

United Against Bullying School Case Study: Improving relationships with GRT families and pupils

How Smarden Primary School improved relationships with GRT families and pupils

Context of our anti-bullying work

We are a small rural school with little diversity. We have several families who identify as Gypsy, Roma and Traveller.

What we hoped to achieve

Speaking to our families, they felt that they were misrepresented in the local community and their cultures and beliefs were misunderstood. We were keen to **challenge** assumptions and bias within our school and the wider community.

The action we took

1. We started by listening to our GRT parents and children and wanted them to understand that we were keen to learn more and celebrate their culture.
2. We engaged in whole school training for staff (alongside another local school) led by the Equality Diversity Inclusion Team (The Education People) and the ABA CPD courses. All staff came to the sessions open-minded and keen to learn new things.
3. The children in the school collaborated and engaged with GRT workshops and 2 GRT pupils had individual workshops, we then displayed their work around the school.
4. We ordered texts that celebrate GRT culture, so that our pupils felt represented.
5. Our GRT pupils led a whole school assembly on the Appleby Horse Fair.

Impact and outcomes of the work

- Improved relationships with our GRT families.
- There has been an increase in trust and mutual respect.
- The greatest impact has been seeing our GRT pupils speak with confidence and passion about their culture and beliefs (my eyes are filling up with tears just thinking about the pride in their faces during the workshops).
- The pupils feel represented and listened to.

This is just the beginning and we will continue **investing the time** to learn, reflect and grow further. We would like to continue to celebrate diversity through further workshops, assemblies and enrichment days.

What we have learned

One of the challenges we have faced, is how some of our GRT pupils deal with conflict and friendship issues due to a struggle between their own personal beliefs and school rules/values. There is no quick fix, but we are using the restorative approach and modelling, to support the pupils in dealing with conflict. We explain to the children that although we respect differences between cultures and beliefs, we have to keep to our Smarden Charter - A right to feel safe, a right to be respected, a right to be treated with kindness and a right to learn. Occasionally, the children group together when dealing with a playground issue and we are helping them to understand that this can become an imbalance of power and can feel intimidating to others. Our dream for the future would be for all children to be able to use the restorative approach to solve problems without relying on an adult to mediate or intervene.