

# Improving Educational Outcomes for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Pupils

## What Works?

Contextual Influences and Constructive Conditions that may Influence Pupil Achievement

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Richard White and Kerry Martin



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## Introduction

Between February and June 2009, case studies were undertaken in ten secondary schools, five primary schools and five alternative education provisions. The sample was selected from schools with Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils on roll that completed and returned a national survey in the autumn term 2007. The main aim of the case studies was to explore in greater depth some of the strategies and approaches described by schools in the questionnaire returns. Researchers conducted face-to-face interviews with senior leaders and other key staff from schools and local authorities, and led focus group discussions with pupils, parents and teachers.

The data have been analysed thematically in order to draw out insights and examples of good practice from the case-study schools. The analytical model in Figure 1 illustrates a visual representation of the theme-mapping process undertaken by the research team. The model comprises three concentric circles representing:

- **Educational outcomes** (e.g. attainment, attendance, engagement, retention)
- **Constructive conditions** (which can all impact positively on the identified educational outcomes)
- **Contextual influences** (which may lie outside the immediate influence of the school and can either support or obstruct the raising of outcomes for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils).

The analysis of the case studies identified certain *constructive conditions* that may help to raise a range of *educational outcomes* for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils. Characteristics associated with the *particular context* of the school, however, may be supportive or obstructive in raising educational outcomes. (More detailed description of the analytical approach undertaken can be found in Appendix 1.)

It is hoped that the use of this structure will help practitioners to look beyond specific interventions and strategies and consider wider attitudinal influences that may permeate the ethos of a school and help to raise outcomes generally.

The following sections illustrate the constructive conditions present in the case-study schools. A discussion of the contextual influences and their impact on outcomes can be found in the concluding comments. Appendix 2 includes a series of audit tools that schools may find useful in identifying their own particular contextual influences and constructive conditions.

