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Moving forward together: Raising Gypsy, Roma and Traveller achievement

Booklet 1: Introduction



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Preface

This guidance aims to support schools and settings in promoting the progress and achievement of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils and gives essential background information for those involved in the teaching of these pupils. It has been produced as part of the DCSF action to raise the achievement of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils and will support schools in meeting their statutory duties in terms of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000.

The guidance materials consist of four interrelated booklets:

1. Introduction
2. Leadership and management
3. Learning and teaching
4. Engagement with parents, carers and the wider community

It is strongly recommended that Booklet 1: Introduction and Booklet 2: Leadership and management are both read before the other two, as they give the context for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children and young people in English schools and outline schools' overarching management responsibilities towards them.

The guidance materials aim to support schools to raise standards, narrow achievement gaps and accelerate progress through:

- an exploration of learning and teaching approaches that will maximise the achievement of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children and young people;
- providing conditions for learning that value diversity and build and promote self-confidence;
- challenging racism and promoting racial equality throughout the school;
- developing effective partnerships with parents, carers, families and communities.

In this way, Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils, like all children and young people, can be helped to achieve their full potential through equal access to – and full participation in – their education.

Key principles

- There are no inherent reasons why a child from a Gypsy, Roma or Traveller community should not achieve as well as any other child.
- High-quality teaching and effective Assessment for Learning (AfL), plus appropriate specialist interventions, supported by school leaders, are key factors in improving the achievement of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children and young people, as groups and as individuals.
- Achievement will only occur through the combined efforts of school, child and home.

Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities

Throughout these guidance materials, reference is made to Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils, parents and communities. This collective grouping includes:

- Gypsies
- Scottish Travellers or Gypsies
- Welsh Gypsies or Travellers
- Roma
- Travellers of Irish heritage
- show people
- fairground families
- circus families
- New Travellers
- bargee or canal-boat families.

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Key messages

- Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children and young people have the same rights as all others to unhindered access to education.
- Because of a long history of racial prejudice and discrimination, many Gypsy, Roma and Traveller families are reluctant to declare their true ethnicity voluntarily. Schools have a duty to create an inclusive culture that encourages all parents and pupils to be confident in ascribing themselves to their appropriate ethnic group, either when they first join the school or at some later point.
- Attainment trends demonstrate that, while attainment levels for most groups have improved, for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils these levels have deteriorated. Research studies have consistently identified Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils as the group most at risk in the education system. However, research evidence also confirms that, when Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils are given the right learning environment and experiences, they can be equally as successful as any other group.

Introduction

All schools should be aware of the well-documented and longstanding record of poor educational opportunities and outcomes for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children. Gypsies were early immigrants to these shores, as long ago as the sixteenth century, and their experience has been characterised by a long history of discrimination, victimisation and social exclusion. Their marginalised status, born of negative attitudes and low public esteem, has resulted in problematic and restricted access to public services. This situation accounts for very low educational achievement for these pupils as a group. As a result, there is a need for clear, well-structured guidance for schools to arrest the trend and remedy the current position.

The representation of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller groups as a focus of educational concern should not be seen as a deficit model of the lifestyle and culture of all or any of these groups. Individual children from these communities can and do achieve as well as pupils from other groups. It is not the intention of this guidance to suggest, directly or indirectly, that Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities are universally suffering a lack of educational opportunities or are necessarily the victims of poverty and economic exclusion. Across the United Kingdom and Europe there is a significant and growing Gypsy, Roma and Traveller middle class that is well educated at academic and professional levels, economically successful and socially integrated, with no sacrifice of ethnic or cultural identity. In order neither to create nor confirm stereotypes, it is important to avoid making generalisations.

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The materials in this guidance are intended to help schools respond to the above factors and to take urgent action to shift Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils from the periphery of the education system to the very centre.

From the periphery to the centre

The longstanding record of poor educational opportunities and outcomes for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children and young people has repeatedly been drawn to national attention by the work of researchers and of Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools (HMI).

In 1971 the government asked the Schools Council to commission a research study into the educational situation of Gypsy and Traveller children. This was seen as:

...a timely response to the rediscovery that most Gypsy and other nomadic children were receiving irregular or, in many cases, no schooling.

The Education of Travelling Children (Reiss 1975)

The research study made a range of recommendations, including some 'on-site' teaching provision in the form of temporary or mobile classrooms. Issues of access and regular attendance were seen as a high priority at that time; despite the development of some out-of-school provision by both local authorities (LAs) and the voluntary sector, the eventual policy objective was towards directing the children to mainstream schools, with appropriate support in terms of resources and expertise.

By the late 1970s many LAs were developing rudimentary Traveller Education Support Services (TESS). These were mainly funded under what was known as the 'No area pool' arrangements, which allowed LAs to take funding from a central pool of finance for covering the unexpected and contingency demands they faced periodically. Gypsy and Traveller communities were added to this category list. However, with the reform of local government finance in 1988, the 'No area' arrangements came to an end, which meant that funding for TESS had to be found elsewhere. A new specific grant was introduced in 1990 under Section 210 of the relevant education legislation: The 1988 Education Reform Act, Section 210, New Specific Grant for the Education of Gypsy and Traveller Children.

