

Taskforce on Traveller Education –  
Report of the Taskforce  
to  
the Department of Education



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# Foreword - A Personal View from the Chairs of the Taskforce

- 1.0 At the inaugural meeting of the Taskforce on Traveller Education the Minister of Education stated that *'at the end of this process we want to see a clear plan of action to reduce inequalities and the poor outcomes in education experienced by many Traveller children and young people'*. Responsibility for drafting the Action Plan now passes to the Department. The Taskforce Report as well as the wider work of the Taskforce will hopefully play a key role in guiding this process. Towards this end it is useful to provide a number of pointers by way of introduction to this report.
- 1.1 It bears emphasis that there can be no doubting the scale of the challenge. It is clear that on a range of indicators – including attendance, achievement and the very high proportion of Traveller children identified as having 'special needs' – that Traveller children are profoundly disadvantaged in their experience of statutory education. The work of the Taskforce also exposed and highlighted other indices of Traveller exclusion from the education system. This is why the Taskforce was established and why there is a need for a Traveller – specific Action Plan.
- 1.2 It is also the case that there is no simple solution to the current situation. Moreover, addressing the challenge at a time of economic retrenchment makes resourcing new interventions particularly difficult. Despite this, Taskforce members were keen to insist that the Taskforce should look for radical solutions and set ambitious targets. The aspiration was for the Taskforce report to be 'bold'. It is important that Traveller educational disadvantage is not regarded as inevitable or immutable and that the opportunity to deliver real progress for Traveller children is grasped. Put simply, the task of the Taskforce was to draw on best practice from the existing Northern Ireland model alongside the British and Irish models in order to transform positively the experience of education of Traveller children and young people in the North of Ireland.
- 1.3 Some of the most positive outcomes of the Taskforce work are detailed in the following pages. First, there was recognition that there is an acute problem in terms of the education of Traveller children which needs analysing and remedying. Second, there was a collective commitment in principle to integration. Third, there is a detailed description of current provision/practice which will inform the action plan from the Department of Education. Fourth, the Taskforce exposed some of the limitations and tensions in Traveller education work and the need for new methodologies to overcome these. Finally, the work of the Taskforce made it clear that education cannot be transformed in isolation – the best education service in the world will not transform the educational experience of Traveller children unless there are concomitant improvements in the quality of life of Traveller children, particularly in terms of accommodation and health.
- 1.4 The key issue in terms of relationships within the sector is the current dynamic between the statutory education sector and the Traveller Support Movement (TSM)/Traveller community in the north. The statutory education sector has been too closed to alternate models of Traveller educational disadvantage – insistent that the defining issue is attendance – if Traveller attendance was improved, so the argument goes, Traveller achievement would follow. There is too little recognition of racism,

particularly institutional racism, and the way that this impacts on the education of Traveller children. For example, racist bullying may very directly negatively affect attendance. Moreover, the absence of Traveller role models in any positions of authority and responsibility within the system is further evidence of profound institutional exclusion.

- 1.5 Of course, Taskforce members, not least Traveller parents, recognised how important it is that attendance is improved. But improved attendance is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for transforming Traveller experience of education. The stark reality that the Taskforce could identify no Traveller teachers or classroom assistants or governors at all throughout the education system in Northern Ireland is indicative of how much other elements have to change in tandem with attendance. Moreover, mechanisms that cannot but inhibit attendance continue to operate – such as transporting children long distances away from local schools and ‘tolerating’ absence on the grounds of ethnic identity.
- 1.6 If the relationship between statutory and NGO partners is to be re-envisioned, it requires movement from the NGO sector as well. The TSM in the north is fairly weak at present. There is no organisation or worker dedicated specifically to track and critique education policy and practice despite the absolute certainty of educational disadvantage to more general Traveller disadvantage. It has also been challenging to sustain meaningful traveller participation in the process. If the statutory education sector in the north is to open itself to constructive engagement with the TSM it has to be presented with a robust and sustained analysis from the sector. The experience of the Taskforce suggests the only way to do this is to integrate best practice from the south of Ireland.
- 1.7 But it is equally important that Traveller education in Northern Ireland is grounded in acceptance of Traveller ethnicity and anti-Traveller racism – this places intervention solidly with the framework of racism and education. The Stephen Lawrence Inquiry and McPherson Report provided government with a radical new mechanism for measuring and transforming its performance vis-à-vis racism and inequality. Recognition of ‘institutional racism’ as a ‘collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture or ethnic origin’ allows us to move away from a simplistic blaming of individuals for ethnic inequality. There is no question that there has been a ‘collective failure’ to provide an appropriate educational service to Traveller children. The Department of Education Action Plan offers a unique opportunity to begin to put that right.
- 1.8 It is imperative that policy and practice in Northern Ireland should adopt that which is best in both ‘British’ and ‘Irish’ models. We can draw on the ‘British’ model in order to ground our analysis of Traveller educational disadvantage in an approach which is much more conscious of the key role that racism and ethnicity play in educational outcomes for Travellers. There is a particular need to pay close attention to lessons in terms of the understanding of the interface of educational and institutional racism. Our interventions should be cognisant of how best practice addresses the role of ethnicity and racism to overcome disadvantage and deliver equality. But policy and practice must also pay close regard to the grounded experience of Traveller education work in the south of Ireland. There is no need to ‘reinvent the wheel’ in the north when best practice in the south has already established what ‘works’ in terms of issues like access or attendance or achievement.

- 1.9 Traveller children constitute a tiny proportion of the whole school population in Northern Ireland – perhaps 0.5%. (Current enrolment figures suggest that less than 0.3% of the whole school population are Traveller children). In this regard, the specific focus of this Taskforce is only justifiable in terms of the educational inequality experienced by Traveller children. This inequality is indeed very marked. But the experience of Traveller children is also symbolic in a wider sense. Traveller education might be regarded as the key meter for the success of human rights and equality in education in the north of Ireland – of making sure that every school is a good school. The statutory sector, the Traveller Support Movement, Traveller parents and the wider Traveller community all have a crucial part to play in transforming Traveller education in the north of Ireland. It bears emphasis however, that, whatever else is argued, Traveller children are not to be blamed for their experience of and performance within the education system. It is up to the rest of us to improve that which needs to be improved and change that which needs to be changed. It is important that none of us loses sight of this reality - it is our collective responsibility to leave behind the collective failure of the past and to achieve educational justice and equality for Traveller children.



**Robbie McVeigh**



**Catherine Joyce**

August 2011

## Chapter 2 - Purpose of the Taskforce

- 2.0 Improving the educational achievement of Travellers is a significant factor in reducing inequalities and encouraging their full inclusion in society. In recognition of this, on 15th September 2008, the then Minister of Education, Caitríona Ruane established the Taskforce on Traveller Education. The Taskforce is cross-sectoral and includes members of the Traveller Community, representatives from a range of non-government organisations, as well as government Departments and public bodies from all of Ireland. The aim of the Taskforce is to assist the Department develop an action plan on Traveller education.
- 2.1 The Department of Education (DE) is committed to working towards raising the attendance and achievement level of Traveller children to a par with other children (including other minority ethnic groups). *Every School a Good School: a Policy for School Improvement*<sup>1</sup> specifically mentions Travellers as one of the groups that require a particular focus to close the gap in achievement.
- 2.2 The Department recognises the importance of partnership working and developing key relationships in this work area between government departments, their agencies and the voluntary sector.
- 2.3 Two joint chairs for the Taskforce were appointed, Catherine Joyce, a Dublin-based Traveller rights activist and former chair of the Irish Traveller Movement and Dr Robbie McVeigh, a Derry-based human rights activist and researcher on racism and sectarianism, equality and human rights. Through the course of its work there were 37 members of the Taskforce in total. The Membership was as detailed in [Appendix 1](#).
- 2.4 **It is acknowledged that the participation of individuals in the Taskforce does not constitute statutory advice provided to the Minister of Education by the organisations to which they are affiliated nor is this report a representation of the views of any of those organisations.**
- 2.5 The Department drafted the following terms of reference for the Taskforce which were endorsed at its inaugural meeting on 18th November 2008.
1. To review the educational needs of Traveller children and the current delivery of services.
  2. To consider best practice models.
  3. To actively consult with members of the Traveller community in relation to the work of the Taskforce.
  4. To make recommendations to improve educational access, attainment and outcomes for Traveller children in pre-school, primary, post-primary and youth provision.

<sup>1</sup> [http://www.deni.gov.uk/index/85-schools/03-schools\\_impvt\\_prog\\_pg/03-every-school-a-good-school-a-policy-for-school-improvement.htm](http://www.deni.gov.uk/index/85-schools/03-schools_impvt_prog_pg/03-every-school-a-good-school-a-policy-for-school-improvement.htm)

5. To assist the Department to develop an agreed action plan for both the statutory and non-statutory sector to see how together improved educational outcomes can be achieved by all Traveller children.
6. To monitor the action plan over a two year period on a six monthly basis.
7. To inform the National Traveller Monitoring and Advisory Committee in the south of Ireland.
8. To ensure that recommendations for improvements are underpinned by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the child (1) (UNCRC)<sup>2</sup> and other relevant equality and human rights legislation;

(1) Article 2: protection against discrimination

Article 12: right to have a voice

Article 28: education on the basis of equal opportunity

Article 29: education with respect for child's parents, cultural identity, language and values.

### **Work of the Taskforce**

- 2.6 The Taskforce met a total of 13 times between November 2008 and June 2011.<sup>3</sup>
- 2.7 While it was not part of the remit of the Taskforce to offer recommendations on the areas of health, accommodation or employment opportunities, the Taskforce recognised the inter-relatedness of education with those issues and the need for inter-departmental or inter-agency working.
- 2.8 Six thematic sub-groups were established to complete more detailed work and make recommendations in the following areas:
  - Early Years and Transitions
  - Special Educational Needs
  - Interculturalism and Racism
  - Primary Education
  - Post-primary and Youth
  - Further and Lifelong Learning and Skills for Life and Work
- 2.9 It was agreed by the Taskforce that issues such as aspiration and inclusion should be principles that ran through all sub-groups and therefore would not require separate groups.
- 2.10 Each sub-group was chaired by a member of the Taskforce and sub-groups engaged in consultation with the Traveller community or had a representative from

<sup>2</sup> <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/crc.htm>

<sup>3</sup> Information on the meetings including agendas and minutes can be accessed on the Department of Education's website at the following link: [www.deni.gov.uk/index/21-pupils-parents-pg/18\\_pupils\\_parents-travellers\\_pg/taskforce\\_on\\_traveller\\_education](http://www.deni.gov.uk/index/21-pupils-parents-pg/18_pupils_parents-travellers_pg/taskforce_on_traveller_education)

the Traveller community. An analysis of the sub-groups' recommendations can be found in the Sectoral Analysis section of this report.

## Chapter 3 - Legal Framework

- 3.0 The Taskforce terms of reference included a requirement to ‘ensure that recommendations for improvements are underpinned by the **Convention on the Rights of the child (1) (UNCRC)**<sup>4</sup> and other relevant equality and human rights legislation’. **Articles 2, 12, 28, and 29** of the Convention are particularly relevant to the work of the Taskforce and full details can be found in [Appendix 2](#).
- 3.1 Irish Travellers are specifically recognised as a ‘racial group’ and named as such in the race relations and anti-discrimination legislation which governs statutory approaches to Travellers. Traveller identity as a ‘racial group’ was placed on a statutory footing by the **Race Relations (Northern Ireland) Order 1997**<sup>5</sup>:
- In this Order “racial grounds” ... includes the grounds of belonging to the Irish Traveller community, that is to say the community of people commonly so called who are identified (both by themselves and by others) as people with a shared history, culture and traditions including, historically, a nomadic way of life on the island of Ireland [and] “racial group” includes the Irish Traveller community. (1997: 9)
- 3.2 Under **Section 75 (1 & 2) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998**<sup>6</sup>, there is a statutory obligation for a public authority in carrying out its functions to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity “*between persons of different racial groups*” and also to have regard to “*the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different racial groups*”. This includes relations between Travellers and non-Travellers. Although individual schools are not under obligation to comply with Section 75, the Department of Education and the Education and Library Boards are obliged to do so.
- 3.3 The **Human Rights Act 1998**<sup>7</sup> which incorporates the **European Convention on Human Rights** into domestic law in the UK provides important context for Traveller education. There is particular relevance to Traveller education in Article 8 (respect for private and family life), Article 14 (enjoyment of ECHR rights without discrimination) and Protocol 1, Article 2 (right to education). Article 6 and Article 12 of the **Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities** are also relevant to the work of the Taskforce.<sup>8</sup>
- 3.4 Statutory education is structured by these key legislative interventions. It is also informed by the **Northern Ireland Race Equality Strategy**. This provides key context for broad policy development. Travellers are also specifically named as a part of - and integrated into the structures of - the Northern Ireland Executive Race Equality Strategy (OFMdfM 2003a). This is intended to become the ‘cross departmental strategy to tackle racial inequalities’. Within these structures a

<sup>4</sup> <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/crc.htm>

<sup>5</sup> [http://www.bailii.org/nie/legis/num\\_orders/1997/19970869\(a\).html](http://www.bailii.org/nie/legis/num_orders/1997/19970869(a).html)

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1998/47/section/75>

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1998/42/contents>

<sup>8</sup> Full text of the Framework Convention can be found at <http://www.coe.int/minorities>

Travellers thematic sub-group was established which reported to the Race Forum and was tasked with overseeing the implementation of Response to the Recommendations in the **Promoting Social Inclusion (PSI) Working Group Report on Travellers (OFMdfM 2003)**<sup>9</sup>.