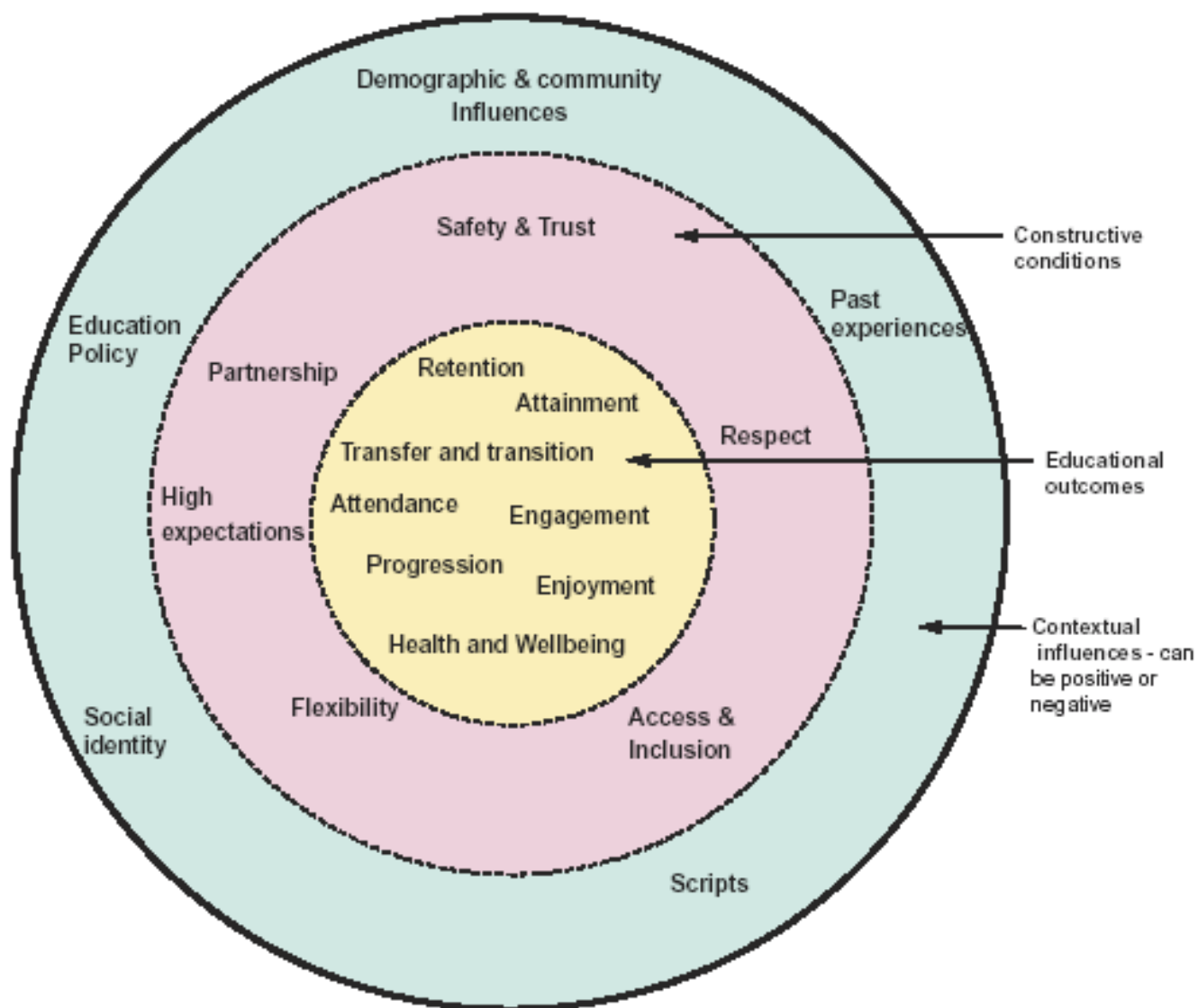


Figure 1 - The Analytical Model

## Constructive conditions: Safety and Trust

### ‘Our top priority is safety’ (Parent)

For many Gypsy, Roma and Traveller parents, the key concern for the moral, physical and emotional safety of their children lay at the centre of all discussions around education and schooling. These anxieties about safety may be ‘scripted’<sup>1</sup> to some extent but the feelings associated with them are real to the individuals concerned and it is not always easy for teachers and other members of staff to fully appreciate this without having a clear insight into the experiences that these families face in wider society. Gypsy, Roma and Traveller parents place a significant amount of trust in schools to care for and protect their children. Whether or not this trust is won, seems to depend on a range of factors and almost always takes time but, once established, the notion of trust appears to be transmitted effectively within the community and can be long-lasting. Schools that had developed a reputation for being caring and understanding of Traveller culture maintained a loyal following of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller families, sometimes over generations, despite the fact that it might not be the nearest school geographically. Conversely, the breakdown of trust between home and school can be quickly ignited and enduring in its impact. TESS are working collaboratively with schools to embed the principles of the successful relationships they have built up with families over time, thus building capacity in schools.

- Faith schools and single sex schools may be perceived as ‘safer’ places, particularly for parents who are anxious to protect their daughters from developing relationships with boys, but there was also an assumption that faith schools demanded higher expectations in terms of pupil behaviour, values and moral standards.
- Key individuals in schools seem to be instrumental in building trusting relationships with pupils and their parents. This does not necessarily mean having one designated member of staff, a more sustainable approach is to develop a number of key personnel who Gypsy, Roma and Traveller parents can relate well to. In some schools, parents were given the mobile telephone numbers of key people. In others, home visits were made by school staff. For Roma pupils, having a member of staff who could speak their language and demonstrate good insight into their cultural experiences was comforting for the pupils and their parents. In schools that employed Gypsy, Roma and Traveller members of staff, parents and pupils demonstrated even greater levels of trust.
- Schools that place a strong emphasis on pastoral care address some of the security needs of the families. Peer support programmes, firm anti-bullying policies and clear and effective behaviour policies that are wrapped around by humanistic<sup>2</sup>/therapeutic approaches for pupils who have social and emotional needs are more responsive to individual needs and more likely to deal with the causes of difficult behaviour. Dedicated pastoral support staff can be highly effective in diagnosing and addressing the source of behavioural concerns.
- Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils often seek out one another’s company outside the classroom, and ‘stick together’ even in schools with diverse populations. Evidence seems to suggest that these pupils simply prefer to socialise with other Travellers because of their shared experiences and background. This could be related to emotional/psychological comfort. Several of the pupils and their parents reported that they had no contact with non-Traveller classmates outside school. Some schools have

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<sup>1</sup> The term ‘script’ refers here to common responses or phrases which may be consciously or unconsciously applied as form of (personal or cultural) defence or protection.

<sup>2</sup> The term ‘humanistic’ is used here to describe an approach which centres upon unconditional positive regard in order to promote self-respect, self-confidence and trust.

developed strategies to break down barriers and cement social relationships. One school, for example, set up a Boxercise club which attracted and brought together boys from different groupings (including Roma students).



## **Constructive conditions: Respect**

### **‘Our beliefs and culture are strong and they understand that’ (Parent)**

Respect is clearly a two-way process with schools expecting families and children to respect their values and rules, and communities needing their identities and beliefs to be recognised. Most of the schools were aware of this balance and were successful in communicating their expectations to families whilst being sufficiently flexible and inclusive to accommodate cultural differences.

- Vision and leadership were seen as key to creating a culture of mutual respect. A head of department observed: ‘The ethos of respect and tolerance has got to come from the top; if it doesn’t you might as well forget it.’ Designating a senior member of staff with responsibility for improving outcomes raises the status of the issues within the school and signals to the communities that their identity and needs are respected. School leaders had a key role in showing respect for the communities, by visiting sites and homes, shows and fairs. Some parents appreciated headteachers showing respect by attending funerals of community members and offering an open door to grieving relatives.
- Individual staff may have specific knowledge about, and interest in, these communities but schools recognised a need for training to develop a whole school approach. TESS and community organisations had important roles in delivering such training. It was suggested that the inclusion of a Gypsy, Roma and Traveller component in broader training might be more effective in reaching all staff and raising the issues more frequently.
- Some schools played down ethnic identity, preferring to see every child as an individual. Others celebrated cultures and developed cohesion within the school community. Older students acted as role models and mentors for younger community members. School staff noted the need to get the balance between acknowledging and celebrating their culture, while not making students stand out as being different. It was about being flexible and responsive to different needs and developing the most appropriate approach.
- One headteacher felt celebrating identity was ‘more about enriching the curriculum ... than isolating a certain section of the school community.’ Schools presented positive images to contrast with those in the press, and collected artefacts from families and community events to mount displays. Some used flexibility within the curriculum to respect community needs by offering appropriate and relevant education and training opportunities.
- Schools expected Gypsy, Roma and Traveller students to respect the school rules and staff. They felt parents were supportive where the rules were clearly explained and fairly applied. Often schools had a relatively simple set of rules, based on mutual respect and that were easily communicated. The direct, adult manner of some students could be misinterpreted as a lack of respect by staff: ‘These pupils are expected to be adults at a much earlier age so by 13 they like to be spoken to and dealt with as adults which causes problems because it is not always appropriate in a school setting.’ Several schools felt that the whole school behaviour expectations of the Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning programme (SEAL) - staff using solution-focused language, praise and encouragement and students developing the ability to deal with emotions in ways that are appropriate to the situation - had contributed to building respect and minimising tension. One school found its open-plan coffee area used by staff and students, contributed to an ethos of mutual respect.