Despite these developments, official concern continued in regard to the relatively poor educational standards attained by Gypsy and Traveller children. The first HMI report on the situation was published in 1982. The HMI report on the achievement of minority ethnic pupils published in 1999 commented that Gypsy Traveller children were still the group most at risk in the education system. Their most recent report, published in 2003, continued to flag up the seriousness of the situation and hints at frustration with the seeming lack of progress in the intervening 20 years.

The vast majority of Traveller pupils linger on the periphery of the education system. The situation has persisted for too long and the alarm bells rung in earlier reports have yet to be heeded.

Provision and support for Traveller pupils (Ofsted 2003)

HMI were not alone in flagging up their concerns on this matter. *Education for all* – the Swann Report (HMSO 1985), on the education of minority ethnic communities in Britain commented:

In many respects the situation in which the travellers' children find themselves also illustrates to an extreme degree the experience of prejudice and alienation which faces many other ethnic minority children.

Over recent years, however, efforts have been made to secure unhindered access to public services for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities, and particularly in the field of education. With the slowly improving situation surrounding access to schools, allied to the fact that these communities are characterised by varying levels of national and international mobility, it is likely that any school may have pupils on roll from any or all of these backgrounds at some time.

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The initial focus of concern about early education, by both government and LAs, related to issues of access and attendance. In this context, the Swann Report also commented:

...many of the particular educational needs of travellers' children arise because of difficulties in gaining access to the education system at all.

In the past, many Gypsy, Roma and Traveller parents have been discouraged from enrolling their children at schools because of their unhappy and painful memories of their own frequently short encounters with formal education. In addition, some parents found that the practical demands of a nomadic lifestyle were at odds with the routines of regular school attendance. Some parents may well have been uncertain of the procedures required for enrolling their children at local schools. Past experience had repeatedly led them to believe that some local schools were not accessible to them.

There is also evidence that some schools disregarded their legal duties when it came to the admission of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children. Schools exercised discriminatory behaviour by refusing to admit the children from these communities. Some schools were able to offer only limited numbers of places to children, even of the same family, because of availability. Parents found such restrictions both threatening and confusing. Many parents wished that all their children should stay together, particularly for the sake of the younger siblings, motivated by concern for their children entering an unfamiliar institution.

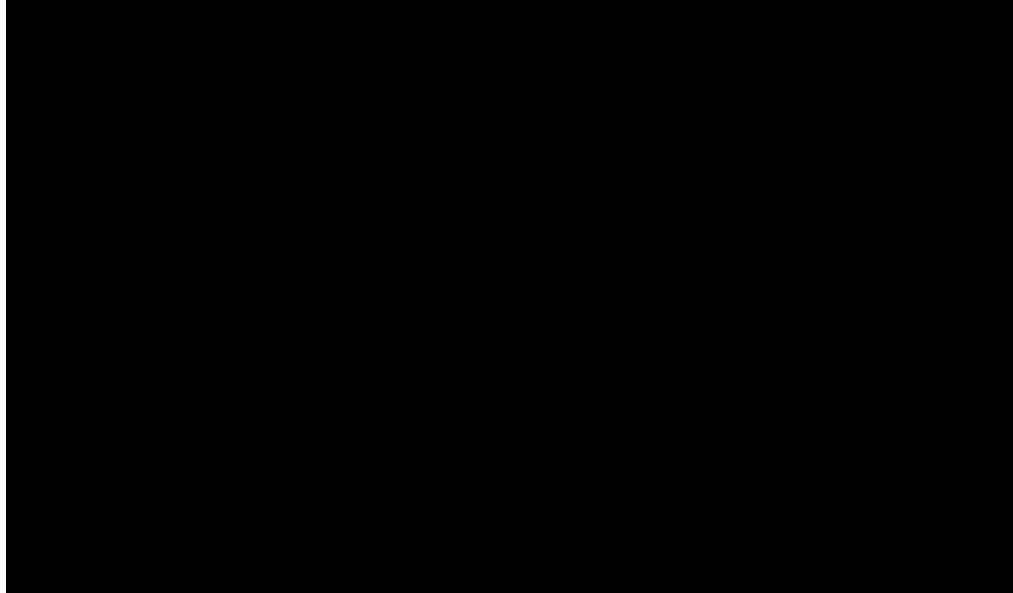
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Recently, LAs and schools have taken their duties towards these marginalised communities more seriously. The vast majority of LAs have established TESS and these have been part-funded over the last 30 years by a succession of central government funding programmes. These services vary in size but their current primary function is to work jointly with schools and other agencies to ensure that LAs fulfil their statutory responsibilities to secure the access, regular attendance and satisfactory levels of achievement for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children. All LAs that have three or more Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils in any one cohort are now required to set targets on pupils' progress and attainment at Key Stages 2 and 4. As a result of the work of local authorities' TESS, a significant cohort of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children now happily access both Early Years settings and primary schools in many parts of the country. However, successful transfer to secondary schooling and beyond remains a matter of continuing concern.