- 3.5 This broad statutory context creates a general acceptance of Traveller ethnicity and anti-Traveller racism. As was discussed a number of times in the course of the Taskforce, this contrasts positively with the situation in Ireland. While this does not preclude the survival of older, racist conceptualizations – Travellers as ‘drop outs’ or members of a ‘subculture of poverty’ and so on, the acceptance of Traveller ethnicity is manifest routinely in public education and other statutory contexts. While references to ‘Traveller lifestyle’ make an appearance at times, generally the principle of Traveller ethnicity and the specific problem of anti-Traveller racism are well established.
- 3.6 Travellers are routinely named as an ethnic group and the reality of marked Traveller educational disadvantage is recognized in this context by all stakeholders. The Race Equality Strategy identifies the ‘serious underachievement of Traveller children’ as a ‘particular issue’
- 3.7 **The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI)** is the Council of Europe’s independent human rights monitoring body specialising in combating racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, anti-Semitism and intolerance. ECRI’s action covers all measures needed to combat violence, discrimination and prejudice against persons or groups of persons on the grounds of their race, colour, language, religion, nationality or national or ethnic origin. Recommendations No.3 (Combating racism and intolerance against Roma/Gypsies) and No.10 (Combating racism and racial discrimination in and through school education) is of particular interest to the Taskforce.<sup>10</sup> The most recent ECRI report to the UK (March 2010) and Committee of Ministers Recommendation CM/Rec (2009)4 on the education of Roma and Travellers in Europe and the UK responses to these are relevant.<sup>11</sup>
- 3.8 **The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)** is also relevant, particular cognisance should be taken of Article 2.2 and Article 13.<sup>12</sup> The Committee’s most recent Concluding Observations on the UK (2007) address school performance and drop-out rates of Travellers in education, and recommendations made, at paragraph 36.
- 3.9 **The International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD)** is also relevant - particular cognisance should be taken of Article 5 and Article 7.<sup>13</sup> The UK includes reference to the Traveller Education Taskforce at paragraphs 291 and 292, by way of evidence of the State’s fulfilment of its Article 5 obligations. The UK is due to appear before the CERD Committee in 2011/2012 and its 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> periodic reports have now been submitted.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk/travellers.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> [http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/ecri/activities/GPR/EN/Recommendation\\_N3/Recommendation\\_3\\_en.asp](http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/ecri/activities/GPR/EN/Recommendation_N3/Recommendation_3_en.asp)

[http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/ecri/activities/GPR/EN/Recommendation\\_N10/Recommendation\\_10\\_en.asp](http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/ecri/activities/GPR/EN/Recommendation_N10/Recommendation_10_en.asp)

<sup>11</sup> <https://wcd.coe.int/wcd/ViewDoc.jsp?id=1462637>

<sup>12</sup> Full text of the ICESCR can be found at: <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/cescr.htm>

<sup>13</sup> Full text of ICERD can be found at: <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/cerd.htm>

<sup>14</sup> These are available at: <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cerd/docs/CERD.C.GBR.18-19.doc>

## Chapter 4 - Background

- 4.0 Statistics reveal a number of interrelated factors which increase the risk of educational underachievement for children of parents on low incomes. People living in low-income households face higher risks of many aspects of disadvantage including: poorer local environment; reduced mobility; higher rates of premature mortality; poorer health; and higher likelihood of unsatisfactory educational outcomes at 11 and 16.
- 4.1 The links between poverty and educational outcomes are often quoted and researched. Educational outcomes are dependent on children’s social background and where they live. Children who grow up in poverty and disadvantage are less likely to do well at school. This in turn manifests later in life and affects achievement in the world of employment and in turn affects their children, continuing the cycle of deprivation. In our education system this can be seen by the gap in achievement between middle class families and those less financially well off. Educational underachievement is linked with a range of factors such as: low parental qualifications, poor housing conditions, ill health, low income, lack of aspiration and unemployment. This often passes from one generation to another.

### Free School Meals

- 4.2 The 2010 school census shows that 77.3% of Traveller pupils are entitled to free school meals compared with 20.4% of the general school population.

**Table 1: Traveller pupils entitled to Free School Meals 2010 Census**

	All Pupils			Traveller		
	FSME	Total	%	FSME	Total	%
<b>Primary</b>	35,835	163,451	21.9%	479	617	77.6%
<b>Post-primary</b>	26,569	147,902	18.0%	190	249	76.3%
<b>Special</b>	2,019	4,458	45.3%	24	31	77.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>64,423</b>	<b>315,811</b>	<b>20.4%</b>	<b>693</b>	<b>897</b>	<b>77.3%</b>

- 4.3 Early interest by the Northern Ireland State in Traveller education was couched in straightforwardly racialised stereotyping. In other words, until the Traveller ‘mode of life’ changed, little could be done to support Traveller education. This approach changed little in the next couple of decades. By the 1960s, however, more sustained efforts were being made to educate some young Travellers. This effort remained, however, conducted in an assimilationist mode. Moreover, Traveller children were sometimes treated in a way that would have been unthinkable for most other children – placed in segregated schools, kept in primary school until they were 16 and so on (Noonan 1994).
- 4.4 In terms of the more specific issue of Travellers’ experiences of education in Northern Ireland, there is a growing body of work confirming inequality and exclusion. Connolly and Keenan have researched and published extensively in this

area (2002:81). Connolly also makes it clear that Traveller educational disadvantage was one of the 'key challenges facing education' (2002: 83-4). Connolly and Keenan's work has addressed the attitudes and experiences of Travellers in some detail – including attitudes towards integrated/segregated education. Paddy Mongan's work for BTEDG has been particularly important as a Traveller-led intervention (2003:2).

- 4.5 The Children's Law Centre Report (Stevenson 2004) also makes a series of 'recommendations for change'. This work has been supplemented by important new contributions from ECNI and NICCY including, *Mainstreaming Equality of Opportunity and Good Relations for Traveller Children in Schools* (ECNI 2008)<sup>15</sup> and *Adequacy and Effectiveness of Educational Provision for Traveller Children and Young People in Northern Ireland* (Hamilton et al. 2007).<sup>16</sup> These provide a useful baseline for analysis and recommendations for DE towards an action plan on Traveller education.
- 4.6 In recognition of the particularly severe disadvantages encountered by members of the Traveller community, Government set up a working group under the Promoting Social Inclusion element of the New Targeting Social Need policy specifically to make recommendations for action to improve the quality of life of Travellers. The working group produced a comprehensive report which made 33 detailed recommendations to Government aimed at improving the lives of Travellers in areas such as health, education and accommodation. The recommendations on Traveller education provided a discrete and grounded template for transforming Traveller experience of education. (OFMdFM 2000)
- 4.7 In terms of those recommendations that were immediately pertinent to the Department of Education and Traveller education, the Department accepted all but one of these and it believes these to have been implemented. The establishment of the Taskforce on Traveller Education effectively transferred primary responsibility for forwarding the legacy of the education elements of the PSI Working Group analysis and recommendations to DE and the Taskforce.
- 4.8 The statutory education sector has also provided reviews of Traveller education, particularly through the work of the Education and Training Inspectorate. An initial *Survey of Provision of Traveller Children into Mainstream Education in Northern Ireland (2004)*<sup>17</sup> was later supplemented by *An Evaluation of Traveller Education in the Five Education and Library Boards*<sup>18</sup> (2008).
- 4.9 These reports found that provision for Traveller children across the five Education and Library Boards (ELBs) is effective and given appropriate priority within the strategic planning of the ELBs and the allocation of central funding and made

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.equalityni.org/archive/pdf/TravellerChildreninSchools1208.pdf>

<sup>16</sup> [http://www.niccy.org/uploaded\\_docs/EC%20-%20Travellers%20report%20complete%20pdf.pdf](http://www.niccy.org/uploaded_docs/EC%20-%20Travellers%20report%20complete%20pdf.pdf)

<sup>17</sup>

[http://apps.deni.gov.uk/insp/inspection\\_reports/2005\\_09/survey\\_of\\_provision\\_for%20inclusion\\_of\\_traveller\\_children\\_into\\_mainstream\\_education\\_in\\_northern\\_ireland.DOC](http://apps.deni.gov.uk/insp/inspection_reports/2005_09/survey_of_provision_for%20inclusion_of_traveller_children_into_mainstream_education_in_northern_ireland.DOC)

<sup>18</sup> [An Evaluation of Traveller Education in the Five Education and Library Boards | Education and Training Inspectorate](#)

recommendations on the additional developments necessary which also inform the Taskforce recommendations.

- 4.10 The 2008 evaluation found that, in the sample of schools visited, it was clear that the staff were providing an inclusive environment and made good efforts to engage Traveller children with appropriate learning experiences. It also found that in those schools the young people from the Travelling community in the primary sector made progress commensurate with their peers, but as a result of increasingly poor attendance as they reach school leaving age they did not achieve the standards and accreditation of which they were capable.
- 4.11 However, the Taskforce is clear that resolution is not the sole responsibility of the schools currently attended by Traveller children and that its recommendations and any subsequent actions must address the basic principle of all schools being open to and welcoming of all children.
- 4.12 It is clear that there has been plenty of analysis emerging from both the statutory and Non-government Organisation (NGO) sectors over recent years. However, Traveller educational disadvantage remains profound and the undoubted advances in law and policy should not engender any sense of complacency.

### **Models of Traveller Education**

- 4.13 One of the Terms of Reference for the Taskforce was consideration of best practice models.

#### ***Ireland***

- 4.14 The model in Ireland is characterised by a much stronger Traveller Support Movement with well established analysis of the needs of Traveller education. The state has a well developed Traveller education specific infrastructure and provision takes place in the context of a Traveller Education Strategy with an established model of 'partnership' between these sectors.
- 4.15 The Taskforce has been a model of northern engagement of policy and practice with the south and other networks and relationships appear to be much more integrated than in the past.
- 4.16 The 1995 Taskforce on the Travelling Community presented a radical and detailed analysis and set of recommendations for changing the Irish education system. The education and training sector of the Taskforce report still bears close examination (1995: 154-233). While some of this discussion is specific to the situation in Ireland, much of it is immediately pertinent to the situation in Northern Ireland. The outworking of this Taskforce process on Traveller education included the establishment of the National Traveller Monitoring and Advisory Committee.
- 4.17 The Department of Education and Science *Report and Recommendations for a Traveller Education Strategy*<sup>19</sup> was the culmination of this process. The report does

<sup>19</sup> [http://www.education.ie/servlet/blobServlet/des\\_recom\\_traveller\\_educ\\_strategy.pdf](http://www.education.ie/servlet/blobServlet/des_recom_traveller_educ_strategy.pdf)

not include statistics which allow comparisons between north and south nor has there been a formal evaluation of the strategy's effectiveness. However, it includes detailed analysis and recommendations and these are of immediate reference to the work of the Taskforce, particularly the conclusions (88-99). The general objectives for Traveller education are specified throughout the report and summarised as:

- **Traveller parents:** Traveller parents should benefit from a comprehensive and inclusive programme of community-based education initiatives that will enable them to understand the education system, to participate in it, and to further support their children in education.
- **Early-childhood education:** Traveller children should have access to an inclusive, well-resourced, well managed, high-quality early-childhood education, with appropriately trained staff operating in good quality premises.
- **Primary, post-primary, adult and further education:** Travellers should have equality of access, equality of participation and equality of outcome in a fully inclusive education system that respects Traveller identity and culture while they are participating in the primary education system, the post-primary system, and the adult and further education system, where Traveller learners will have the same chances as their settled peers and have real-life options for progression and employment on completion of their studies.
- **Higher education:** Higher education, with greater and easier access, should become a real option for Travellers.