## **Constructive conditions: Access and inclusion**

**‘No matter what cultures are in the school, they’re all classed the same. Just because they are in a caravan doesn’t mean they are different. The school is so welcoming’**  
(Parent).

The need to identify and overcome barriers to Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils’ access to school was identified as a key element in their successful engagement, retention and subsequent achievement. This entailed the provision of practical support to facilitate access.

- Partnership working, (especially between TESS and school), was seen to facilitate effective access for new arrivals, including assessment to ensure the appropriate class placing. Induction groups / programmes were regarded as invaluable for newly arrived pupils, especially Roma, as a means of providing comprehensive input, including essential language support and assistance in developing understanding of, and participation in, school practice and culture, especially in secondary schools.
- Practical assistance, including providing uniform, and school support for transport to collect and return pupils to a nearby site, was identified as being effective in facilitating pupils’ access to school, as well as removing access barriers borne out of possible ‘safety and trust’ concerns. Interviewees also highlighted the impact of being proactive in supporting parents in the school admission and transfer process (through assisting them in completing application forms, for example).
- A school’s support for distance learning could be a key element in maintaining school-family links whilst travelling, underpinning Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils’ access to school and learning/curriculum on their return. Several school staff noted that returning pupils, or other families, would always be (re-) admitted even if there were no surplus places.

Alongside facilitating access, the need to counter challenges to the inclusion of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils in school was raised. It was seen as essential to make them feel part of the school and to communicate the message to families and the wider community that the young people and their cultures are welcome and respected.

- A central strand of a school’s inclusive ethos or approach included finding the right balance between recognising and celebrating diversity, but not promoting or creating ‘difference’ within the school community. Interviewees spoke of the need to work with all pupils as individual young people within the school. This was especially apparent in those schools with a broader demographic composition. Examples included the considered use of culturally-specific resources and programmes, such as engaging in Gypsy Roma Traveller History month activities in conjunction with/woven into other elements of the curriculum.
- Whilst understanding particular pupils’ desire to form and maintain friendship groups, some school staff identified the need to encourage greater mixing in class and also during break times. The focus of this was not to disperse or segregate groups of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils, but to foster feelings of a school identity as opposed to a collection of individual groups. After-school clubs providing leisure opportunities and homework support were seen to contribute to this integration, as well as including all pupils in the wider life / experience of the school. In the main, Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils, however, were keen to assert their desire to maintain their separation from non-Travellers suggesting that this was because they preferred to be with their own peer/friendship group: ‘[It’s] having someone who knows my stuff and what I’m going through, who understands me basically’ (Y9 pupil).

- Inclusion could also be supported by promoting the school's pastoral system and approach within these communities, (to reinforce safety and trust issues). In addition, interviewees associated high levels of pastoral and classroom support (underpinning a humanistic perspective on learning), with increased engagement of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils. This stemmed from the flexibility offered to meet the individual needs of all pupils in the school.
- Broadening-out the reach of the school, through the provision of family learning opportunities, the use of ICT, adult literacy and numeracy classes, was seen to increase Gypsy, Roma and Traveller parents' affinity/relationship with the school. Hence, widening the offer of school could act to counter many parents' negative experiences of school and education. The employment of community members in the school, acting as advocates for it, was seen as being particularly effective in this.

## **Constructive conditions: Flexibility**

**‘There is a desire within the school to want to make things better for Traveller families and to want to meet them half way’** (Traveller Project Coordinator)

Flexibility, in terms of the curriculum the school offers, as well as through its overall approach, was found to be important in a significant number of schools and was particularly welcomed by Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils and their families.