The evidence coming from LAs' TESS has repeatedly confirmed that access to education and regular attendance are often undermined for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children and young people by incidents of real or perceived racist bullying. The reality of this situation has been confirmed by one research study after another (see Chris Derrington, 2004, and Franks and Ureche, 2007). These fears are also shared by Gypsy, Roma and Traveller parents; it is well established that racist bullying is one of the principle reasons for the widespread non-attendance and/or premature dropout from secondary education.

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LA data suggests that there is a very significant and growing cohort of secondary-aged Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils who are either not transferring to secondary school or dropping out of school during Key Stage 3. In 1996 an HMI Ofsted report estimated that 10,000 secondary Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils were not registered with schools. The subsequent HMI report of 2003 drew attention to the worsening situation in this regard.

This survey indicates no decrease in these numbers and estimates that the figure could now be closer to 12,000. Despite examples of success by some services, the picture at the secondary phase remains a matter of very serious concern.

Provision and support for Traveller pupils (Ofsted 2003)

This HMI report went on to compare the situation of Traveller children to the improving situation of the majority, as demonstrated through Ofsted Section 5 school inspection reports.

The most recent annual report (Ofsted, 2003) from Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools stated that 'the education system is doing better and better for more and more pupils. But the system continues to fall short for a significant number of pupils and students, particularly

those for whom "academic" learning does not come easily.' The results of this inspection clearly indicate that Traveller pupils continue to make up a small but very worrying proportion of those pupils and students. The situation is at its most serious at the secondary phase and in this respect has changed little since the earlier HMI inspection reports. They are the one minority ethnic group which is too often 'out of sight and out of mind'.

In 2002, the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) introduced the Aiming High strategy, which was specifically focused on raising the achievement of minority ethnic pupils. In the summer of 2003 the Department published *A Guide to Good Practice*, to assist LAs and schools in developing policy, provision and practice in accordance with the principles of good practice.

In autumn 2006 the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) initiated the National Strategies' Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Achievement Programme. Since then, the work has progressed steadily; this guidance is seen as an essential part of the planned programme of DCSF-approved actions in disseminating good practice more widely. The LAs in the programme have worked in a large number of schools, but the programme has also been the catalyst for the publication of a range of supportive documentation. For additional guidance in relation to the Early Years Foundation Stage see *Building Futures: Developing trust*, a focus on provision for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (due to be published in Autumn 2009). The National Strategies' guidance and training materials for learners of English as an additional language (EAL) complement this guidance, as does that offered within the New Arrivals Excellence Programme (DCSF 2007). Initiatives by the DCSF in 2007 on educational inclusion and community cohesion are also highly relevant to work with this group of pupils and their families.

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Efforts within the UK to improve the educational situation of these communities should not be seen as isolated attempts to help a number of small, disadvantaged groups, but as part of a much wider pan-European mission to protect human rights and provide educational equality for Europe's largest minority ethnic community, with an estimated population of approximately 15 million.

Improving ascription

Gypsy and Roma people have been recognised as a racial group since 1988; Travellers of Irish heritage received legal recognition as a racial group in 2000. Gypsy, Roma, Travellers of Irish heritage and Scottish Travellers are therefore protected by race relations legislation. In 2000, the DfES introduced ethnic group monitoring within the Annual School Census. Since 2003 the two minority ethnic groups of Gypsy or Roma and Travellers of Irish heritage have been included as ethnic categories.

Other groups traditionally included within the generic terminology of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller are fairground families, show people, circus families, New Travellers and bargees or canal-boat families. These latter groups do not have minority ethnic status and are not specifically listed as categories within the Annual School Census. However, schools should respond to the educational needs of these children, taking into account their particular and special circumstances and the demands and constraints placed on many in relation to their nomadic lifestyle.

The UK government, in common with administrations across Europe, has very limited statistical and ethnographic data on these communities, their actual population cohorts, size of families, numbers of children and the communities' access to and uptake of public services. A recent report on Roma, published by the European Union (2004), emphasises the data-deficient environment surrounding Gypsy, Roma and Traveller families and suggests a possible connection to the racial and social status of the communities. It suggests that responsible governments should establish reliable data as a foundation for establishing positive policy responses to identified need.

At the time of the inclusion of these two ethnic categories within the Annual School Census, it was recognised that voluntary ethnic self-ascription rates would be low, given a number of complex reasons pertinent to these particular communities. The ethnically disaggregated data generated by the Annual School Census has revealed cohort sizes for Gypsy, Roma and Travellers of Irish heritage that appear to be at odds with both the data held by LAs' TESS and the estimates of the DCSF. These data sources all suggest that the actual number of children may be anything from 50 per cent to 70 per cent larger than the official ascription cohort size. In order to strengthen the quality of information arising from the Annual School Census in relation to Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils, the DCSF has been concerned to enhance the level of voluntary self-ascription by these groups. Further guidance is given in *The inclusion of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children and young people* (DCSF 2008).