### ***England and Wales***

- 4.18 There is a number of defining aspects of the 'British model' – these contrast with the situation in both the north and south of Ireland and provide important perspective for any new initiatives.
- 4.19 Traveller pupils are regarded as being part of the growing number of Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) students in a complex multi-racial and multi-faith school system – their difference is less pronounced than that in areas which have very little history of cultural or ethnic heterogeneity. This means that Travellers are integrated – albeit as a small part – into broader anti-racist and multicultural education policy and practice.
- 4.20 There has also been a more recent emergence of 'Gypsy, Roma, Travellers' policy and practice which offers a new model for addressing specifically the educational disadvantage of these groups. Irish Travellers – or '*Traveller of Irish heritage pupils*' as they are often termed in this context – are central to this model which ensures that specific analysis of the situation of Traveller children is available.
- 4.21 The most recent and perhaps the most relevant is the National Strategies: *Moving forward together: Raising Gypsy, Roma and Traveller achievement (2009)*<sup>20</sup>. This

<sup>20</sup> *Moving forward together: Raising Gypsy, Roma and Traveller achievement (2009) guidance booklet* can be found at [:http://nationalstrategies.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/node/248709](http://nationalstrategies.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/node/248709)

guidance consists of four booklets written to support schools in raising the achievement of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils. The key principles are:

- 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 assessment, plus appropriate specialist interventions, supported by school leaders, will improve the achievement of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils; and
- achievement will only occur through the combined efforts of school, child and home.

4.22 Guidance is provided on:

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

4.23 Another National Strategies publication *Building Futures: Developing trust – A focus on provision for children from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller backgrounds in the Early Years Foundation Stage*<sup>21</sup> provides similar guidance for Early Years practitioners.

<sup>21</sup>*Building Futures: Developing trust – A focus on provision for children from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller backgrounds in the Early Years Foundation Stage* can be found at:  
<https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationdetail/page1/DCSF-00741-2009>

## Chapter 5 - Changing Nature of the Population

- 5.0 The composition of the population has changed considerably over the past decade. Although, in addition to the two main traditions within the community, there have been Irish Travellers living here for a very long time and there are long established Indian and Chinese communities, in recent years there have been increasing numbers of people from elsewhere seeking to make their homes here.
- 5.1 Social change brings its own issues and challenges and while many have welcomed these new arrivals a small minority have subjected minority ethnic people to racially motivated exclusion, intimidation and violence.
- 5.2 The challenge for policy makers is to embed real understanding, inclusion and respect for diversity in planning and to tackle the various forms of discrimination practiced through ignorance and lack of understanding by some of the local population. In the process they must ensure that the needs and interests of longer established minority ethnic communities are not overlooked. Education is vital in preparing all children for living in a complex and ethnically diverse society.

### **Cohesion, Sharing and Integration**

- 5.3 The draft Programme for Cohesion, Sharing and Integration sets out a vision for a new era in which communities will work together to build a shared and better future, a future where fairness, equality, rights, responsibilities and respect are acknowledged and accepted by all.
- 5.4 The Programme recognises the importance of respecting cultures and emphasizes that all sections of our community should feel comfortable expressing and sharing their cultural identity.
- 5.5 Promoting intercultural respect and dialogue is particularly crucial among our children and young people in building a better future for everyone in our society.
- 5.6 Following a review of the Department of Education's existing Community Relations policy a new Community Relations, Equality and Diversity in Education (CRED) policy has been developed.
- 5.7 The CRED policy seeks to extend the current policy focus on relations between the two main communities to addressing relations between all section 75 groups and therefore will be a significant contribution to achieving good relations outcomes.
- 5.8 The aim of the CRED policy is to contribute to improving relations between communities by educating children and young people to develop self respect, respect for others, promote equality and work to eliminate discrimination and by providing formal and non-formal education opportunities to build relationships with those of different background and traditions.

## Integration/Segregation

- 5.9 As noted previously, the Race Relations (Northern Ireland) Order 1997 specifically identifies Irish Travellers as a 'racial group'. The Order also makes clear the unlawful nature of imposing racial segregation:
- (2) For the purposes of this Order segregating a person from other persons on racial grounds is treating him less favourably than they are treated.
- 5.10 Education authorities are formally opposed to segregated education but there is a degree of de facto segregation of Traveller children across different sectors, particularly in Belfast. There is formal integration across other education and library board areas in Northern Ireland. The DE policy principle is that, *'it is in the best long-term interests of both Traveller children and settled children that they should be educated together'*.
- 5.11 There has been less consideration of and discussion about the existence of some de facto segregated pre-school provision for Travellers. The reality appears to be that any pre-school provisions on a Travellers' site or within a Traveller project will inevitably – whether formally or informally – provide only for Travellers.
- 5.12 In terms of the integration situation, there is general agreement across all sectors and within the Taskforce that integration is desirable. All parties accept that there are some schools and pre-schools disproportionately attended by Traveller children. However, there is a concern about the disproportionate *non-enrolment* of Traveller children at schools much closer to where they live.
- 5.13 The enrolment of Traveller children in schools in the educational sector of parental choice (controlled, maintained, integrated or Irish medium) should be broadly reflective of the number of Traveller children living in the local area. It bears emphasis that such integration will not occur by default. It is the policy of the Department of Education to support this kind of education, and it will require regional implementation of this policy.
- 5.14 Fundamental to this are the attitudes of: parents, schools, Traveller children, other children, the parents of other children and wider society. The Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey 2009 demonstrated that there is still considerable prejudice against Travellers.
- 55% of respondents would not willingly accept Travellers living in a house as a resident in their local area.
  - 30% of respondents would not willingly accept them as a colleague at work.
  - 46% of respondents would not willingly accept them as a close friend.
  - 47% of respondents would not willingly accept them as a relative by way of marrying a close family member.
- 5.15 Schools, in the nature of things, have a particular role and particular responsibilities which include:
- accepting their statutory responsibilities;

- building a welcoming environment;
- preparing professionally to receive Traveller children;
- preparing other children;
- developing relationships with parents of Traveller children;
- recognising and respecting cultural difference;
- recognising the reality of racism; and
- maintaining constancy and consistency of educational expectation for all children.

5.16 The role of Traveller parents is crucial and positive engagement with them is vital. This is particularly important where the parents have had negative experiences of school.

## Chapter 6 - Setting the Context

- 6.0 Education is the foundation for success in life, providing the mental, physical and social skills for the world of work.
- 6.1 Traveller children constitute less than 0.3% of the whole school population. However, as the statistics in this chapter show, the educational inequality experienced by Traveller children is stark.
- 6.2 While the Traveller community is small in relative and absolute terms, it has all the complexity and variety of much larger communities and uniformity of response cannot be expected.

### Current Education Framework

- 6.3 A key priority for the Department is to raise standards, tackle the long tail of underachievement and help every young person to achieve to their full potential. This will be achieved through a suite of complementary policies. The revised curriculum, introduced from 2007 provides increased flexibility which enables schools, as part of the whole-school approach, to incorporate the history and cultures of Irish Travellers into the curriculum and also to discuss and challenge stereotypes and preconceived attitudes.
- 6.4 The post 14 curriculum, the counterbalance to the reduced core curriculum at KS4, gives schools the flexibility to offer a pupil centric curriculum. In meeting their needs, interests and aspirations, pupils will be able to follow courses that they see as relevant to their future careers and that can help them succeed in life and work.
- 6.5 Young people who see their time at school as relevant are more likely to stay engaged with education and more likely to succeed and do well. This in turn contributes to raising standards and impacting positively on the economy. The curricular offer must include general / academic and applied (vocational) courses which have clear progression pathways to employment, Further and Higher education, training and employment.
- 6.6 Every School A Good School – a policy for school improvement (April 2009) is centred on six key areas including “ tackling the barriers to learning that many young people face” and “increasing engagement between schools, parents and families”.
- 6.7 To promote improvement in educational outcomes, the Department of Education issued updated guidance to all schools on the education of children from the Traveller community in the form of a school circular in August 2010. A consultation, which included the Taskforce, took place between September and December 2009.
- 6.8 The primary aim of the revised circular is to provide comprehensive guidance to schools regarding a range of issues which impact on the education of children from the Traveller community such as; inclusion and diversity, the revised curriculum,

management of attendance, home-school links, bullying, the recording of information, partnership working and examples of good practice.

### **Current Support Structure**

- 6.9 All of the Education and Library Boards provide some services to schools with Traveller children, the pupils themselves and their parents, though services vary from board to board. The Department has recognised that there is a need to build a more co-ordinated approach to Traveller education in order to centralise/maximise the existing knowledge and experience and ensure equality of access and outcomes for Traveller children.
- 6.10 The Forum for the Education of Travellers' Children is representative of all five Education and Library Boards (Senior Education and Advisory Officers), the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools and, in an advisory capacity, the Department of Education and the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI). Since its formation in 1993 it has exerted positive influence on the education of Travellers through promoting in-service training for teachers and drawing together various dimensions within the education sector ranging from pre-school to post primary to further education.
- 6.11 The Forum's achievements over a number of years have included the securing of funding for the development and production of intercultural resources for Key Stages 1, 2, and 3. It has also held conferences, produced and commented on relevant reports, been involved in a Comenius project and fostered positive working relationships not only with colleagues from the Department of Education and Skills in Ireland but also with representatives from the voluntary sector in Northern Ireland.
- 6.12 Forum members are committed individuals with expertise in Traveller specific and intercultural issues. They are keen to promote improved educational outcomes for Traveller children and young people and, in co-operation with other stakeholders, in offering appropriate advice, guidance and support to schools with Traveller children. It is a small group of individuals and is able to respond rapidly and effectively to the wide range of educational issues which impact upon Traveller education.

## Current Statistics on Traveller Children in Education<sup>22</sup>

### Enrolment

- 6.13 The 2009/10 Northern Ireland school census carried out in October 2009 showed that a total of 866, or 0.26%, of the children enrolled in schools, nurseries and pre-schools were from the Traveller community. The majority were in the Southern, Western and Belfast Education and Library Board areas and, of the 866 Traveller children, 66% were enrolled in primary and 27% in post-primary schools.
- 6.14 As the following tables show, there has been a steady increase over the past 10 years in the number of Traveller children enrolled in pre-school education and school. However, it has been suggested by organisations working with Travellers that there are Traveller children who are not enrolled or registered at any school.

**Table 2: Traveller Children in Pre-School education and Year 1 in Primary Schools**

	00/01	01/02	02/03	03/04	04/05	05/06	06/07	07/08	08/09	09/10	10/11
<b>Traveller Children in Pre-School Education</b>	27	32	40	49	39	40	58	52	61	57	62
<b>Year 1 Traveller Children in Primary Schools</b>	56	58	69	72	83	70	56	76	67	71	86
<b>Traveller Children in Pre-School education as percentage of those pupils in Year 1 in Primary Schools the following year</b>	47%	46%	56%	59%	56%	71%	76%	78%	86%	66%	n/a

Note: Figures for pre-school children include those in nursery schools, nursery and reception classes in primary schools and in funded places in voluntary and private pre-school places.