- More flexible schools are responsive in their curriculum approach, sometimes incorporating a thematic approach to teaching and learning, as well as building on the interests, aspirations and particular needs of these pupils to offer personalised learning opportunities via different pathways. This also involved a constructive approach to mobility, including distance learning, for pupils who travel for parts of the year.
- Particularly valued by parents were secondary schools that offer a flexible, work-related curriculum, which was seen as more relevant to Traveller lifestyles and cultural expectations. Parents were also aware of the changing world in which their children are growing up and a work-related focus was seen as a way of increasing their employment prospects. For schools, accreditation through a range of vocationally-related qualifications was regarded as an important element in sustaining motivation and facilitating onward progression.
- Schools able to offer greater flexibility at an earlier age (for example, by allowing pupils to begin vocational courses in Year 9 rather than Year 10) appeal to Gypsy, Roma and Traveller parents who, traditionally, might have expected their children, particularly boys, to begin generating family income at this age and thus leave secondary school before the end of Key Stage 3. For schools, flexibility at an earlier age was perceived as a way of ‘hooking’ the pupils in and providing them with a focus, with the ultimate benefit of improving retention and achievement. Good relationships with local colleges and employers were considered to be an essential feature of a successful vocational curriculum.
- Several schools employed bilingual family support / link workers to develop and maintain relationships with families, which was said to demonstrate schools’ respect for and understanding of their culture. In addition, schools demonstrated their flexibility through the innovative deployment of staff, such as home language-speaking IT technicians working outside their normal remit to help support new arrivals, and administrative staff helping parents with the completion of forms, or following up non-attendance. Staff in one school reported that the headteacher had never been heard to say ‘No’ to the employment of additional staff to support pupils’ progress.
- Clear boundaries and expectations, balanced with a degree of flexibility which was based on understanding and open dialogue, were appreciated by Gypsy, Roma and Traveller parents. There were several examples of schools ‘meeting parents half way’ and adopting a problem-solving approach to behaviour and attendance issues. In a secondary school, a flexible attendance policy meant that time off to attend cultural or family events could be sanctioned where pupils’ attendance was generally good.
- A more flexible approach to homework was appreciated by Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils and their families. A number of schools were providing homework clubs at lunchtimes and, in a few cases, homework clubs were available on sites after school. In one school, although more traditional forms of homework were given in core subjects, other subjects gave project-based homework, involving the presentation of drafts

followed by feedback, before the submission of final drafts and presentations. This 'university-style' approach was reported to increase the engagement and motivation of pupils. Another school had completely reorganised the school day, taking away common break times and introducing longer teaching sessions (during which teachers gave their classes a 20 minute break to fit in with the learning activities). Then between 3pm and 5pm, the school ran study sessions and extra curricula activities for all pupils.

## **Constructive conditions: High expectations**

**‘Because they [teachers] thought I wasn’t able to make anything of myself, I believed it as well’** (Traveller Teaching Assistant)

The importance of high expectations in raising aspirations and, ultimately, achievement is effectively demonstrated in the above quote from a Traveller working as a TA in a primary school. Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils, like any pupil, are more likely to succeed if they feel that the school values them and is working to support them to reach their potential. At the same time, there is a need to work with their parents to help them appreciate the value of education and recognise how it can improve their children’s future opportunities. Where parents feel that their children are unlikely to succeed, they are often less likely to remain in school. There were several examples in the schools of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller parents recognising that their traditional way of life was changing and that qualifications would be essential to enable Travellers ‘to compete on an even footing’. Schools were working hard to capitalise on, and support, these aspirations.

- In several schools, performance data was being monitored in order to track the progress and achievement of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils so that appropriate support could be accessed where needed. A number of the schools were involved in the National Strategies’ Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Achievement Programme which supported achievement, as well as moving the issue higher up the agenda in school.
- Schools were using positive role models to help raise parents’ and pupils’ aspirations, for example, pupils who have successfully completed Key Stage 4 and gone on to take up college places. In one school, a Roma pupil, a talented musician, had come back to the school after studying music at college and was supporting in GCSE music lessons. In another school, a member of the TESS (and also the local community) was working effectively with parents to increase both their understanding of the UK education system and their awareness of its value for their children’s futures. This, it was hoped, would result in pupils staying in school longer and thus being more likely to achieve.
- Where Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils had gone through from Foundation Stage to Year 6, there was found to be less divergence between schools’ and parents’ expectations. In most of the schools, transfer from primary to secondary school was expected, with more girls transferring than previously. Some primary schools operated transition programmes in collaboration with the TESS. For example, in one primary school, such a programme involved home visits, coffee mornings, meetings with secondary headteachers and a mini enterprise project. Another primary school ran meetings for all Year 5 parents to provide information and practical help (e.g. who to contact, how to complete forms). A secondary school had organised taxis to bring primary school pupils to the school for additional pre-transfer visits. More rigorous tracking and monitoring of Year 6 destinations data by the TESS was taking place, to ensure that Traveller pupils did not ‘slip through the net’ at the point of transfer. An effective strategy to try and improve transition post-16 was, again, the use of positive role models progressing onto further and higher education.
- Attendance in several of the schools was reported to be good and, in one or two cases, to be above the national average. In others, it was said to be improving, although from a low baseline. Improved attendance was seen to be a result of whole-school attendance policies supported by clear systems (e.g. first-day contact by attendance officers; monitoring of absence to identify patterns) and messages about the importance of good attendance for doing well in school. In one school, a dedicated Education Welfare Officer worked in collaboration with the school for two and a half days a week. The approach was non-punitive, focused on engaging the parents in

dialogue about the importance of regular attendance and not taking holidays in term time.

- Clearly stated expectations of behaviour, underpinned by a supportive and flexible pastoral support system, were appreciated by Gypsy, Roma and Traveller parents.