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Both the oral and written history of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller of Irish heritage communities confirm the reality of racist persecution and discrimination faced by these communities over many centuries. Many parents are thus concerned not to expose their children to the negative and damaging impact of prejudice and discrimination at school. They make judgements in this context, based on their own difficult experiences of school, and fear the manifestation of prejudice in the form of teachers' attitudes and racist bullying by peers. Without sufficient support and the confidence of a strong school ethos of welcome and inclusion at the point of registration, a majority of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller parents are disinclined to record their children's ethnic status as Gypsy, Roma or Traveller of Irish heritage. The 'White other' or 'White British' boxes are much safer alternatives for completing the form, which is frequently completed in front of the administrative staff of the school.

LAs and schools also need to be aware of the particular circumstances of Roma immigrant families from Central and Eastern Europe. (Some families may be asylum seekers or refugees, but a majority now are migrant workers who are legitimatised within the UK as migrant labour by the Treaty of Accession of the European Union 2003.) Most of these families have come to the UK to escape both poverty and racist abuse and discrimination in their home countries. These families will be anxious about declaring their ethnic status, as opposed to their nationality status, when in the UK. Many of these families will have suffered gross discrimination in education in their country of origin, which will have frequently resulted in their children ending up in either substandard segregated schools or special schools for those with learning disabilities. Although empirical evidence is slight, some of these families are reported to be very pleased to be in the UK, with the opportunities that schools appear to offer their children. Their appearance does not unleash the extreme and abusive treatment that many Roma have traditionally received in their countries of origin. However, fears exist and may also relate to the families' lack of confidence in speaking, reading and writing in English.

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In addition to the factors above, a significant number of Gypsies, Roma and Travellers who reside in houses may feel intimidated in ascribing to the ethnic status of Gypsy or Roma or Traveller of Irish heritage when registering their children at school. They may be acutely aware of the potential for such a declaration to invoke racially prejudiced behaviour, both for their children in the school setting and for their family as a whole, within the local community. Some families may also feel that schools will raise potentially embarrassing issues, in the mistaken belief that once Gypsies or Travellers settle in a house they, in some strange way, shed their ethnic minority status. This ill-informed attitude is prevalent within both schools and the population at large.

It is recognised that for a significant number of families the actual terminology of the two categories as 'Gypsy or Roma' and 'Traveller of Irish heritage' may, in fact, be a disincentive to self-ascribe. For example, for those families where the parents are of mixed heritage, there is no appropriate box to tick. The DCSF has thus recently changed the terminology relating to the ethnic categorisation for these two ethnic-minority groups. This is intended to encourage more parents to feel sufficiently confident to ascribe with greater accuracy. The new categories are 'Gypsy', 'Roma' and 'Traveller', with the last term enabling further specification of heritage by including a sub-category tick-box of 'Irish' or 'Scottish'.

Schools need to be aware that they have a duty to create circumstances conducive to Gypsy, Roma and Travellers of Irish heritage feeling sufficiently confident in them to ascribe their children voluntarily within their accurate category determination. This is part of their general duties under the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000, to promote equal opportunity and good race relations.

Raising attainment

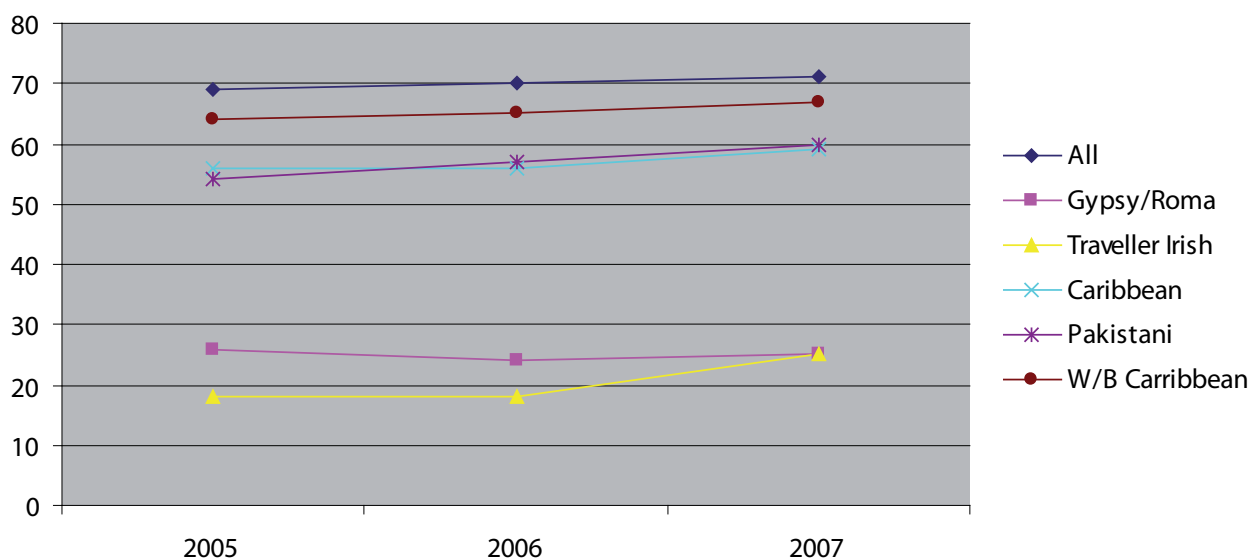
Using data appropriately is a crucial first step in identifying and tackling the underperformance of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils. Schools must ensure that pupil-tracking mechanisms, target setting and access to appropriate intervention strategies are in place for these pupils. This is a key challenge for schools with a stable community – even more so for schools with mobile populations. The use of nationally agreed and self-ascribed ethnicity categories enables schools to collect, record and analyse Gypsy, Roma and Traveller data. Such data becomes most robust when it contains information about the majority of pupils in any ethnicity category. Hence the need to maximise the accurate ascription of pupils within ethnicity categories.