**Table 3: Enrolments of Traveller Children (Year 1 to Year 12)**

	00/01	01/02	02/03	03/04	04/05	05/06	06/07	07/08	08/09	09/10	10/11
<b>Year 1</b>	56	58	69	72	83	70	56	76	67	71	86
<b>Year 2</b>	59	67	73	78	79	83	73	71	85	82	83
<b>Year 3</b>	72	56	70	79	87	82	92	79	74	82	93
<b>Year 4</b>	64	69	65	68	76	84	86	99	78	71	85
<b>Year 5</b>	61	56	65	72	73	76	90	83	91	72	70
<b>Year 6</b>	70	50	57	75	71	79	73	88	83	96	74
<b>Year 7</b>	70	71	56	56	66	78	80	78	94	76	97
<b>Total</b>	<b>452</b>	<b>427</b>	<b>455</b>	<b>500</b>	<b>535</b>	<b>552</b>	<b>550</b>	<b>574</b>	<b>572</b>	<b>550</b>	<b>617</b>
<b>Year 8</b>	30	43	43	29	33	36	39	41	48	52	56
<b>Year 9</b>	30	37	46	38	36	37	50	43	46	58	53
<b>Year 10</b>	40	34	35	38	38	26	27	47	41	49	56
<b>Year 11</b>	32	36	30	28	27	30	20	27	39	40	44
<b>Year 12</b>	21	22	27	25	17	19	28	12	17	34	35
<b>Total</b>	<b>153</b>	<b>172</b>	<b>181</b>	<b>158</b>	<b>151</b>	<b>148</b>	<b>164</b>	<b>170</b>	<b>191</b>	<b>233</b>	<b>249</b>

<sup>22</sup> Statistics are given for Northern Ireland. They can be further broken down by area for operational purposes.

- 6.15 Table 3 shows that a significant number of Traveller children who were enrolled in primary school have not continued into post-primary education or have left school before year 12. However, these figures are taken from the annual school census which is carried out in October and some pupils may be away travelling on the date of the census. From the 2010/11 school year each pupil will retain the same Unique Pupil Number (UPN) from the day they start school until the day they finish which will enable the education system to identify those pupils who are no longer registered with a school.
- 6.16 The ELBs use the Electronic Management System (EMS) to record pupil data including school location, admissions and transfers. A Unique Pupil Number (UPN) is created for each pupil. If a pupil does not return to the school where he/she was enrolled and does not enrol in another in Northern Ireland, the school and the relevant ELB pursues the parent to obtain the name of the school where they intend to enrol thereafter. The school will not pursue the parent if the family is 'travelling'.
- 6.17 If the pupil has not enrolled in another school in Northern Ireland the EWS will contact the Traveller Education Support Services in each local authority of the UK to run a trace for the pupil and/or family to locate the school in which they may have enrolled. Contact will also be made by the EWS with the Education Welfare Board in Ireland to locate the pupil if the family have moved there.
- 6.18 Most searches are conducted through statutory and voluntary organisations such as Traveller Support Groups (TSGs). This can be a slow process if the pupil is not enrolled in a new school and his/her whereabouts remain unknown to services in the relevant area. The Child Protection Service will commence their own search if child protection concerns are notified to the ELB by the school.
- 6.19 Engaging with parents and ensuring their involvement in school life and their children's experience of education was thought by the taskforce to be particularly important where the parents had negative experiences of school. Different methods are used in order to help develop a more positive approach to education. To inform this An Munia Tober conducted a consultation exercise with over 90 Traveller adults/parents in April/May 2009.
- 6.20 Belfast Education and Library Board (BELB) and Southern Education and Library Board (SELB) have been successful in doubling the number of Traveller children enrolling in year 7 since 2002 although a very significant number of Traveller children still drop out of the education system after primary school with a percentage drop out rate of around 40 - 50%.

### **Attendance**

- 6.21 In terms of attendance, there is general agreement across all stakeholders in the Taskforce - including Traveller parents and the Traveller Support Movement (TSM) that attendance is problematic. It is clear that this is a necessary if not sufficient condition for improving Traveller educational achievement. Often Traveller parents have had a very negative experience of education themselves. It has been a

watchword of sectors of the education provision to 'get Traveller children ready for school' – but it is equally important to 'get schools ready for Traveller children'.

- 6.22 Traveller children attending primary school missed 29.0% of the total half days compared with the overall average of 5.3%. At post-primary level Traveller children missed an average of 46.7% of half days compared with an overall average of 7.7%.
- 6.23 Education and Library Boards through their Education Welfare Service have a legal duty to make sure that all parents and carers meet their own responsibility towards their children's education. If they do not, the Education and Library Boards are duty bound to use the legal process of court action to enforce a parent's duty to make sure that young people in their care receive an education.
- 6.24 A school should make a referral to the Education Welfare Service when a pupil's attendance is a cause for concern or when attendance drops below 85%.
- 6.25 The Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1986<sup>23</sup> places a duty on the parent of every child of compulsory school age to cause him to receive efficient full-time education suitable to his age, ability and aptitude and to any special educational needs he may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.
- 6.26 It also places a duty on the parent of a registered pupil at a school to secure his regular attendance at that school. However, the Order states that where, in any proceedings brought against a parent on the ground that a child who is a registered pupil at a school has failed to attend that school regularly, it is proved that the child has no fixed abode the parent shall be entitled to be acquitted if he proves that he is engaged in any trade or business of such nature as to require him to travel from place to place and that the child has attended (at the school at which he was a registered pupil) as regularly as the trade or business of the parent permitted provided that, in the case of a child who has attained the age of six years, he has so attended on at least one hundred days during the period of twelve months ending with the date on which the proceedings were instituted.
- 6.27 Prior to the 2010/11 school year a specific absence code was used to indicate that a Traveller child was absent from school because the family was travelling. School Circular Number 2010/07<sup>24</sup> removed the traveller absence code and introduced a range of new codes so that more detailed information on the reasons for absence could be collected and the absence of all pupils, regardless of ethnicity, is now coded in the same way. The tables below detail Traveller pupil attendance figures by year group for the 2009/10 school year.

<sup>23</sup> [The Education and Libraries \(Northern Ireland\) Order 1986](#)

<sup>24</sup> [http://www.deni.gov.uk/circular\\_2010\\_07\\_-\\_pupil\\_attendance\\_-\\_absence\\_recording\\_by\\_schools.pdf](http://www.deni.gov.uk/circular_2010_07_-_pupil_attendance_-_absence_recording_by_schools.pdf)

**Table 4: Traveller attendance by primary school year group, 2009/10**  
(% of total half day sessions)

Year group	% attended	% absent	% authorised	% unauthorised
1	73.7	26.3	15.4	10.9
2	70.8	29.2	16.8	12.4
3	72.8	27.2	19.2	8.0
4	72.4	27.6	17.0	10.6
5	68.7	31.3	20.8	10.6
6	69.5	30.5	20.5	10.0
7	69.2	30.8	18.7	12.1
<b>Primary Average - Travellers</b>	71.0	29.0	18.4	10.6
<b>Primary Average - all pupils</b>	94.7	5.3	4.0	1.3

**Table 5: Traveller attendance by post-primary school year group, 2009/10**  
(% of total half day sessions)

Year group	% attended	% absent	% authorised	% unauthorised
8	67.0	33.0	20.4	12.6
9	58.5	41.5	21.4	20.1
10	45.4	54.6	29.5	25.1
11	44.3	55.7	23.2	32.5
12	46.0	54.0	23.2	30.8
<b>Post-Primary Average - Travellers</b>	53.3	46.7	23.5	23.2
<b>Post-Primary Average - all pupils</b>	92.3	7.7	5.2	2.6

- 6.28 In 2009/10 only 34 Traveller pupils were enrolled in post-primary schools in year 12, the final year of compulsory education, and their average attendance was less than 50%.

### Special Educational Needs

- 6.29 Special Educational Needs is defined as a learning difficulty which calls for special educational provision to be made. The definition covers a wide spectrum of learning difficulties many of which can be met through school based support.
- 6.30 54% of Traveller pupils of statutory school age have been identified as having special educational needs (SEN) in comparison with 20% of all pupils. The following tables give a breakdown by SEN stage and gender. These figures may be capturing children who are under achieving because of poor attendance rather than having a specific learning difficulty. Further analysis of the figures is required to provide more information on the categories of SEN which have been recorded.

**Table 6: Traveller Pupils by SEN and Gender – 2010/11**

School type	Gender	SEN stage						TOTAL
		0	1	2	3	4	5	
Primary	Female	153	30	70	#	*	#	280
	Male	146	33	74	#	#	#	337
	Total	299	63	144	#	11	#	617
Post primary	Female	70	#	13	35	*	13	138
	Male	45	#	19	#	0	22	111
	Total	115	#	32	51	*	35	249
Special	Female	0	0	0	*	*	#	11
	Male	0	*	0	0	0	#	20
	Total	0	*	0	*	*	#	31
Total	Female	223	36	83	50	7	30	429
	Male	191	43	93	49	7	85	468
	<b>Total</b>	414	79	176	99	14	115	897

**Table 7: All Pupils by SEN and Gender – 2010/11**

School type	Gender	SEN stage						TOTAL
		0	1	2	3	4	5	
Primary	Female	67,690	3,044	5,740	2,002	195	1,159	79,830
	Male	61,883	4,422	8,509	4,874	584	3,349	83,621
	Total	129,573	7,466	14,249	6,876	779	4,508	163,451
Post primary	Female	64,716	3,782	#	1,258	#	1,368	74,374
	Male	58,422	4,353	#	2,114	#	3,722	73,528
	Total	123,138	8,135	#	3,372	#	5,090	147,902
Special	Female	0	*	*	11	#	1,349	1,423
	Male	0	#	*	25	#	2,879	3,035
	Total	0	14	*	36	#	4,228	4,458
Total	Female	132,406	6,830	8,919	3,271	325	3,876	155,627
	Male	120,305	8,785	13,278	7,013	853	9,950	160,184
	<b>Total</b>	252,711	15,615	22,197	10,284	1,178	13,826	315,811

## Attainment

6.31 The table below shows the combined attainment figures for Traveller school leavers for the five school years 2003/04 to 2008/09 compared with the overall 2008/09 school leavers figures. With the numbers so small it is not possible to make any meaningful comparison with attainment elsewhere.

**Table 8: Traveller attainment on Leaving School 2003/04 to 2008/09**

	Combined Travellers 2003/04 to 2008/09	NI Total School Leavers 2008/09
<b>No. of Traveller school leavers</b>	105	23279
<b>No. achieving at least 5 A* - C or higher</b>	10	16323
<b>% achieving at least 5 A* - C or higher</b>	9.5	70.1
<b>No. achieving at least 5 A* - G or higher</b>	24	21242
<b>% achieving at least 5 A* - G or higher</b>	22.9	91.3
<b>No. achieving No GCSEs</b>	65	673
<b>% achieving No GCSEs</b>	61.9%	2.9

Source: School Leavers Survey

- 6.32 Research conducted on behalf of the Department of Education in Northern Ireland found that schools serving disadvantaged communities and performing better than might be expected recognised that encouraging parental involvement is a key factor in raising attainment.
- 6.33 National Strategies: *Moving forward together: Raising Gypsy, Roma and Traveller achievement* (2009)<sup>25</sup> offers a useful template. The key principles are:
- 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 assessment, plus appropriate specialist interventions, supported by school leaders, will improve the achievement of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils.
  - Achievement will only occur through the combined efforts of school, child and home.

### Advancement

- 6.34 The table below shows the combined destination figures for Traveller school leavers for the five school years 2003/04 to 2008/09 compared with the overall 2008/09 school leavers figures. Along with the tables above these figures set out starkly the level of educational disadvantage compared with the general school population.
- 6.35 However, the 2008 ETI Evaluation of Traveller Education in the 5 ELBs found that , in the schools visited by the Inspectorate, Traveller young people made progress commensurate with their peers, but as a result of increasingly poor attendance, as they reached school leaving age, they do not achieve the standards and external accreditation of which they are capable.

**Table 9: Destination of school leavers recorded as Travellers 2003/04 to 2008/09**

	2003/04 to 2008/09		NI School Leavers 2008/09
	Number	%	%
<b>Institution of Higher Education</b>	0	0	42.9
<b>Institution of Further Education</b>	20	19.0	32.4
<b>Employment</b>	17	16.2	6.7
<b>Training</b>	15	14.3	12.7
<b>Unemployment</b>	37	35.2	3.1
<b>Unknown</b>	16	15.2	2.1
<b>Total Leavers</b>	105	100.0	100.0

<sup>25</sup> <http://nationalstrategies.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/node/248709>

# Chapter 7 - Economic Context

## Current Economic Situation 2011-2015

- 7.0 Although the current economic situation and the pressure on public expenditure mean that there may not be significant additional funding available to deliver the action plan on Traveller Education this does not mean that actions cannot be delivered and available resources better targeted. As recommendations cannot be dependent on extra resources the educational needs of Travellers must be built into departments' priorities.
- 7.1 As the following paragraphs show, the Department of Education is already providing over £1.6 million of additional funding per year for Traveller education.

