen will not be starting at the beginning of term. So what has been set up is a link for Charles to send to Clyst Vale his E-Lamp project work and to be able to use e-mail to keep in contact with both schools. For example sending this memorable experience by e-mail...

### When I met Prince Charles and Camilla.

‘This year when I went to the Devon County Show I met Prince Charles and Camilla three times.

I didn’t think I was going to meet them even though I knew they were at the show.

The first time I saw them I was going into a tent, I saw all of police and bodyguards coming out of the tent and I knew it was them. So I got my self in a good position ready to shake their hands. Lucky for me I had my picture phone on me so I got this ready to take a picture as well if I could. This is one of the pictures I managed to take just before they spoke to me.



Camilla spoke to me first and said ‘Hello’ and then Charles spoke to me and said ‘Have you seen everything around here?’

All I said back to him was ‘yes’, I couldn’t say anything else I was so surprised.

They were both dressed smartly and I think Camilla looks smaller than she does on telly and nicer too.

The next time I saw them was when they were coming out of the food hall. I took some more pictures and they stopped to talk to me again. Camilla said to my dad ‘Hello again’, because she recognised us.

We met them again later on when they were about to leave and we were leaving, so my dad said to Camilla ‘Are you following me?’ and she replied ‘We have got to stop meeting like this’ and laughed.

It was good meeting them and being able to get some pictures.’

Lynne Ogden at Clyst Vale has already had some really chatty messages with Charles. (Not HRH!) So he is very much included in the transfer process through the project technology.

It is only through the realisation of the usefulness of this type of project by schools determined to look for those opportunities to be inclusive and the support of the pupils and families that E-Learning will have an assured future and change the impact of distance learning for highly mobile families.

### **Other news and good practice from around the Consortium**

#### **KEEPING IN TOUCH**

When **Ottery St. Mary Primary School** worked with D.C.T.E.S to prepare Distance Learning for Felix to support his continuity of education while he went travelling with his parents in Eire, little did the class teacher realise she would be able to keep in touch instantly! Thanks to his Mum allowing him to use her laptop and mobile technology Felix could

send e-mails back to his friends to tell them what he was doing and they could reply. He was also able to email pictures to school that supported the class’s current study on “Houses and Homes”. This is a wonderful example of sharing a first hand experience with absent friends using mobile technology! Thank You Felix’s Mum!

#### **A REWARDING SCHOOL EXPERIENCE**

A very big THANK YOU should go to **Plympton St. Maurice and Clyst St. Mary Primary Schools** who recently made Sofia so welcome in their schools for the short time her family were travelling in the area. Sofia is the daughter of a Showman’s family.

The success was due in part to Plympton sending a brief outline of the work Sofia had covered and her reading levels with her to Clyst St Mary. This aided the teaching staff receiving her to support Sofia’s speedy integration, an all-important factor to a happy outcome, especially when her stay was only just over a week.

Sofia must have felt so at home that her hard work was recognised by the class teacher awarding her the “Pupil of the Week” accolade. The award was presented in a special class assembly to which parents were invited at the end of her last day.

Another big Thank You should go to Clyst St. Mary Pre-School who made Darci, Sofia’s little sister, so very welcome. She made firm friends with another girl she hopes to see when Darci’s family return for the County Show next year.

### **And those schools who welcome Travelling pupils at the drop of a hat...**

Many thanks to the schools who helped accommodate Traveller children this summer term. **Cockington Primary** in Torquay found a place for a Russian pupil whose parents were performing with the Russian Ice Circus; they were amazed by his gymnastic and swimming prowess. The DCTES were asked by the manager of the circus if we could find a Hula Hoop for a visiting performer who happens to have an Olympic Gold medal in Rhythmic Gymnastic, (they had broken theirs) the call went out to many schools and gymnastic clubs, unfortunately there appears not to be one 34 inch Hula Hoop in the whole South West. However, the show went on and she turned up with at least three, *Lost in Translation* springs to mind.

A big thank you to **The Erme Primary School** in Ivybridge who welcomed 8 Travellers on the last day of half-term for an Art Enrichment experience, all this with less than 24 hours notice. It was certainly an experience for the Travellers, the School and the taxi driver who made the mistake of going to Ermington; she arrived at The Erme 45 lively minutes later-somewhat dazed!

**Leigham Primary School** in Plymouth found places in 4 classes for 7 highly mobile Traveller children for three days. The children integrated well and enjoyed their stay, there were hugs all round and the inevitable exchange of mobile numbers for the eldest girl who made good friends in such a short time.

Places were also provided by **Cornwood Primary, Stowford Primary and Pre-school**, although these places were unable to be taken up.

A special mention should go to the **District Council** who provided mobile toilets and black bags which enabled the site to be left as it was found, the Leisure centre also allowed the Travellers shower facilities. In fact, it was heard in certain circles in the neighbourhood that it was the quietest it had been at night in years. The boy racers, who used the 'illegal' site on a nightly basis, had to find somewhere else to entertain themselves!

A special thanks to two exceptionally Inclusive Torbay schools, **Shiphay and Barton Primary**, who have shown sensitivity and understanding in welcoming and encouraging Traveller pupils from one family this year. The pupils will be moving on at the end of term after making very good educational progress.

### **Ethnic Ascription**

Many thanks to the Traveller Community, schools and officers who came along to the DfES Seminar on Ethnic Ascription in March.

The DfES requested these seminars because of a concern about the very low numbers of Romany Gypsy and Irish Traveller children whose ethnicity was recorded on the annual school census. The paucity of information is causing difficulties in analysing and planning support for raising the attainment of Traveller pupils at both local and national levels. Officials wanted to investigate methods of building the confidence of the Traveller communities to voluntarily record their ethnicity so that schools, LEA's and central Government may use better statistical information to improve the planning and delivery of education to this group of children.

We had a very productive morning and the DfES officials commented positively on the quality of interaction.

Key issues emerging from the day were:

- The Traveller community needs to know that the information on ethnicity they give to schools is confidential and won't become common knowledge in the staffroom and playground and that this confidentiality is protected in law by the Data Protection Act
- Traveller parents need to know why the information is collected and what use it will be put to.
- There is a fear that passing this information to schools will result in increased levels of bullying and marginalisation of Traveller pupils.

The points above are ones that were raised in all the groups. We recorded a large volume of feedback which has been forwarded to the DfES for analysis and we expect to receive further guidance in the future.

In the meantime, the DfES is consulting with local authorities about the best way to collect data which demonstrates the needs of children whose education is interrupted due to regular family travelling patterns.

And finally...

### **CALLING ALL PRE-SCHOOLS!**

**You don't have to have Travellers on roll to qualify to borrow our Pre – School resources.** D.C.T.E.S. has loan boxes that contain books and puzzles reflecting Traveller culture and lifestyle. If you would like to borrow a box or would like to know more about how we can support your setting, please get in touch with ...

### **DCTES CONTACT**

Redworth House  
Ashburton Road  
Totnes  
TQ9 5JZ  
Tel: 01392 386811 Fax 01392 386829  
Calls will be answered by our administrator **Vlod Kucyj**  
vlod.kucyj@devon.gov.uk  
Head of Service:- **Anne Walker**  
anne.walker@devon.gov.uk