The educational achievement for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils is recorded as being consistently low. Schools need to be aware of these national trends, this history of underachievement and to analyse their school data in this context. However, given the current inaccurate levels of ascription, schools need to use all Gypsy, Roma and Traveller data with caution. As stated in the Ethnicity and Education report (DfES 2005):

Both Gypsy/Traveller groups have extremely low attainment. Although it is estimated that many children are not recorded in the annual school census, are not present during Key Stage assessments and/or do not continue in education up until Key Stage 4, for those who have a recorded result, attainment is low.

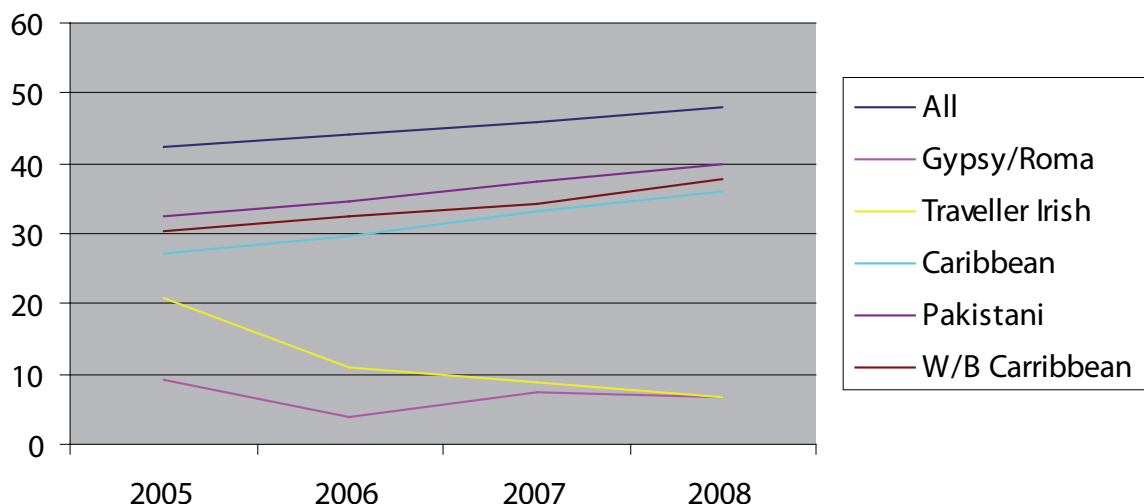
This low attainment has persisted, as is shown below.

Numbers of pupils achieving at least level 4 in English and mathematics by the end of Key Stage 2



Numbers of pupils achieving at least five grades A*-C, including English and mathematics, by the end of Key Stage 4

KS4 5A*-C including English and mathematics



The 2008 threshold data, shown below, reveals some worrying outcomes in relation to the attainment and progress of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller of Irish heritage pupils at all key stages.

Early Years Foundation Stage

Nationally, 49.5 per cent of Gypsy or Roma children and 52 per cent of Traveller children of Irish heritage groups are in the bottom 20 per cent of the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile. In relation to their population this is an over-representation. In relation to specific scales there are considerable gaps when looking at those groups that achieve a 'good level of development': that is, achieving 78 points or more across all 13 scales, including 6+ in all four Communication, language and literacy development scales and 6+ in all three Personal, social and emotional development scales.

Early Years Foundation Stage		
	Good level of development	Gap with all pupils
Traveller of Irish heritage	19%	30%
Gypsy or Roma	16%	33%
All children	49%	

However, the gaps can be even wider within specific scales (2008 data), for example in calculating and reading.

Key Stage 1						
These gaps widen by the end of Key Stage 1.						
	Reading level 2+	Writing level 2+	Mathematics level 2+	Reading level 2+	Writing level 2+	Mathematics level 2+
				Gap with all pupils		
Traveller of Irish heritage	32%	28%	52%	52%	52%	38%
Gypsy or Roma	37%	34%	57%	47%	46%	33%
All pupils	84%	80%	90%			

Key Stage 2				
Wide gaps persist at Key Stage 2.				
	English level 4+	Mathematics level 4+	English level 4+	Mathematics level 4+
			Gap with all pupils	
Traveller of Irish heritage	33%	30%	48%	48%
Gypsy or Roma	40%	39%	41%	39%
All pupils	81%	78%		

Key Stage 4						
	Any pass (G+ grades) at GCSE	5 A*-C grades at GCSE	5 A*-C grades at GCSE, including English and mathematics	Any pass (G+ grades) at GCSE	5 A*-C grades at GCSE	5 A*-C grades at GCSE, including English and mathematics
				Gap with all pupils		
Traveller of Irish heritage	71.6 %	17.4%	7.3%	26.6%	46.1%	40.5%
Gypsy or Roma	84.8 %	15.7 %	6.8%	13.4%	47.8%	41.0%
All pupils	98.2%	63.5%	47.8%			

Further attainment data is also now available to indicate where pupils are making the expected rates of progress between key stages. For the progression rates between Key Stages 1 and 2, and between Key Stages 2 and 4, analysis of the available data shows low rates of progress for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils.