## Current Traveller Specific Funding and Support from the Statutory Sector

- 7.2 Through the Common Funding Formula (CFF), schools receive additional money (0.5 of the Age Weighted Pupil Unit) per Traveller child each financial year, (£1028 per child in 2010/11). However, no part of the school's budget can be ring-fenced by the Department as the budget can be spent at the discretion of the school. Decisions regarding the annual budget are made by the Board of Governors in conjunction with the Principal. Schools are subject to general and focused inspections on the quality of their provision for all pupils including those with additional educational needs, by the Education and Training Inspectorate, such as the Evaluation of Traveller Education in the Five Education and Library Boards<sup>26</sup>, published in November 2008.
- 7.3 The Department also provides a fixed amount (adjusted for inflation) of funding every year to the Education and Library Boards for Traveller education services. In 2010/11 a total of £412k was distributed according to the number of Traveller children in each board. The funding is equivalent to £476 per capita.
- 7.4 Early Years, the Organisation for Children implements and manages the Early Years Fund on behalf of the Department of Education. In the 2010/11 financial £340k of the Early Years Fund budget was utilised for the Traveller Toybox Project. The aim of the Toybox Project is to ensure Traveller children and families have access to high quality inclusive early education and family support.
- 7.5 The Barnardo's Travellers pre-school service operates from St Aiden's PS, Whiterock Road, Belfast. The project is in receipt of 6 funded pre-school places in the 2010/11 school year. Other playgroups in the Pre-School Education Expansion Programme (PSEEP) cater for children from the Traveller community but are not Traveller specific.

<sup>26</sup> [An Evaluation of Traveller Education in the Five Education and Library Boards | Education and Training Inspectorate](#)

7.6 A brief summary of the range of support currently provided by Education and Library Boards is outlined in the following paragraphs.

### **Belfast Education and Library Board (BELB)**

7.7 BELB inputs additional resources for Traveller education in the form of additional administrative support and management of an Educational Welfare Officer. The Board also funds two youth workers, one full time and one part-time (12 hours per week) who are based in An Munia Tober (AMT). The youth workers run activities for young Travellers that support educational outcomes. The full time worker is invited to attend youth service training and information events and the AMT youth group receives grants as any other registered youth groups, where applicable.

### **Southern Education and Library Board (SELB)**

7.8 There are 5.8 staff employed in the area of Traveller education. The team acts as the link from home to school, provides support and administers projects such as;

- the Inclusion Education Project (£33k funding);
- Safe and Well Project;
- Belong Project; and
- Transforming Communities.

Traveller resource materials are available to schools through LearningNI. LearningNI is a secure learning platform through the Classroom 2000 (C2K) web based support for schools, designed for learners and educators. Adviser support and guidance is also available as required through all Board sectors, e.g., Psychological Services, Education Welfare, and Benefits Section.

7.9 Staff in Brownlow Resource Centre (Craigavon) are currently working with a young men's Traveller group in the Drumgor area. A strategic planning session was held in June 2010, between the Inclusion team within SELB Youth Service and the Traveller Education Support Service, to review the potential to develop work with young Travellers. It was agreed to establish a working group linking the SELB Youth Service with the SELB Equality Unit. The initial task for the group is to carry out a needs analysis with a range of young Traveller groups in the area. It is intended that specific programmes will emerge from this process, particularly in relation to daytime school based programmes, in partnership with targeted schools.

7.10 Funding is also provided for the following:

Access to Extended Schools/Neighbourhood Renewal (Across SELB)	£23k
DELTA (Developing Everyones Learning and Thinking Abilities), Carnagat, Newry Parents Club	£6k
Traveller Support Groups across SELB	£20k
St Catherine's PS Afterschool	£12k

### **Western Education and Library Board (WELB)**

7.11 There are 4 staff employed in the area of Traveller education. Traveller resource materials for schools are available through LearningNI. Adviser support and guidance is also available through all Board sectors, e.g., Psychological Services, Education Welfare, and Benefits Section.

The Board has committed £28,082 of its Youth Outreach budget to the North-West Traveller Support Group to carry out a youth work programme with young Travellers in Derry and Strabane. The worker was appointed in June.

- 7.12 Funding is also provided for the following:  
Indirect access to extended schools/neighbourhood renewal initiatives      £20k

### **South Eastern Education and Library Board (SEELB)**

7.13 A support teacher is employed to work a few hours a week with Traveller children. The support teacher is based in one of the primary schools in Twinbrook and creates resources to use with the Traveller children. Last year SEELB produced a booklet of Traveller stories which is enjoyed by all the children in the schools in the Board area.

7.14 The Board pays for a dedicated part-time youth worker and a mainstream sponsorship allocation of £3000. A programme is offered by An Munia Tober on two evenings per week and one afternoon. The afternoon session is provided in Colin Youth Centre and the programme covers: - sport and recreation, ICT, creative arts and arts and crafts. Approximately 20 young people aged 8–12 attend the afternoon session. The evening youth work sessions cater for young people 10-16 and focus on issue based work like conflict management and conflict resolution. This aspect of the programme also focuses on inter club/unit contacts and joint programmes. One of the successful programmes has been a joint initiative with a youth group from Clifton Street in Belfast. In the summer of 2009 a week of Summer Programme activities was planned and delivered in Colin Youth Centre. This was to recruit and encourage the participation of Travellers into mainstream youth provision. Since then thirty young people in the age range 7-16 from the Traveller Community in Colin attend the Colin Centre on a regular basis. A similar week was scheduled in summer 2010. However, it did not attract a large attendance and the reasons cited include that there are now already 30 young people from the Traveller community integrated into mainstream youth service activities in Colin.

### **North Eastern Education and Library Board (NEELB)**

7.15 Within the North Eastern Education and Library Board there are currently two officers involved in the provision of educational support for the pupils and the families from the Traveller community. One officer is working actively in schools supporting staff and families in raising literacy and numeracy attainments, whilst the second officer works at a strategic level as a line manager and liaison officer with the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools and other statutory agencies.

7.16 The officer attached to the schools which have children enrolled from the Traveller community, works in developing their educational attainments and also often acting as the 'link' between school and the community in order to maximise support from parents and the school for the benefit of the pupils.

7.17 The Traveller liaison teacher has access to extensive resources, accumulated over several years, which assist her in developing individual education plans designed for the pupils. ICT resources are also available to the teacher to assist with lesson

planning and development, as well as communication between all parties i.e. NEELB/schools and other personnel involved in Traveller education.

- 7.18 The Board also works with a small number of settled Travellers from the Doury Road area in the Dunclug ward, Ballymena. They attend the Waveney and All Saints youth clubs. The attendance has varied over the years and can depend on internal relationships within the families and wider area. The NEELB also funds a scheme in the Dunclug area using Department of Social Development finance. This was in response to previous consultation with Traveller representatives and the programme attracts 25 young Travellers. £11,678 was allocated for the programme which ran from July to December 2010.

## Chapter 8 - Sectoral Analysis

8.0 Each of the six thematic sub-groups of the Taskforce produced full reports detailing their findings. Links will be provided. Summaries of the recommendations of each sub-group follow.

### Early Years and Transitions

8.1 The following table shows there has been a steady increase over the past 10 years in the number of Traveller children enrolled in primary school and pre-school education.

**Table 10: Traveller Children in Pre-School education and Year 1 in Primary Schools**

	00/01	01/02	02/03	03/04	04/05	05/06	06/07	07/08	08/09	09/10
<b>Traveller Children in Pre-School Education</b>	27	32	40	49	39	40	58	52	61	48
<b>Year 1 Traveller Children in Primary Schools</b>	56	58	69	72	83	70	56	76	67	71
<b>Traveller Children in Pre-School education as percentage of those pupils in Year 1 in Primary Schools the following year</b>	47%	46%	56%	59%	56%	71%	76%	78%	86%	n/a

Note: Figures for pre-school children include those in nursery schools, nursery and reception classes in primary schools and in funded places in voluntary and private pre-school places.

8.2 The Early Years and Transitions sub-group consisted of members from Traveller parents; DE Early Years Team; Southern Education and Library Board (SELB), Western Education and Library Board (WELB), Barnardo's; Dungannon Sure Start and Early Years, the organisation for young children.

8.3 85 Traveller children in pre-school and P1 from Traveller families across Northern Ireland took part in consultations with trained facilitators.

8.4 **Summary of the key recommendations of the Early Years and Transitions Sub-group:**

- Continuation of Toybox project to support children and parents.
- Improved communication between agencies, with all professionals feeding in relevant information to Toybox worker.
- School staff to engage in home visits for new families.
- Clear policy in relation to missed days and follow up on pattern of poor attendance at pre-school/nursery.
- Pre-school/nursery settings to be granted additional places to meet the needs of Traveller children – flexibility of one place.
- Production and distribution of DVD to encourage more Traveller children to engage in Toybox project from the age of 2 onwards.

- Facilitation of a consultation with children to allow them to participate in the education process.
- Training and skilling of parents regarding information and available services.
- Identification of best practice and address gaps in provision in transitions from home to pre-school and then pre-school to primary school through effective use of existing resources.
- Inclusion of ethnic identifiers on pre-school enrolment form for Pre-school Education Advisory Groups (PEAGs) places and publish this information as part of census.

## **Special Educational Needs**

8.5 A Special Educational Needs sub-group was established as over 54% of Traveller pupils of statutory school age have been identified as having special educational needs (SEN) in comparison with some 20% of all pupils. The sub-group consisted of members from Toybox, the Equality Commission and the Children's Law Centre, one school, DE Representative, SELB Special Education and SELB/WELB Representative.

8.6 As a result of the non-attendance of Traveller parents three members of the working group consulted with a small number of parents on a 1:1 basis. 25 Traveller children from primary and post-primary schools were also consulted.

### **8.7 Summary of the key recommendations of the Special Educational Needs Sub-group:**

- The need to promote improved attendance levels of Traveller children and young people in all educational settings throughout Northern Ireland, through a co-ordinated Strategy (Sub-Group Action Plan – Key Strategies).
- The need to develop, promote and support the educational attainment of Traveller children and young people with special needs through flexible learning opportunities that meet their needs and abilities. For example:
  - Essential Skills, Life Skills Yr 11 and 12 stepped accreditation levels;
  - Use of Entitlement Framework and equality of access;
  - Specific Literacy & Numeracy Support; and
  - Pre-School and Early Years Support & Interventions
- Foster the personal development of Traveller children and young people with special educational needs through;
  - Personal Development and Citizenship
  - Learning for Life and Work
- Promote and develop knowledge and skills for life, employment and further learning. Working with a range of education providers (Key Stage 4 (KS4)) integrating ICT, Art, Sport and Drama as mediums for learning.
- Promote and assist parents in supporting their children's learning and achievement pre-school - KS4, deploying a range of approaches.

- Increase the uptake and level of Traveller participation in pre-school education, play, special needs pre-school support and other early years opportunities through;
  - Collaborative working between Boards and other agencies e.g. Surestart, Playbox
- Promote and support the educational attainment of Traveller children and young people with special needs through partnership working and collaboration with other agencies e.g. Health, Further Education (FE), Department for Employment and Learning (DEL) etc.

## **Interculturalism and Racism**

8.8 The Interculturalism and Racism sub-group consisted of members from Traveller parents, An Munia Tober and Pavee Point. A number of other NGOs also participated along with statutory bodies including the Education and Library Boards, Belfast City Council and the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust. OFMdFM, DE and the Inclusion and Diversity Service were also involved.

### **8.9 Summary of the key recommendations of the Interculturalism and racism Sub-group:**

- The Board Officers and DE staff responsible for Traveller education should consult with Traveller communities on the vision, aims and objectives of the Inter-Culturalism & Racism programme as set out in this report to ensure that Travellers agree with the broad conclusions and recommendations.
- The Education and Library Boards need to agree upon a specific set of anti-racism training programmes for teachers, non-teaching staff, governors, parents and children in all schools with Traveller children at present and then rolled out to all schools eventually. The training content should be accepted as mandatory with no sections omitted or skipped. Training should be phased in over time, age appropriate for the pupils involved and tailored to each education sector from early years to further education colleges.
- The Education and Library Boards should develop through their Curriculum Advisers an enhanced version of the “Mutual Understanding” part of the curriculum to reflect Traveller culture and heritage (this is being piloted at present through the Together 4 All project).
- A guidance note should be published for all newly qualified teachers on Traveller culture including how access to personal training, teaching resources, references for further reading, sources of advice and guidance and a set of live web links to Traveller support websites.
- Board officers and specialist school staff should be trained to deliver the enhanced element of the curriculum and diversity awareness training to

school-based staff. A DVD of how to undertake inter-cultural work should be made available to schools and available as a download from the appropriate websites.