## **Constructive conditions: Partnerships**

### **'It is holistic, it is not just an education problem, it's everything'**

(Multi-agency team member)

Partnerships are seen as a vital way for schools to access and engage Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities, to establish respect, build trust and ultimately change hearts and minds to value education. Partnerships are key drivers in educational engagement at the individual, parental, school and community level.

- Respecting Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils and treating them as mature individuals facilitated the effective collaboration between pupils and school staff. There were examples of schools building partnerships with pupils by encouraging pupil-led/originated initiatives (e.g. to promote a greater understanding of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller culture). For example, one primary school established strong links with a local university which hosted a pupil-led conference. Successful partnerships were built between pupils and staff with responsibility for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils/those with English as an Additional Language (EAL), and other support staff who worked closely with them (e.g. TAs, learning mentors). Offering flexibility, particularly in terms of the curriculum, work-placements and extracurricular activities helped schools to work collaboratively with pupils. Schools also developed partnerships with previous pupils who had successfully gone on to college, or into employment, as role models to others and used existing Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils as ambassadors.
- Schools were successful where they reached out to work in partnership with parents from these communities. Direct and informal methods of communication were effective (e.g. parents were given mobile phone numbers of staff). By being visible to parents and the wider community (e.g. through staff visits to sites or attendance at local community events), schools were able to demonstrate a willingness to work together. Similarly, by having an 'open door policy', staff were seen as accessible and approachable. Schools also established parent forums / consultation events (with interpreters where necessary). Schools developed partnerships with parents by being flexible and considerate to their requests and concerns (e.g. around issues such as school trips and sex and relationships education) and through the offer of family learning (e.g. access to basic skills, ESOL classes). Schools encouraged parents' involvement by recruiting members of the community as staff / governors. Equally, schools had expectations of parents to work with them (e.g. to attend induction sessions, develop individual behaviour plans, and encourage their child's attendance).
- Although it is important to have members of school staff with dedicated responsibility for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils, partnership working between school staff through the sharing of information and practice is vital to the successful integration of pupils from these communities into school. Effective staff partnerships work to develop capacity and ensure pupils do not develop an overreliance on key personnel. In-school partnerships are also critical to ensure the sustainability of effective working and maintenance of good relationships with Gypsy, Roma and Traveller families. Equally, partnerships between schools, particularly secondary schools and their feeder primaries are essential for the successful transfer of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils. Ongoing liaison with primary schools (which have established relationships with families from these communities and experience of the young person) can be valuable and help with the retention of pupils.



- TESS has longstanding experience of working with Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities and established relationships with families. Often viewed as impartial and separate to the school, TESS has a mediating and brokering role between schools and these communities. Partnerships with the TESS were particularly important in initial access and induction of pupils, although collaborative working is required (e.g. joint home visits with school staff to support attendance, the development of the curriculum etc). TESS have a key role in the development of staff and engaging them in projects and strategies at an authority wide/national level, however, this specialist knowledge and practice must be embedded by the school in order to be truly effective.
- Collaboration with other agencies that have respect among Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities helps schools to build relationships and extend the support available to meet their wider needs. Schools recognised that pupils from these communities often require flexibility, for example with the curriculum, and looked to establish partnerships with local colleges and alternative providers to develop relevant courses (e.g. in construction) and out-of-school activities. Partnerships were also developed with employers and universities to raise aspirations. Some agency staff were based in schools (e.g. police), for others, the school was seen as the hub of partnership working and an enabler to the provision of coordinated holistic support. Schools also had a challenge role with their partners (for example contesting decisions made by local colleges regarding places for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils).

## Concluding comments

The **educational outcomes** for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils that case-study schools were working hard to improve are essentially inter-dependent. For example, the link between attendance and attainment is widely acknowledged and progression into Further Education often depends on retention into Key Stage 4. In turn, retention may be determined by levels of enjoyment and engagement and so on. It is important therefore for schools to consider pupil progress holistically across all eight outcomes, to maintain a composite overview of academic and pastoral indicators, to identify support needs and target interventions.

Each school operates within its unique setting and context. This unique context might include variables that actually support the school in raising outcomes for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils (for example there may be a long and established history of admitting pupils from these communities) or it might present particular barriers (inter-racial tensions within the local community). Collectively, these are referred to as **contextual influences** and the research identified five common themes, each of which could be supportive or obstructive to the school's efforts in raising outcomes.

Because of this diversity, specific interventions and approaches may lead to quicker results in some schools than others which are operating under very different circumstances. However, conceptual analysis of the types of approaches and strategies described by case-study schools identified a pattern of themes. These are referred to as **constructive conditions**.

Six constructive conditions were perceived to impact positively on educational outcomes and these have been explored in turn. It is important to note that although the six conditions have been considered separately within this report, taken together, they can be said to characterise the inclusive ethos of a school and their effects are inevitably inter-woven. For example, a solid *partnership* between a school, parents and the TESS based on mutual *respect* was linked to *high expectations*. Parents who felt that school staff understood and showed *respect* for their culture placed their *trust* in the school to keep their children physically and morally *safe*. Where *safety and trust* is firmly established, it can further facilitate *access and inclusion*.