Two levels of progress at Key Stages 1-2 (2007 data)				
	English	Mathematics	English	Mathematics
			Gap with all pupils	
Gypsy, Roma and Traveller	66.3%	54.5%	17.3%	38.4%
All pupils	83.6%	75.9%		

3+ levels of progress Key Stages 2-4 (2007 data)				
	English	Mathematics	English	Mathematics
			Gap with all pupils	
Gypsy, Roma and Traveller	23.0%	15.5%	38%	38.4%
All pupils	61.0%	53.9%		

For Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils this is an especially worrying trend as the data inevitably represents the achievement rates of the least mobile pupils. In order to feature in this data analysis, by definition, pupils have to have relatively stable attendance at a particular school. However, despite the relative stability for this group, their achievement rates are still significantly lower than those of their peers.

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Using the specific categories of Gypsy or Roma and Traveller of Irish heritage, identified through the Annual Schools Census, the DCSF is able to identify trends and gaps relating to a number of educationally significant factors, such as rates of achievement and attendance, identification of special educational needs (SEN) and rates of exclusion. This data monitoring enables the cross reference of other factors that contribute to underachievement, such as eligibility for Free School Meals (FSM) among these communities. In this regard it is significant to note that these poverty indicators are only marginal contributors to the underachievement of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils; the causes of their underachievement lie beyond these factors.

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RAISEonline provides a common set of analyses for schools, LAs, inspectors and school improvement partners.

Individual schools have online access to the data on their website. This provides interactive analysis of school and pupil performance data, which schools can use to improve learning and teaching. The website offers the facility to generate analyses and reports covering the attainment and progress of pupils in Key Stages 1, 2 and 4, with interactive features allowing exploration of hypotheses about pupils' performance.

Key features include:

- contextual information about the school, including comparisons to schools nationally;
- the percentage achieving level 4+ in English and mathematics at Key Stage 2;
- the percentage of pupils attaining five A*–C passes at GCSE, including English and mathematics;
- prior and current attainment and progress data: the proportion of pupils making two levels of progress between Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 in English and mathematics, the proportion making at least three levels of progress between Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4 in English and mathematics;
- contextual value-added data;
- attendance data;
- question-level analysis, allowing schools to investigate the performance of pupils in specific curricular areas;
- target setting, supporting schools in the process of monitoring, challenging and supporting pupils' performance;
- a data-management facility, providing the ability to import and edit pupil-level data and create school-defined fields and teaching groups, for example intervention groups, gifted and talented register, pupil exclusions, rewards and sanctions.

Wider issues impacting on Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities

Accommodation and mobility

Despite an earlier reference to the nomadic heritage of many within the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities, the current issue is more one of settlement than a totally nomadic lifestyle. Within the UK it is estimated that there are about 80,000 Gypsy and Traveller children, within the age group 0 to 16, who are semi-nomadic, although many live for most of the year on sites, either private or public. It is estimated that anything up to half a million members of these communities are living in fixed rather than mobile homes. It is also known, however, that many families periodically switch between a settled life and a nomadic one, depending on many different circumstances of family and economic life at any particular time.

Public sites are provided and maintained by local authorities nationally; most of these sites have been established in response to the 1968 Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act, which placed a duty on LAs to make adequate site provision for Gypsies and Travellers. Private sites are owned and run by private individuals, although most private sites are developed essentially to serve the needs of a particular Gypsy or Traveller extended family group.

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Despite these dual sources, it is officially recognised that there is a lack of authorised sites available for about a fifth of the families who require provision. As a consequence, many of these families are forced to locate their mobile homes on unauthorised sites. This places the children in situations of considerable risk in terms of 'staying safe and being healthy', and reduces any realistic hope of routine access to local schools.

The Government is taking steps to increase the number of sites available, although it is likely to be many years before sufficient pitches are in place. Within the Planning Act 2004, LAs were required for the first time to include the site accommodation needs of Gypsy and Traveller families in their 'Housing Needs Assessments'. This process has led to each LA being informed of the number of site pitches that it must make available for Gypsy and Traveller communities, in relation to the identification of suitable land upon which sites may be located either by public authorities or the private market. On many occasions, the European Court of Human Rights has ruled that Gypsies and Travellers have a right to their nomadic heritage and lifestyle and for this to be recognised and respected by central governments and LAs. It is thus important for schools also to acknowledge these issues.

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Many Gypsy, Roma and Traveller families live in substandard accommodation where the utility infrastructure is weak or non-existent. The lack of adequate sanitary and washing arrangements can be a serious hindrance to families wishing to get their young children to school every day. This situation is frequently exacerbated by a relatively high incidence of environmentally aggravated child health problems and infections. When the early childhood education provision is located some distance from their home, some Gypsy, Roma and Traveller families may be seriously disadvantaged because of a lack of realistic access to private or public transport facilities.