- Board officers and employing authorities should provide a Traveller-specific element to their induction training for all non-teaching staff including bus drivers, canteen staff, cleaners, caretakers and after school workers.
- A second level of training should be provided to Senior Management Teams, Boards of Governors and Heads of Service for public bodies on how to tackle racism, how to raise expectations of Traveller participation and how to promote the inclusion of Traveller parents including their participation in voluntary roles such as Governors and Parent/School Associations.
- Schools should be advised of the availability and willingness of Traveller trainers to visit their school and provide a Traveller-specific element to the school's anti-racism and cultural diversity work both with staff and pupils.
- All schools should review their anti-bullying work using a whole school approach with input from staff, pupils and parents working together to tackle all forms of bullying and to improve the culture of reporting. The use of older Traveller pupils as 'peer mentors' or 'buddies' should be encouraged and supported as standard practice.
- Schools should use the Inclusion and Diversity Service's 'Toolkit for Diversity' as a means of developing and sustaining their inter-cultural work beginning with an audit of current practice within the school. School leaders are recommended to include the following key learning points in developing their inter-cultural work:
  - Create a positive and welcoming ethos within the school
  - Ensure good communication with parents
  - Use positive images and role models from minority ethnic communities
  - Develop inter-cultural learning across the whole school
  - Celebrate racial and ethnic diversity with all pupils
  - Raise awareness of world faiths and festivals
  - Use inclusive teaching strategies
  - Include in your school development plan work on anti-racist bullying
  - Contact a Board Officer for sources of training, advice and guidance.
- As part of their anti-racism and inter-culturalism work, schools should consult Traveller pupils and their families on such work and to ask for their participation. Traveller parents should also be asked about how this information should be presented. e.g. do they wish to have the Traveller information provided in the context of all cultures in Ireland without having their children mentioned specifically.

- Education and Library Boards should provide up to date and accurate advice to schools via training seminars, awareness-raising events, e-learning including web-based learning, video conferencing and bulletin boards.
- As an integral part of the school ethos, schools should seek to include Traveller parents in their school outreach work to improve Travellers' sense of belonging and inclusion within the school community.

## **Primary Education**

8.10 The Primary Education sub-group consisted of members from at least one Traveller parent, along with two Traveller support groups while the NGO sector was represented by Early Years. Boards and DE also participated. More Traveller parents, teachers and a Principal contributed to the final meeting.

### **8.11 Summary of the key recommendations of the Primary Education Sub-group:** *Supporting Attendance*

- Introduction of Traveller Education Support Officers across NI
- Improved monitoring of Traveller pupil attendance
- Travellers Inclusion Plan (TIP) developed for each school
- Schools become explicit in welcome of Traveller children and parents are made aware of their rights

#### *Supporting Achievement*

- Traveller Education Team in each school to create 'team approach'
- Advisory Teachers for Traveller pupils in class based on need
- Increase skills of teachers to support Traveller achievement

#### *Supporting Attainment*

- Afterschool services to be provided in each area, employing local Travellers either in school or with Traveller Support Group (TSG)/NGO
- Individual Learning Plans for each child are developed
- Regular monitoring of Traveller children's attainment beyond yearly census

#### *Other actions*

- Improved support for parents both for their own education and to enable them to support their children
- Training on Traveller culture in all schools including provision of resources
- Actions to improve relationships between Travellers and schools.

## **Post-primary and Youth**

8.12 The Post-primary and Youth sub-group consisted of Traveller parents and representatives from Derry Traveller support group. NEELB, SELB, WELB including the youth service, four post-primary maintained schools and DE.

### 8.13 **Summary of the key recommendations of the Post-primary and Youth Sub-group:**

*For Youth:*

- Commission research on Youth Service for Traveller children
- Raise awareness of the needs of Traveller children among youth service and school staff through training
- Opportunities for increased involvement including the use of peer educators from the Traveller community
- Develop a Traveller youth worker forum

*For Post-Primary Education:*

- Repeal legislation that allows Traveller children to attend only 100 days in a school year.
- Use Traveller Support Service and others to increase parental involvement in three key areas: years 7-8, years 10-11 and years 12-13.
- Identify, collate or develop quality learning materials on Traveller culture. This should be used as part of the KS3 Citizenship strand.
- More awareness to be raised among schools of the degree of flexibility, examples of best practice and resources that are available through the revised curriculum for Traveller children.
- Range of courses at KS3 and 4 should be broadened to meet the needs of children from the Traveller community.
- Accreditation should be in place for Traveller children following alternate/disapplied courses or vocational/occupational courses. This should include a mechanism by which it is ensured that these courses are viable and merit accreditation.
- Careers advice education and guidance should take account of the Travellers' 'world of work'.

### **Further and Lifelong Learning and Skills for Life and Work**

8.14 The Further and Lifelong Learning and Skills for Life and Work sub-group consisted of members from Department of Employment and Learning, Education and Library Boards, An Munia Tober, and the Further Education sector, including a Traveller staff member.

### 8.15 **Summary of the key recommendations of the Further and Lifelong Learning and Skills for Life and Work Sub-group:**

The development of inclusive education and training environments for Travellers

- Conduct local and international desk research in order to uncover best practice

- Learn from existing best practice and apply including Individual Education Plans
- Develop Traveller-focussed materials for schools and education institutions.

To provide support for Travellers thereby increasing participation in education and training.

- Provide a mechanism for effective tracking of information on individual Traveller children and young people
- Policy on recording attendance statistics needs to be revised to take account of travelling

To actively promote equality of opportunity for all Travellers both in accessing and experiencing training and education

- Actively support Traveller young people and parents to access appropriate funding to stay in education

Maximise opportunities for employment, including self-employment, for all Travellers

- Provide suitable advice and guidance to young Travellers on interview preparation and presentation and health and safety issues by peer mentors.
- Provide business skills and employment related skills.
- Find and nurture employers who will provide placements
- Recognise barriers preventing Travellers accessing the business start-up programme

Traveller focussed business advisers to provide guidance.

## Chapter 9 - Conclusions

- 9.0 There is a specific dynamic around Travellers and public education in Northern Ireland. In a positive context, Travellers and Traveller issues have been much more central to race equality debates and strategies in Ireland – north and south - than in many parts of the EU. (Although this is arguably changing as Roma equality issues become more and more significant.) In Northern Ireland this is witnessed by the naming of Travellers in the 1997 Race Relations (Northern Ireland) Order and the existence and importance of the PSI Working Group on Travellers and this Taskforce.
- 9.1 Travellers are integrated into equality measures and anti-racism in a way that they are often not in other contexts. In particular, the Promoting Social Inclusion Working Group Report on Travellers (OFMdFM 2000, 2003) created a positive momentum on Traveller equality in general and Traveller educational equality in particular. Moreover, the operation of equality proofing mechanisms of Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 has ensured that the public education sector has to consider the ways in which its policies and practices affect Travellers. While equality impact assessments may have been less than perfect in delivering equality, they ensure a level of consultation and discussion on issues that directly impact Travellers.
- 9.2 In terms of evaluation – and related data, planning and monitoring - there has been marked improvement in terms of the Department of Education – and the other statutory education partners – putting statistics relevant to Traveller education in the public domain. This makes proper evaluation of current Traveller education strategy in Northern Ireland easier than it was a number of years ago.
- 9.3 Conversely the absence, until recently, of any other significant minority ethnic dynamic in education has meant that the multicultural and anti-racism models embedded in British responses to education and racism have been largely absent from Northern Ireland. There is very little evidence of the Northern Ireland education system learning – either positively or negatively – from the British model. Nor are Travellers any less educationally disadvantaged in Northern Ireland than in England, Scotland or Wales or the south of Ireland. Nor, more specifically, does it mean that education provision for Travellers is radically more successful in terms of outcomes.
- 9.4 It is important, therefore, to balance the positive achievements in Northern Ireland alongside the profound challenges that continue to exist. On the one hand, the PSI process created an institutional framework for addressing Traveller social inclusion issues – including, centrally, Traveller education issues – that was groundbreaking and set a precedent for countries with much larger Traveller populations. The same argument might be made in terms of education in the work of this Taskforce on Traveller Education. This needs to be positively welcomed as well as critiqued and improved upon. At the same time, however, Traveller children in Northern Ireland remain more unequal and more excluded from public education than any other ethnic group. The challenge of delivering equality for Traveller children – measured in terms of outcome – remains as profound as it has ever been. We must aspire

towards a conclusion that helps makes the situation significantly better than it has been.

- 9.5 Some of the most positive outcomes of the work of this Taskforce are: 1) detailed description of current provision/practice; 2) universal commitment in principle to integration; 3) recognition that there is an acute problem in terms of the education of Traveller children which needs analysis and addressing; 4) exposure of some of the limitations and tensions in Traveller education work and the need for new methodologies to overcome these.
- 9.6 The key issue in terms of relationships within the sector is the current dynamic between the statutory education sector and the Traveller Support Movement/Traveller community in Northern Ireland. But if this relationship is to be re-envisioned, it requires movement from the NGO sector as well. The TSM here is fairly weak at present. There is no organisation or worker dedicated specifically to track and critique education policy and practice despite the absolute centrality of educational disadvantage to more general Traveller disadvantage. It has also been challenging to sustain meaningful Traveller participation in the process. If the statutory education sector is to open itself up to constructive engagement with the TSM, it has to be presented with a robust and sustained analysis from the sector.
- 9.7 There is also a related question of how much Traveller provision should be integrated into emerging broader minority ethnic education structures. In general the 'British model' has been better in this regard in that it treats Travellers as one of a number of different ethnic communities that need to be integrated into and appropriately supported by the education system – albeit one with very specific dynamics and challenges. But this is markedly different from the 'Irish model' which sees Traveller education largely as a discrete, specific area of work. Here Traveller education is largely separate from and unconnected to wider multi-ethnic/minority ethnic education. Arguably this approach has achieved relatively little for Traveller children – especially in the north.
- 9.8 Certainly we in the Taskforce are keen that policy and practice in Northern Ireland should adopt that which is best in both 'models'. We should draw on the 'British model' in order to ground our analysis of Traveller educational disadvantage in an approach which is much more conscious of the key role that racism and ethnicity play in educational outcomes for Travellers. Equally our interventions should be cognisant of how best practice addresses the role of ethnicity and racism to overcome disadvantage and deliver equality. But policy and practice must also pay close regard to the grounded experience of Traveller education work in Ireland.
- 9.9 There are six core issues which recur in the broad analysis of Travellers and public education in Northern Ireland and help us to map a way forward – access, attendance, integration/segregation, evaluation, resourcing and partnership. Each of these requires goals and timetables for the 'agreed action plan for both the statutory and non-statutory sector to see how together improved educational outcomes can be achieved by all Traveller children'. The main elements of these emerged in the work of the Taskforce subgroups.

- 9.10 Although the Traveller Community is small, it is complex and responses to these issues must recognise that there is a variety of attitudes within the community and build in the need for different approaches, but children's rights and welfare are core.
- 9.11 One of the key tasks for this Taskforce is to identify a mechanism that allows the statutory education sector and the Traveller Support Movement to work together positively in the interests of Traveller children, without either element needing to compromise its separate identity in the process. This is accepted as good practice elsewhere and it is necessary if all the problems facing Traveller children in education are to be addressed. Once again the southern model of 'partnership' working will be an important comparator in terms of both statutory and NGO sectors.
- 9.12 As stated earlier in this report, improving the educational attainment of Travellers is a significant element in reducing existing inequalities and encouraging their full inclusion in society. However, education needs to be addressed in the context of a holistic approach with other agencies to tackle barriers to Traveller equality and inclusion.

## Chapter 10 - Recommendations

10.0 At the Taskforce meeting on 30 November 2010 it was agreed that the following fundamental principles should be embodied in this report and should underpin the recommendations and actions:

- Every child is an equal child
- The expectations for Traveller children should be the same as for all others, including access to the full range of educational experiences free from racial discrimination and prejudice.
- Outcomes for Traveller children should parallel the range of outcomes for all children
- Traveller parents have the same entitlements and responsibilities as all other parents
- All schools should be open to and welcoming of Traveller children
- Parents of Traveller children should have access to any school of their choice, on the same basis as any other parents, for the education of their children
- The Department has a key responsibility in ensuring the achievement of these outcomes

The Taskforce has an expectation that these principles will be met in ten years.