However, although a school might uphold *high expectations* of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils (in terms of attendance and attainment) it may show little evidence of *flexibility* in its approach to the curriculum or in supporting pupil access. Conversely, another school may demonstrate a great deal of *flexibility* in this respect, at the expense of maintaining *high expectations* of all its pupils. In both these examples, the set of conditions is out of balance.

Strengthening each of the constructive conditions through the implementation of national strategies and approaches such as SEAL, the Mid-term Arrivals Project and the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Achievement Programme to achieve greater balance, may help to mitigate the effects of obstructive contextual influences and ultimately improve educational outcomes. For example, the introduction of a more flexible and vocational curriculum had the effect of challenging previously fixed parental attitudes about the value of secondary school. This research suggests that each of the conditions is important and their cumulative effect is necessary for educational outcomes for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils to be improved. The key to improving outcomes therefore, may lie in achieving an appropriate balance between these constructive conditions.

## **Key points for good practice**

### **Safety and trust:**

- Feelings of safety and trust can be encouraged if school staff demonstrate understanding and awareness of the experiences of GRT communities in wider society.
- Trusting relationships between GRT communities and schools can stem from, or be enhanced by, building on the existing interactions that community members have with TESS professionals. Collaboration between school and TESS personnel can increase a school's ability to engender and nurture trusting relationship with community members.
- Schools advocating and demonstrating effectively defined and strict behaviour policies are often attractive to Traveller families.
- Key individuals in schools, whether formally designated or not, can act as accessible and approachable points of contact for Gypsy, Traveller and Roma families. It is important that such capacity is developed throughout the school.

### **Respect:**

- Respect needs to be promoted as a two-way process - mutual respect between the school and Gypsy, Traveller and Roma families.
- Vision and leadership are central to creating a culture of mutual respect in the school, whereby cultural differences could be accepted and celebrated in the school's systems and values. Parents were seen as more likely to be respectful of school rules and policies that were clearly defined and fairly applied.
- Locating responsibility for raising the achievements of Gypsy Traveller and Roma students with a senior member of school staff can signal to families that they are valued and respected members of the school community.
- Knowledge of, and respect for, Gypsy, Traveller and Roma communities could be enhanced in schools through building on training and development work by TESS and community organisations. Increased emphasis on different cultures and lifestyles at initial teacher training stage could also promote increased awareness and respect amongst school staff.

### **Access and inclusion:**

- Access and inclusion can be supported via offering practical assistance, such as help with transport and uniform requirements. Accessibility can be increased when schools are proactive in assisting parents with the admission process.
- The active promotion of, and support for, distance learning opportunities can contribute to the maintenance of pupils' engagement in learning and relationships with the school when travelling. Re-admission and reintegration of pupils on their return can also be made easier if such links have been maintained.
- The integration of culturally-specific resources and programmes into wider curriculum areas could serve to support and communicate Gypsy, Traveller and Roma pupils' inclusion and belonging in the school.
- The promotion of a 'school identity' can be an effective way of encouraging all pupils to interact and integrate, breaking down social and cultural barriers.
- Schools can also be seen to be more accessible through the provision of additional services, resources and facilities, including for example, family learning opportunities. The employment of community members can be a key element in increasing a school's accessibility to Gypsy, Traveller and Roma pupils and their families.

**Flexibility:**

- Flexibility in the curriculum approach of a school can be effective in engaging Gypsy, Traveller and Roma pupils, responding to their needs and offering individual pathways, skills and opportunities that have direct relevance to their futures.
- Work-related curriculum opportunities are often particularly valued by pupils and families at secondary school level. The offer of accredited, vocationally orientated courses can furnish pupils with relevant learning experiences and provide schools with the means to sustain motivation and engagement, as well as facilitating onward progression. Offering such experiences at an earlier age may be particularly beneficial in encouraging, engaging and retaining pupils.
- A school's willingness and ability to negotiate and pursue a 'problem solving approach' to policies, such as behaviour, attendance and homework policies, based on dialogue with parents and understandings of cultures and lifestyles can be particularly valuable, often indicating a commitment to meeting families and pupils 'half way'.

**High Expectations:**

- Generating and sustaining high expectations and aspirations are key elements underpinning improvements in outcomes for Gypsy, Traveller and Roma pupils.
- Communication of such expectations (including attainment, attendance and behaviour) throughout the school and communities represents a key element of success. This could involve the promotion of joint 'scripts' (between schools and communities) that can be evidenced, supporting the message that, for example, 'Our Traveller pupils do well at this school'.
- The use of role models from within the communities can be effective in communicating and embedding high expectations and aspirations, evidencing the positive relationships between schools and members of Gypsy, Traveller and Roma communities, and so encouraging others.
- Performance data needs to be monitored in order to track the progress and achievement of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils, to ensure that the most appropriate provision is made available (reinforcing the need for flexibility and relevance of curriculum content and delivery).