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Parent and community support

Schools and their educational partners need to be conscious of a number of potential constraints on parents of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children in playing a full role in the education of their children. Many parents have unhappy memories of their own school experiences and, because of the endemic prejudice their community receives in society at large, many may also hesitate to visit the schools their children attend.

It is also reported that Gypsy, Roma and Traveller parents are very sensitive to the feelings of their children, who are sometimes exposed to situations in which they may experience and suffer social rejection and unhappiness. Far from this being an implicit statement of a lack of parental concern, it is more likely to betray an astute awareness on the part of parents to the potentially damaging impact of racist abuse and the resultant devaluing of individual and cultural identity.

The evidence also suggests that many Roma and Traveller parents view the education of young children as the responsibility of the extended family and community rather than 'threatening' formal institutions. Some families may thus claim that the extended Roma family is quite capable of providing adequate socialisation and informal education, which provides family and community cohesion, coherence and security (see Franks and Ureche, 2007).

Fears and anxieties of both pupils and parents extend into areas such as:

- the perceived relevance of the secondary-school curriculum;
- the pointlessness of working hard at school and then being unable to penetrate the anticipated prejudice and discrimination in the labour market;
- the erosion of cultural values, which are seen as an essential part of community identity.

These fears can also act as a hindrance to admission to school in the first place.

Practical issues, such as the isolation of many of their encampments, mean that some Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities have had very limited opportunities to experience active involvement with public services and community participation and are often under-represented. For example, nationally, there are very few Gypsy, Roma or Traveller parents acting as school governors. Schools should encourage co-option of members of these communities to ensure wider community representation and a tangible contribution to good race relations and community cohesion.

For some Roma migrant families, the lack of appropriate child and family documentation, for example birth certificates and personal identity papers, may still be a factor undermining access, particularly to early childhood education. Many families find the burden of bureaucracy in a foreign language too complex to deal with, or cannot afford the associated costs of school attendance such as transport, meals, clothing and extracurricular activities. The sharp rise in the levels of Roma unemployment, resulting from the change to market economies in Central and Eastern Europe, is seen as a key factor in the reduction of numbers of Roma pupils participating in early childhood education in many of these countries; hence, when the children come to the UK they may have missed the essential Early Years educational experiences.

Gypsy, Roma and Traveller culture

Policymakers and practitioners need to be aware of the cultural capital within Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities that can be tapped to provide much enrichment to educational provision at all levels. These strengths should be noted so that any prejudicial views held by policymakers and practitioners towards Gypsy, Roma and Traveller culture and socialisation processes are countered and challenged.

A strength of the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller extended family is that it provides a very secure context for early child development and subsequent adult happiness and well-being. From an early age, children are treated with respect from adults and, within the secure social environment, they are able to absorb oral history and Gypsy, Roma and Traveller folklore.

These communities have a rich linguistic and cultural heritage. Many Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children are bilingual or multilingual; research suggests that this has positive advantages over monolingualism in terms of potential intellectual development. It is reported in recent research findings that, because of the linguistic and cultural strengths within the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller families and community, most children from an early age can narrate a story and understand riddles, teasing and jokes, on the basis of an expanding lexicon and an ability to formulate complex sentences (see Kyuchukov 2007). This cultural capital needs to be acknowledged.

The response to school of Travelling pupils is crucially influenced by the travelling children's awareness of the level of their acceptance by teachers and other pupils. Where the presence of Travelling children is openly acknowledged, and where accurate and positive images of the different nomadic communities are featured within both the resources of the school and the curriculum, then the response is lively and there is an openness to learning.

Education of Travelling children (Ofsted 1996)

The principle vehicle by which schools can deliver an inclusive and responsive curriculum is through Quality First teaching. The overarching teaching and learning offer that is available to all pupils must reflect not only the communities present in a particular school, but also twenty-first century multi-racial and multi-cultural society.

It is important to recognise, however, that the ethos that attempts to include all children, families and communities within a framework of equal educational opportunities must include marginal groups who, too frequently, remain the victims of discrimination and social exclusion. This requires an honest appraisal of professional integrity, knowledge and skills, which the publication of these materials is intended to support and develop.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Communities and cultural context

Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils do not constitute one homogenous group. In the past four decades the term 'Traveller' has been used to describe a wide variety of cultural and ethnic groups that either are, or have been, traditionally associated with a nomadic lifestyle. The term then became useful shorthand for a range of different groups, including Gypsy, Roma, Travellers of Irish heritage, fairground families or show people, circus families, New Travellers and bargees or canal-boat families. However, its continued use as a generic term may be considered to be unhelpful and potentially discriminatory, as it does not recognise specific ethnic characteristics.

The term 'Traveller' started to be adopted in the 1960s to avoid the use of derogatory references such as 'gypsies' and 'tinkers'. The use of the generic term for all of these otherwise heterogeneous groups was more for the benefit of officialdom than to oblige any expressed wishes for self-ascription within the different communities themselves. Given the legal terminology surrounding the minority ethnic status of the two main groups, 'Gypsy/Roma' and 'Travellers of Irish heritage', and the need to be inclusive, it would seem now that the most appropriate terminology to describe the groups collectively would be 'Gypsy, Roma and Traveller'. This manages to incorporate respect for felt and perceived cultural differences with the need for manageable semantic terminology. This approach has been adopted by the DCSF.