10.1 The following high level recommendations provide a framework to assist the Department of Education in developing an action plan which will address the barriers to Traveller children fully enjoying their right to education.

10.2 The draft action plan should be developed by the end of 2011. It must grasp the opportunity to deliver real progress for Traveller children. In developing the plan the Department should carefully consider the detailed recommendations of the six thematic sub-groups of the Taskforce and of the Education and Training Inspectorate. The actions should build on good practice where it is occurring as highlighted by the sub-group reports and in Chapter 5 of this report.

10.3 The important role of teachers in the education of all children is key and building their capacity to develop an inclusive ethos and deliver change through Initial Teacher Education and Continuous Professional Development is crucial to the success of any action plan.

10.4 The action plan must be adequately monitored and resourced and should include target dates and responsibility for delivery for improvements in Traveller access, attainment, attendance, enrolment and advancement. Actions to be taken should be based on firm evidence with collection and further analysis of data to enable monitoring of outcomes and evaluation of actions.

## **Voice of the Traveller community**

- There must be active engagement and participation with Traveller children and young people and their families on the draft action plan and as an ongoing process.

### **10.5 Partnership**

- Improving the educational attainment of Travellers is a significant element in reducing existing inequalities and encouraging their full inclusion in society. However, equality and social inclusion requires an integrated, collaborative approach across the statutory sector and with partners outside government.
- A strategic group which includes representatives from health, education, employment, housing, the Traveller Support Movement and any other relevant organisations is necessary to facilitate a partnership approach and sharing of good practice in tackling barriers to Traveller equality and inclusion. This could be achieved by reconstituting the Traveller thematic group of the Racial Equality Forum.
- A consistent, co-ordinated approach across all areas should be developed to promote the improved access, participation and attendance of Traveller children and young people in all formal and informal educational settings. This should include after school and youth activities, with actions identified for DE, ELBs, NGOs, TSGs and Traveller families.

### **10.6 Access and Home/School/Community liaison**

- Schools, ELBs, NGOs and TSGs should improve engagement with Traveller parents to build trust, improve Travellers' sense of belonging and inclusion within the school community and encourage a positive attitude towards education and children's participation in all levels of education, including pre-school. Evidence indicates that 70% of a child's outcomes are dependent on parents/carers who need to be supported.
- Information should be provided to Traveller families on educational provision, opportunities and services, their rights in relation to education and how to access appropriate funding to enable young people to go on to further education.
- Best practice to support Traveller children and young people's transitions from pre-school to primary school, primary to post-primary school and post-primary to further education should be identified and disseminated.

## 10.7 Attendance

- Reasons for school absence should be analysed, monitored and addressed. ETI has found that when Traveller children attend on a regular basis they achieve commensurate with their peers.
- Para 3 (3) of Schedule 13 of the Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1986 which relates to the school attendance requirement for a child who has no fixed abode and whose parent's trade or business requires him to travel from place to place should be reviewed.

## 10.8 Attainment

- Careers advice, education and guidance to Traveller young people should take account of Travellers' 'world of work' but also encourage them to widen their horizons and ambitions.
- The educational attainment of all Traveller children and young people, including those with special educational needs, should be developed, promoted and supported through flexible learning opportunities that meet their needs and abilities. Traveller young people should be made aware of the wide range of courses available under the Entitlement Framework from September 2013.
- Schools must have an expectation that Traveller children and young people will achieve their potential and parents should be encouraged to have high expectations of their children's achievement and that their education should continue while they are travelling.

## 10.9 Inclusion

- Consistent regional anti-racism training and high quality learning materials which reflect Traveller culture and heritage should be available to school Governors and school leaders and as part of Initial Teacher Education and the Continuing Professional Development of teaching and non-teaching staff.
- Where it exists, the practice of providing Traveller specific school transport should be reviewed.

## 10.10 Structures and delivery

- There should be a new structure to deliver the action plan and ensure meaningful Traveller involvement in the education sector. This would involve reconstitution of the Forum for the Education of Travellers' Children to include key NGO members.
- This new structure should connect with evolving structures focussed on multiculturalism and appropriate education support for minority ethnic children so that in the longer term policy and practice should focus more on Traveller children as a specific constituency within all minority ethnic children.

### **Taskforce Membership**

The Membership agreed by the then Minister and the two joint chairs were as follows:

**Secretary: DE**

#### **Voluntary/ Community sector and Traveller representatives:**

**NGO Regional Forum on Traveller Education** - Five representatives, 4 from different Traveller Support Groups

**Additional Traveller representation** - Six Traveller parents to be nominated via An Múna Tober and the Irish Traveller Movement

**Barnardo's** - One representative

**Save the Children** - One representative

**Irish Traveller Movement** - One representative

**Pavee Point** - One representative

**Early Years Toybox project** - One representative

#### **Government:**

**Department of Education** - One representative

**Education and Training Inspectorate** - One representative

**Department of Employment and Learning** - One representative

**Department of Education and Science** - One representative

**Office of First Minister and Deputy First Minister** - One representative

#### **Non-departmental Public Bodies:**

**Education and Library Boards/ Education and Skills Authority** - Two representatives

**Council for Catholic Maintained Schools** - One representative

**NI Council for Integrated Education** - One representative

**Equality Commission NI** - One representative

**Council for Curriculum Examination and Assessment** - One representative

**Commissioner for Children NI (NICCY)** - One representative

**Human Rights Commission** - One representative

**Comhairle Na Gaelscolaíochta** - One representative

**Teachers representatives:**

**NI Teachers Council (umbrella body for five unions)** - Two representatives

**NI Committee of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (NICICTU)** - One representative

**Principal of St Mary's Primary School** - One representative

To allow for additional expertise and input, the following organisations have joined as members: Children's Law Centre, Youth Justice Agency and additional representation from the Education and Library Boards. This brings the total membership to 37 plus chairs and secretary (A full list of members can be found at [Appendix 1](#). Where there are two or more names this indicates change of representation).

### United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child Articles

The Taskforce terms of reference included an instruction to 'ensure that recommendations for improvements are underpinned by the Convention on the Rights of the child (1) (UNCRC) and other relevant equality and human rights legislation'. Articles 2, 12, 28, and 29 of the Convention are particularly relevant to the work of the Taskforce.

#### Article 2

1. States Parties shall respect and ensure the rights set forth in the present Convention to each child within their jurisdiction without discrimination of any kind, irrespective of the child's or his or her parent's or legal guardian's race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status.
2. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that the child is protected against all forms of discrimination or punishment on the basis of the status, activities, expressed opinions, or beliefs of the child's parents, legal guardians, or family members.

#### Article 12

1. States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.
2. For this purpose, the child shall in particular be provided the opportunity to be heard in any judicial and administrative proceedings affecting the child, either directly, or through a representative or an appropriate body, in a manner consistent with the procedural rules of national law.

#### Article 28

1. States Parties recognize the right of the child to education and with a view to achieving this right progressively and on the basis of equal opportunity, they shall, in particular:
  - (a) Make primary education compulsory and available free to all;
  - (b) Encourage the development of different forms of secondary education, including general and vocational education, make them available and accessible to every child, and take appropriate measures such as the introduction of free education and offering financial assistance in case of need;
  - (c) Make higher education accessible to all on the basis of capacity by every appropriate means;
  - (d) Make educational and vocational information and guidance available and accessible to all children;
  - (e) Take measures to encourage regular attendance at schools and the reduction of drop-out rates.

2. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that school discipline is administered in a manner consistent with the child's human dignity and in conformity with the present Convention.

3. States Parties shall promote and encourage international cooperation in matters relating to education, in particular with a view to contributing to the elimination of ignorance and illiteracy throughout the world and facilitating access to scientific and technical knowledge and modern teaching methods. In this regard, particular account shall be taken of the needs of developing countries.

## **Article 29**

1. States Parties agree that the education of the child shall be directed to:

(a) The development of the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential;

(b) The development of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and for the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations;

(c) The development of respect for the child's parents, his or her own cultural identity, language and values, for the national values of the country in which the child is living, the country from which he or she may originate, and for civilizations different from his or her own;

(d) The preparation of the child for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes, and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin;

(e) The development of respect for the natural environment.

2. No part of the present article or article 28 shall be construed so as to interfere with the liberty of individuals and bodies to establish and direct educational institutions, subject always to the observance of the principle set forth in paragraph 1 of the present article and to the requirements that the education given in such institutions shall conform to such minimum standards as may be laid down by the State.

### Research and Literature Review

#### Background

- 1.0 Early interest in the Northern Ireland State and Traveller education was couched in straightforwardly racialised stereotyping. See for example the Report of Committee on Gypsies and Like Itinerants 1948:

The education of the young of these nomads was a problem to which we gave thought, and the Ministry of Education was consulted, but was not in a position to indicate the numbers of children deprived of a normal education by reason of their parents' mode of life. That Ministry pointed out that it is the duty of each Local Education Authority to ensure that the parents of the children of compulsory school age in their area caused them to receive efficient, full-time education, but emphasised the difficulty of an Education Authority enforcing its mandate in the case of itinerant gypsies who would be in any particular area for a very short time only. We considered this one of the most important problems with which we were faced in the course of our investigation, and the one probably the least susceptible to solution. The "running wild" of these children appears to be inherent in the nomadic life, and until the people concerned can be compelled, or induced, to adopt a more civilised way of life, their offspring will be without the benefit of modern education.

- 1.1 In other words, until the Traveller 'mode of life' changed, little could be done to support Traveller education. This approach changed little in the next couple of decades. By the 1960s, however, more sustained efforts were being made to educate some young Travellers. This effort remained, however, conducted in an assimilationist mode. Moreover, Traveller children were sometimes treated in way that would have been unthinkable for most other children – placed in segregated schools, kept in primary school until they were sixteen and so on (Noonan 1994).
- 1.2 In terms of the more specific issue of Travellers' experiences of education in Northern Ireland, there is a growing body of work confirming inequality and exclusion. Connolly and Keenan have researched and published extensively in this area (2002:81). Connolly also makes it clear that Traveller educational disadvantage was one of the 'key challenges facing education' (2002: 83-4). Connolly and Keenan's work has addressed the attitudes and experiences of Travellers in some detail – including attitudes towards integrated/segregated education. In general they found Travellers to be positive about education in principle but unhappy with current provision because of three key factors: 1. low expectations of teachers and concomitant poor levels of education; 2. fear of being bullied, especially at secondary schools; and 3. the irrelevancy of current educational provision especially in terms of future employment. Paddy Mongan's work for Belfast Travellers Education and Development Group (BTEDG) has been particularly important as a Traveller-led intervention (2003:2)

- 1.3 The Children's Law Centre Report (Stevenson 2004) also makes a series of 'recommendations for change'. This work has been supplemented by important new contributions from ECNI and NICCY including *Mainstreaming Equality of Opportunity and Good Relations for Traveller Children in Schools* (ECNI 2008) and *Adequacy and Effectiveness of Educational Provision for Traveller Children and Young People in Northern Ireland* (Hamilton et al. 2007). These provide a useful baseline for analysis and recommendations for the DE towards an action plan on Traveller education.
- 1.4 When this research and recommendations are put in the context of those of the PSI Working Group, it is clear that there has been plenty of analysis emerging from both the statutory and NGO sectors over recent years. The real issue is implementation in the context of a commitment to deliver in terms of equality of outcomes. So the undoubted advances in law and policy should not engender any sense of complacency in terms of the lived experience of education by Traveller children in Northern Ireland. Traveller educational disadvantage in Northern Ireland remains both profound and unparalleled in terms of any other ethnic group.