**Partnerships:**

- The development of partnerships at individual, parent, school and community level are crucial drivers in the access and engagement of Gypsy, Traveller and Roma pupils and communities.
- Effective collaboration between pupils and school staff can be facilitated through, for example, pupil-led initiatives to promote greater understandings of Gypsy, Traveller and Roma culture in the school.
- Maintaining and enhancing links with previous pupils who have left the school and progressed to higher or further education destinations can be an effective way of helping to support school-pupil partnership approaches.
- School-parent partnerships are important. Employing community members provides crucial links into, and for the communities, as well as fulfilling official roles in the school. Schools can be more successful in building a partnership approach with parents when they proactively reach out to the communities. This might include senior members of school staff visiting sites and attending various community events and occasions.
- Within the school, partnerships between staff are important so that the responsibility for supporting Gypsy, Traveller and Roma pupils is not seen to rest with a specific individual. Whilst certain key individuals can be essential in supporting these pupils, it is important that all staff take a joint ownership approach to meeting the needs of all pupils in the school.

- The development of strong and supportive partnerships between primary and secondary schools are essential in ensuring effective transfer. These partnerships need to be based on dialogue and communication between staff at the different schools. In this way, secondary schools can, for example, capitalise on the often good relationships developed between primary schools and community members.
- School partnerships with TESS are valuable, with TESS often able to broker partnerships between schools and communities, based on their long-standing relationships with Gypsy, Traveller and Roma communities. In practice, this could involve joint home visits (involving school and TESS staff) and TESS's role in developing capacity and expertise within schools to effectively engage with Gypsy, Traveller and Roma communities.

## Appendix 1 - Analysis of the case-study data

The case-study data were analysed thematically in order to draw out insights and examples of good practice from the case-study schools and this process is represented in Figure 1 below. The model comprised three concentric circles:

- Educational outcomes
- Constructive conditions
- Contextual influences.

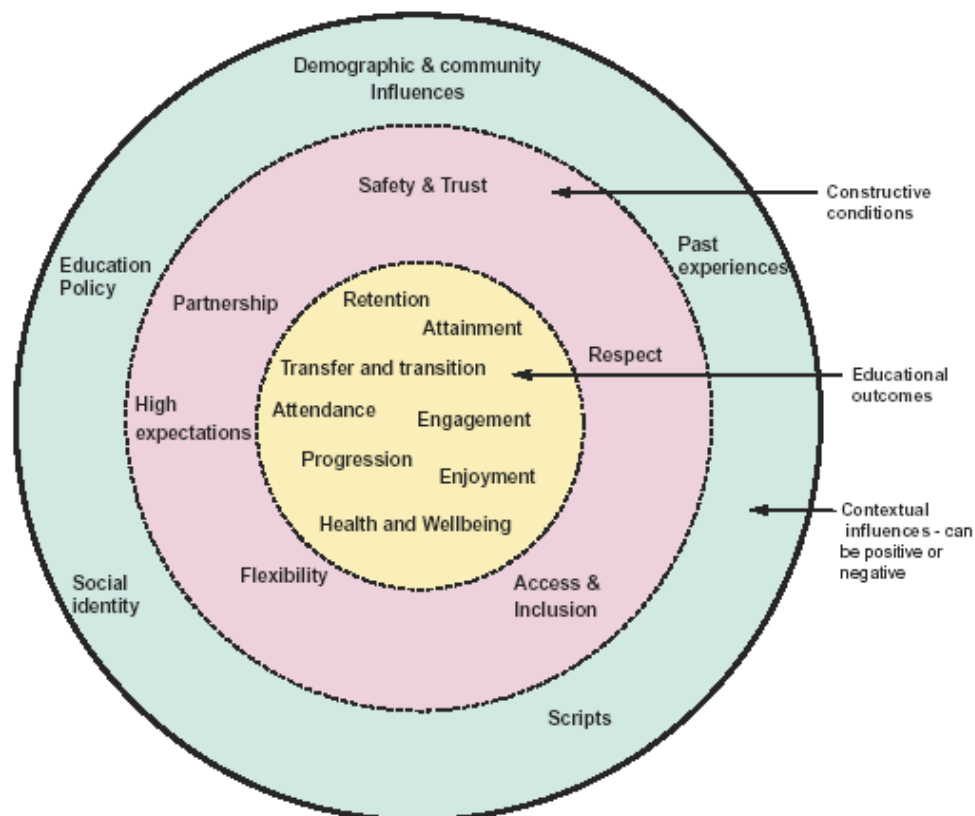


Figure 1 - The Analytical Model

### 1. Educational outcomes

The educational outcomes under examination and placed at the centre of the model are identified as:

- Transfer and transition
- Attainment
- Attendance
- Engagement
- Enjoyment
- Retention
- Progression (to FE, employment, training)
- Health and wellbeing.

Interviews and focus group discussions were designed to explore participants' experiences and perceptions around each of these outcomes.

**2. Constructive conditions**

Next, the case-study data were analysed *across* outcomes to identify broad concepts that were recurring. There were six themes or conditions that were most commonly alluded to. These were:

- Safety and trust
- Respect
- Access and inclusion
- Flexibility
- High expectations
- Partnership.

Theme-mapping analysis suggests that, potentially, these conditions all impact constructively on each of the identified educational outcomes. For example: high expectations can have a positive impact on Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils': transition; attainment; attendance; engagement; enjoyment; retention; and progression into FE, employment, training.

These constructive conditions are placed in the second concentric circle of the model, surrounding the outcomes and are presented here as separate sections of the report.