Previously, lower-case letters were commonly used for terms such as 'Gypsy' and 'Traveller'. There has been a long battle to ensure that the correct spelling, together with capital letters, is common practice. The Oxford English Dictionary now uses the spelling 'Gypsy' (not 'Gipsy'), and also initial capital letters for 'Gypsy' and 'Traveller'. It should be noted, however, that some press continue to practise and therefore reinforce cultural and ethnic disrespect.

Gypsies

Within this group there are a large number of different ascribed or self-ascribed terms. These include non-derogatory words such as 'Gypsies', 'Romany', 'Romany Gypsies', 'Travellers', 'Traditional Travellers', 'Romanichals', 'Romanichal Gypsies', 'Scottish Travellers or Gypsies', 'Nawkens', 'Welsh Gypsies or Travellers', 'Kale' and 'Roma'. Although the Council of Europe has accepted that the terms 'Roma' and 'Traveller' are generally acceptable in collectively describing all European Gypsies (and Travellers), there are many different groups that may have geographical or territorial associations and are ascribed and or self-ascribed as, for example, 'Vlach Rom', 'Rom', 'Kalderash', 'Manouche', 'Sinte', 'Tattare', 'Kaale', 'Cale', 'Lavari', 'Ursari', 'Boyhas' and 'Luri'.

Millions of Gypsy or Roma people speak the Romani language, making it one of the principal minority languages of Europe. Romani is an Indic language, closely related to modern Hindi, which developed in the European diaspora under the influence of a number of other languages, most notably Byzantine Greek. There are over a hundred dialects of Romani and, although in the past there have been efforts to deny the legitimacy of Romani as a language, with some scholars classifying it as a form of jargon, there is now broad consensus among linguists as to the wealth and unity of the Romani language. The Romani spoken by English Gypsies is known as pogadi jib (broken tongue) and a number of TESS report that it is spoken as a first language within some Gypsy families. The majority of Central and Eastern European Roma speak Romani.

Roma

The term 'Roma', although covering a large number of different groups, relates back to the Rom tribe, who were the main group to travel through Europe from the Indian subcontinent in around the tenth century.

A small number of Roma families migrated to and through the UK from different parts of Europe in the post-war years up until the late 1980s. However, with the collapse of communism in the states of Central and Eastern Europe, many more Roma families migrated to the UK, seeking asylum. This was granted to a minority while the majority suffered deportation. However, much larger numbers of Roma were able to migrate to the UK following the accession to the European Union (EU) of the eight new countries in May 2004. Other Roma have come to the UK since the subsequent accession of Romania and Bulgaria to the EU in January 2007.

Travellers of Irish heritage

A range of terminology is also used in relation to Travellers with an Irish heritage. These are either ascribed or self-ascribed to include 'Minceir', 'Travellers', 'Travelling People' and 'Travellers of Irish heritage'. Travellers of Irish heritage speak their own language, known as 'Gammon' or sometimes referred to as 'Cant', which is a language with many Romani loan words, but not thought to be a dialect of Romani itself.

Other Traveller communities

These communities include:

- show people and fairground families;
- circus families (Note that families with a range of national and ethnic backgrounds are frequently included within the same circus, so pupils in school may be learning English as an additional language.);
- New Travellers (New-Age Traveller, New-Age Gypsies);
- families and people living on boats (bargee, canal-boat and boat families).

Appendix 2: DCSF initiatives to raise the attainment of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils

The DCSF has taken a series of actions within the Narrowing the Gaps Division to initiate a range of strategies targeting vulnerable groups, including Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils.

Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Achievement Programme

The National Strategies, Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Achievement Programme was launched in September 2006, with 12 LAs and 45 schools and settings. In 2007 the programme was extended, with the addition of 10 more LAs and 40 more schools.

The aims of the programme were to pilot methodology and pedagogy aimed at improving outcomes for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils, and to disseminate existing and emerging good practice from these and other LAs through conferences and publications such as these guidance booklets.

Gypsy Roma Traveller History Month (GRTHM)

The inaugural GRTHM was launched in June 2008 and was aimed at schools. The month provided an opportunity to celebrate the achievements of all the Travelling communities, especially through the arts. The aim was to promote curriculum inclusion and community cohesion.

The DCSF has been proactive in encouraging educational publishers and LAs to publish materials that are more inclusive of the history, culture and languages of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities, in the interests of affirming cultural identity and improving the quality and accuracy of knowledge for all children within the curriculum.

In 2009 the National Association of Teachers of Travellers and other professionals (NATT+) was awarded DCSF funding to coordinate GRTHM activities.

Research

The DCSF's research programme is linked to two projects with a focus on Gypsy, Roma and Traveller issues:

- a. a longitudinal study, 'Improving the Outcomes of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Pupils', which encompasses a literature review and an in-depth analysis of schools' and pupils' experiences;
- b. a mapping exercise of Central and Eastern European Roma settlement in England, together with an analysis of their access to public services.

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