### **The Promoting Social Inclusion Working Group - Report on Travellers**

- 2.0 In recognition of the particularly severe disadvantages encountered by members of the Traveller community, Government set up a working group under the Promoting Social Inclusion element of the New Targeting Social Need policy specifically to make recommendations for action to improve the quality of life of Travellers. The working group produced a comprehensive report<sup>6</sup> which made 33 detailed recommendations to Government aimed at improving the lives of Travellers in areas such as health, education and accommodation. The recommendations on Traveller education provided a discrete and grounded template for transforming Traveller experience of education. (OFMdFM 2000)
- 2.1 In terms of those recommendations that were immediately pertinent to the Department of Education and Traveller education, the Department accepted all but one of these (the proposed closure of St Mary's school) and it believes these to have been implemented. The establishment of the Taskforce on Traveller Education effectively transferred primary responsibility for forwarding the legacy of the education elements of the PSI Working Group analysis and recommendations to the DE and the Taskforce.
- 2.2 The statutory education sector has also provide some review of Traveller education, particularly through the work of the ETI – initially in its *Survey of Provision for the Inclusion of Traveller Children into Mainstream Education in Northern Ireland*:

The findings of this report indicate that provision for Traveller children across the five ELBs is effective and given appropriate priority within the strategic planning of the ELBs and the allocation of central funding. There is a need to ensure that the improvements in provision and the developing and positive outcomes for Traveller children in terms of engaging with education, improving their attendance and developing a more long-term appreciation of the benefits of remaining in school, are maintained and enhanced. This report seeks to provide some guidance on the additional developments necessary to

help ensure that Traveller children, their culture and their potential contribution to our society are recognised and valued. (ETI 2004)

- 2.3 This was been supplemented by the later *An Evaluation of Traveller Education in the Five Education and Library Boards*<sup>27</sup> which concludes:

The effective education of Traveller children and young people is a key area of interest to the Department of Education (DE) and subject to ongoing evaluation and attempts to improve the low educational standards and achievements of this group. As part of the process of providing effective guidance, advice and support to schools, DE commissioned the Education and Training Inspectorate (Inspectorate) to evaluate the quality of provision for Traveller education in primary and post-primary schools across the five Education and Library Boards (ELBs) and the impact of the ELBs' support in assisting schools to improve Traveller education.... This evaluation has found that in the sample of schools visited by the Inspectorate, young people from the Travelling community in the primary sector make progress commensurate with their peers, but as a result of increasingly poor attendance as they reach school leaving age, they do not achieve the standards and external accreditation of which they are capable. In the schools visited, it is clear that the staff are providing an inclusive environment and make good efforts to engage Traveller children with appropriate learning experiences.

### **The model in the south of Ireland**

- 3.0 The Taskforce Terms of reference included the instruction, 'to inform the National Traveller Monitoring and Advisory Committee in the south of Ireland'
- 3.1 The model in the south of Ireland is characterised by a much stronger Traveller Support Movement with a well established analysis of the needs of Traveller education. The state has a well-developed Traveller education-specific infrastructure and provision takes place in the context of the recent Traveller Education Strategy. There is an established model of 'partnership' between these sectors. While this does not preclude very different analyses at times, it ensures that NGO voices cannot be excluded from both access to – as well as to some extent responsibility for – the character of Traveller education in the south of Ireland. This Taskforce – as well as having one chairperson with deep experience of this sector – benefited greatly from the contributions of both statutory and NGO representatives from the south of Ireland.

### **The Task Force on the Travelling Community**

- 4.0 The 1995 Taskforce presented a radical and detailed analysis and set of recommendations for changing the Irish education system. The education and training sector of the Taskforce report still bears close examination (1995: 154-233). While some of this discussion is specific to the situation in the south of Ireland, much of it is immediately pertinent to the situation in the north.

<sup>27</sup> [An Evaluation of Traveller Education in the Five Education and Library Boards | Education and Training Inspectorate](#)

- 4.1 The outworking of this Taskforce process on Traveller education included the establishment of the National Traveller Monitoring and Advisory Committee. The terms of reference of this Taskforce on Traveller Education include a specific task to 'inform the National Traveller Monitoring and Advisory Committee in the south of Ireland' [of our work].

### **Traveller Education Strategy**

- 5.0 The Department of Education and Science (DES) in Dublin also developed a Traveller Education Strategy in response to the dynamic established by the 1995 Task Force report. The Department suggested:

The main objective of the Traveller Education Strategy will be to ensure *equality of outcomes* for Travellers from education. It will map out the way forward in relation to Traveller education, taking account of the complexity of the issues involved, the history of provision and existing measures. It will mark out the challenges for the future and clearly identify ways to approach those challenges. (DES 2003, emphasis added)

- 5.1 The commitment to 'equality of outcomes' presents a stark challenge to public education authorities in the north in terms of any assessment of the success or otherwise of Traveller education measures. Clearly, anyone interested in Traveller education in the north should be monitoring and engaging with this major innovation in the south.
- 5.2 The DES *Report and Recommendations for a Traveller Education Strategy* was the culmination of this process. The report includes detailed analysis and recommendations and these are of immediate reference to the work of the Taskforce, particularly the conclusions (88-99). The general objectives for Traveller education are specified throughout the report and summarised as:

- **Traveller parents:** Traveller parents should benefit from a comprehensive and inclusive programme of community-based education initiatives that will enable them to understand the education system, to participate in it, and to further support their children in education.
- **Early-childhood education:** Traveller children should have access to an inclusive, well-resourced, well managed, high-quality early-childhood education, with an appropriately trained staff operating in good quality premises.
- **Primary, post-primary, adult and further education:** Travellers should have equality of access, equality of participation and equality of outcome in a fully inclusive education system that respects Traveller identity and culture while they are participating in the primary education system, the post-primary system, and the adult and further education system, where Traveller learners will have the same chances as their settled peers and have real-life options for progression and employment on completion of their studies.

- **Higher education:** Higher education, with greater and easier access, should become a real option for Travellers. (2006: 90)

This offers a useful template for the action plan of the Taskforce.

### The model in England and Wales

- 6.0 There are a number of defining aspects of the 'British model' – these contrast with the situation in both the north and south of Ireland and provide important perspective for any new initiatives. First, the longevity of this process is in itself important – educationalists have been analysing and addressing racism and BME underachievement in education since the 1960s. Not least among the consequences of this is that Traveller pupils are regarded as being part of the growing number of BME students in a complex multiracial and multi-faith school system – their difference is less pronounced than that in areas which have very little history of cultural or ethnic heterogeneity. Second, this history means that Travellers are integrated – albeit as a small part – into broader anti-racist and multicultural education policy and practice. They are a part of a 'critical mass' on ethnicity that has produced defining work like the Swann Report and the Macpherson Report. Third, there has been a more recent emergence of 'Gypsy, Roma, Travellers' policy and practice which offers a new paradigm for addressing specifically the educational disadvantage of these groups. Irish Travellers – or '*Traveller of Irish heritage pupils*' as they are often termed in this context – are central to this paradigm.
- 6.1 Swann's *Education for All* advocated multicultural education for all schools, regardless of institutions, location, age-range or ethnicity for staff/pupils. The report provided clear data on ethnicity and educational attainment and made it clear that racism had a causal effect on the educational experiences of Black and minority ethnic children in the UK. Swann also included a detailed discussion on the place of Traveller children within its wider deliberations on anti-racism and multiculturalism:
- 6.2 The MacPherson Inquiry 1999 provided new discourse on racism for the British State. In particular it made clear the need for an analysis of 'institutional racism' and its impact on service delivery to minority ethnic people:
- 6.34 "Institutional Racism" consists of the collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture or ethnic origin. It can be seen or detected in processes, attitudes and behaviour which amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness, and racist stereotyping which disadvantage minority ethnic people.
- 6.3 MacPherson also made clear the need for specific work within education:
- 46.34 If racism is to be eliminated from our society there must be a co-ordinated effort to prevent its growth. This need goes well beyond the Police Services. The need for training of police officers in addressing racism and valuing cultural diversity is plain. Improved understanding and attitudes will certainly help to prevent racism in the future, as will improved procedures in terms of recording and investigating racist incidents. Just as important, and

perhaps more so, will be similar efforts needed from other agencies, particularly in the field of education. As we have indicated, the issue of education may not at first sight sit clearly within our terms of reference. Yet we cannot but conclude that to seek to address the well founded concerns of minority communities simply by addressing the racism current and visible in the Police Services without addressing the educational system would be futile. The evidence we heard and read forces us to the conclusion that our education system must face up to the problems, real and potential, which exist. We therefore make a number of Recommendations aimed at encouraging schools to address the identified problems (Recommendations 67-69).

6.4 MacPherson made specific recommendations on 'Prevention and the role of Education':

67. That consideration be given to amendment of the National Curriculum aimed at valuing cultural diversity and preventing racism, in order better to reflect the needs of a diverse society.

68. That Local Education Authorities and school Governors have the duty to create and implement strategies in their schools to prevent and address racism. Such strategies to include:

- that schools record all racist incidents;
- that all recorded incidents are reported to the pupils' parents/guardians, school Governors and LEAs;
- that the numbers of racist incidents are published annually, on a school by school basis; and
- that the numbers and self defined ethnic identity of "excluded" pupils are published annually on a school by school basis

69. That OFSTED inspections include examination of the implementation of such strategies.

### **Contemporary Gypsy/Roma/Traveller education**

7.1 In England and Wales, the 'Gypsy, Roma, Traveller' paradigm ensures that specific analysis of the situation of Traveller children is available. Sometimes this is integrated into broader analysis of ethnicity and educational attainment. For example, *Ethnicity and Education: The Evidence on Minority Ethnic Pupils aged 5–16* (DFS 2006) contains a great deal of information on Traveller children:

Traveller of Irish Heritage and Gypsy/Roma pupils are over-represented among many categories of SEN, including Moderate, and Severe Learning Difficulties, and BESD. The literature suggests a number of factors ranging from those associated with school such as negative teacher attitudes, racism and bullying, and a curriculum perceived as lacking relevance, to factors associated with Traveller cultures, such as high mobility, poor attendance and early drop out from school. However, the research base on this group is limited and therefore these conclusions are indicative only.

- 7.2 Of course, much of this sounds not dissimilar to the situation in Northern Ireland. Nevertheless the comparative analysis is vital, particularly in terms of learning from any models of good practice and success.
- 7.3 Other publications address specifically this Gypsy/Roma/Traveller educational paradigm. These too offer important comparative analysis for the Taskforce. Examples include the Department for Children, Schools and Families *The Inclusion of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Children and Young People* and the Department for Education and Skills *Aiming High: Raising the Achievement of Gypsy Traveller Pupils: A Guide to Good Practice* (2003).
- 7.4 There is also important educational research which addresses issues central to the work of the Taskforce. For example, Bhopal and Myers (2009) offer important conclusions on 'good practice' and 'inclusion' (2009: 314).
- 7.5 This kind of research work overlaps with a body of Traveller-specific research emerging from or commissioned by the statutory education sector. For example, *Improving Educational Outcomes for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Pupils: What Works?* provides a useful notion of 'constructive conditions' – these combine in complex ways to structure educational outcomes for Traveller children. The conclusions are worth quoting at length:

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. (Department for Children, Schools and Families 2009)

- 7.6 Most recent and perhaps most relevant of all of these is the National Strategies *Moving forward together: Raising Gypsy, Roma and Traveller achievement* (2009). This guidance consists of four booklets. Each written to support schools in raising the achievement of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils. The key principles are:

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 assessment, plus appropriate specialist interventions, supported by school leaders, will improve the achievement of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils.

Achievement will only occur through the combined efforts of school, child and home.

- 7.7 Guidance is provided on:

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

- 7.8 Another National Strategies publication *Building Futures: Developing trust – A focus on provision for children from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller backgrounds in the Early Years Foundation Stage* provides similar guidance for Early Years practitioners.

## Glossary

BELB	Belfast Education and Library Board
BME	Black and Ethnic Minority
BTEDG	Belfast Travellers Education and Development Group
C2K	Classroom 2000
CFF	Common Funding Formula
CRED	Community Relations, Equality and Diversity in Education
DE	Department of Education
DEL	Department for Employment and Learning
DES	Department of Education and Skills
ECRI	European Commission against Racism and Intolerance
EF	Entitlement Framework
ELB	Education and Library Board
ETI	Education and Training Inspectorate
FE	Further Education
ICERD	International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination
ICESCR	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
NEELB	North Eastern Education and Library Board
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
OFMdFM	Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister
PEAGS	Pre-School Education Advisory Group
PSEEP	Pre-School Education Expansion Programme
SEELB	South Eastern Education and Library Board
SELB	Southern Education and Library Board
TIP	Traveller Inclusion Plan
TSG	Traveller Support Group
TSM	Traveller Support Movement
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the child
UPN	Unique Pupil Number
WELB	Western Education and Library Board

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