**3. Contextual influences**

Finally, although aspects of these constructive conditions were identified across the case study schools, the context of each school was unique. Some schools had long and established relationships with Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities, some were single sex schools, others served a highly diverse catchment area. These contextual differences appear to be influential.

Second level theme-mapping identified the five *contextual influences* presented in the outer circle of the model. These external variables may lie outside the immediate influence of the school and can either support or obstruct the raising of outcomes for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils. Examples of how the contextual influences may impact in a supportive or obstructive way are illustrated below:

**a. Demographic and community influences**

The impact of community values and attitudes on educational outcomes.

For example:

<b>Supportive</b>	<b>Obstructive</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The local Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities may value secondary education highly</li> <li>• Loyalty towards the school may be communicated to other community members</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relatives/other community members may discourage Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils from attending or transferring to secondary school</li> <li>• Parents may be unwilling to consider their children taking part in extra-curricula activities or other enrichment activities such as school visits.</li> </ul>

## b. Past experiences

The impact of prior experiences in shaping attitudes.

For example:

Supportive	Obstructive
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Former Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils may have achieved highly in school, providing a good role model</li><li>• Most / all Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils may have transferred to secondary school in the past and established a pattern</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Several Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils may have been excluded from the school, reinforcing stereotyped expectations on all sides</li><li>• Parents may have had unhappy and negative experiences of school themselves</li></ul>

## c. Scripts

The impact of common responses/phrases used consistently to justify actions.

For example:

Supportive	Obstructive
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 'Travellers need exams these days - times have changed'</li><li>• 'I want them to have the education that I didn't have'</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 'Our girls don't go to high school'</li><li>• 'Their parents won't allow them to go on trips'</li></ul>

## d. Education policy

The impact of wider policies and systems.

For example:

Supportive	Obstructive
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The school may be an all-girls' school and this may appeal to Traveller parents</li><li>• The school may be a faith school and this appeals to these parents</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A selective schooling system in the local area may deter Traveller parents at point of transfer</li><li>• The secondary curriculum may be perceived as irrelevant to the needs of these pupils</li></ul>



**e. Social identity**

The impact of individual and group identities.

For example:

<b>Supportive</b>	<b>Obstructive</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The school may serve a diverse population with many different community groups and pupils with a variety of needs. Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils may be less likely to feel like 'outsiders.'</li><li>• The Traveller community may be well established in the local area - there is community cohesion which impacts positively on peer and home-school relationships</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The Traveller community may be marginalised by the local community, perhaps segregated geographically and there is inter-community tension.</li><li>• One Gypsy parent was not going to allow her daughter to transfer to a high school where there were no other Gypsy pupils</li></ul>

## **Appendix 2 - Audit tools**

The following audit tools have been designed to assist schools to consider the educational outcomes for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils that they are working to achieve, and to highlight the contextual influences and constructive conditions that may influence that achievement. It is hoped that this will assist in identifying which constructive conditions are already a strong feature of a school's current ethos and practice and which might benefit from further development in order to improve outcomes for this group of pupils.

**Form A - Intended educational outcomes**

<b>School</b>	
<b>Local authority</b>	
Intended educational outcomes for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils	
Criteria for success	
Monitoring and evaluation arrangements	

**Form B - Contextual influences (may be positive or negative)**

<b>School</b>	
<b>Local authority</b>	
Demographic and community influences ( <i>e.g. cohesion/tension within the community</i> )	
Past experiences ( <i>e.g. history of positive/negative relationships with Travellers</i> )	
Scripts ( <i>e.g. commonly used responses to justify actions such as 'Our girls don't go to high school'</i> )	
Education policy ( <i>e.g. selective system, faith schools</i> )	
Social identity ( <i>e.g. schools serving a diverse population where there may be less marginalisation of certain groups</i> )	
Other contextual influences	

**Form C - Constructive conditions: priorities for development**

<b>School</b>					
<b>Local authority</b>					
<p><i>Use the scale of 1 to 5 (with 1 being a strong feature and 5 being a feature in need of some development) to indicate the extent to which the following are a feature of the school's current ethos / practice.</i></p>					
	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
Safety and trust (e.g. a key member of staff, a strong emphasis on pastoral care)					
Respect (e.g. celebration of culture, whole-school behaviour expectations)					
Access and inclusion (e.g. practical assistance and proactive support for parents, induction groups)					
Flexibility (e.g. work-related curriculum, earlier access to vocational courses, flexible approach to homework)					
High expectations (e.g. using positive role models, monitoring performance data, clear expectations of behaviour)					
Partnership (e.g. with pupils, parents, other schools, TESS and other agencies)					
Additional constructive conditions					

## **Background**

The National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER), in partnership with Brian Foster from the Inner London Traveller Education Consortium and Chris Derrington, an independent consultant, is conducting a three-year study on behalf of the DCSF, to investigate the improvement of educational outcomes for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils. The research, which is focused predominantly on Key Stages 2-4, involves four main components; a longitudinal analysis of national data, progress mapping in 200 schools, a review of the literature (which has been published and is accessible from: <http://publications.dcsf.gov.uk/eOrderingDownload/DCSF-RR077.pdf>) and 20 case study visits. The final report will be published in 2010, together with details of the analytical techniques used. A summary of the findings from the case study phase is presented in this interim report.

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