Improving the outcomes for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils: final report

Anne Wilkin, Chris Derrington, Richard White, Kerry Martin, Brian Foster, Kay Kinder, and Simon Rutt

Department for
Education

Contents

Executive summary

Introduction

- The issue of improving educational outcomes for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller[1] pupils has been a focus of research and policy for some time and is particularly serious for secondary age pupils. Evidence suggests that where Gypsy and Traveller pupils do transfer successfully to secondary school, their attendance is unlikely to continue beyond the age of 14 (DfES 2006a; Derrington and Kendall, 2004).

- Although there is some evidence of growing economically and educationally successful Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities (Ryder and Greenfield, forthcoming), there is still concern that Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils are reported to be amongst the lowest achieving ethnic groups within schools in England, are more likely to be identified as having special educational needs (SEN), and are four times more likely than any other group to be excluded from school as a result of their behaviour (DfES, 2005; DCSF, 2009a).

- It is within this context that the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) (now the Department for Education [DfE]) funded the present study, which examined the issues faced by Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils and what can be done to improve educational outcomes for this group.

- The study had four distinct methodological strands:

  - Strand one: analysis of national attainment, attendance and exclusions data for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils (Key Stage 2-4) compared to a control group of similar pupils.
  - Strand two: progress mapping through questionnaires sent twice to primary and secondary schools with relatively high numbers of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils during the course of the study (in 2007 and 2009).
  - Strand three: A review of UK and international literature over the last ten years.
  - Strand four: In-depth case-study visits to 15 schools (ten secondary and five primary) and five alternative education providers. Researchers conducted face-to-face interviews with senior leaders and other key staff from schools and local authorities and held focus group discussions with pupils, parents and teachers.

- This report draws on the findings from all four strands of the research conducted. More detailed information on the contextual history of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities can be found in the review of literature (which has been published:http://publications.dcsf.gov.uk/eOrderingDownload/DCSF-RR077.pdf).

---

[1] Throughout the report, Gypsy, Roma and Traveller is used as an umbrella term embracing all Gypsy and Traveller groups as well as Roma from Eastern and Central Europe. Within this, Roma is a generic term used to describe many different groups of Romani people including, for example, Gypsies, Tsiganes, Sinti Kalé, and Romanichal.

Attainment

- The literature review confirms that Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils have lower levels of achievement than other ethnic groups at all key stages. This is due to a complex range of factors, including barriers that prevent them from fully accessing the curriculum, such as lack of engagement, interrupted education and negative experiences of school.

- Our statistical analysis using the National Pupil Database (NPD) shows that Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils usually attend schools with lower than average rates of achievement. Forty per cent of Gypsy Roma and Traveller pupils with only Key Stage (KS) 2 SAT results (suggesting they had disrupted education) attend schools in the lowest quintile (fifth) of attainment.

- Pupils with missing key stage test data had higher rates of Free School Meals eligibility, suggesting a connection between poverty and disrupted educational experience. Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils are reported to have the highest level of Special Educational Needs of all ethnic minority groups, and this may be the result of families lacking information or experiencing problems accessing appropriate health care, or schools failing to respond appropriately to cultural difference. Overall, the fact that Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils tend to have low prior attainment, have Special Education Needs and are entitled to Free School Meals is likely to be affected by cultural factors.

- The NFER surveys of secondary and primary schools showed that specific support was in place for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller achievement. In 2007, the most common type of strategy highlighted by both primary and secondary headteachers was the use of additional dedicated support, (for example, from Teaching Assistants, Traveller Education Support Service (TESS) staff) and curriculum learning/support.

- In the 2009 survey, headteachers rated specific strategies which directly address Gypsy, Roma and Traveller attainment: 'performance data being routinely tracked and analysed by ethnicity' was very well established in half of the secondary sample and two-thirds of the primaries. 'Staff valuing and celebrating Gypsy, Roma and Traveller culture' was reported as very well established in half of the primary sample, but nearly half of the secondary headteachers stated this was in need of some development in their school. A third of both samples suggested that 'using positive role models' as a strategy to relay high expectations to Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils was in need of some or significant development. Nearly all the secondary school headteachers reported vocational opportunities were quite or very well established.

- Case-study schools identified a tension between family aspirations and those of the school, with pupils sometimes caught in the middle. Most schools noted that the attainment outcomes for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils were low because of parental and community attitudes. Parents' aspirations were influenced by cultural expectations and their own limited educational opportunities.

- The case-study schools recognised they needed to encourage parents to engage in dialogue. Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils who made most progress and were most likely to remain in education post-16 were those who had parental support. Many of the schools made reference to raising expectations of pupils, their families and their own staff.

- Pupil tracking and analysis allowed schools to identify pupils achieving below their potential. Other strategies to address attainment highlighted in the case-study schools included focusing on transition support at KS 3; being flexible and creative in personalising the curriculum to keep pupils engaged and achieving, (including elements of a work-related curriculum); and providing mentoring support. Working in partnership with the TESS was also highlighted.

Attendance and exclusion

- Nationally, in both the primary and secondary phases, Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils have significantly higher levels of absence from school than pupils from other ethnic groups.

- Travellers of Irish heritage in both primary and secondary schools have slightly more absences than either Gypsy/Roma pupils[2], or Roma pupils with English as an additional language (EAL). Gypsy/Roma pupils have the lowest level of overall absence.

- In primary schools, levels of absence for Travellers of Irish heritage and Roma pupils with EAL are very slightly higher for girls than for boys. In contrast, for Gypsy Roma pupils, girls have very slightly lower levels of absence than boys.

- In secondary schools, levels of absence for Travellers of Irish heritage and Gypsy Roma pupils are slightly higher for boys than for girls, while for Roma pupils with EAL, girls still have a slightly higher absence rate than boys.

- In our first questionnaire in 2007, the most common type of strategy for maintaining and improving the attendance of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils, at both primary and secondary level, was reported to be the provision of dedicated support for attendance, in particular the Education Welfare Officer (EWO), TESS, or through a member of school staff with responsibility for attendance issues, followed by contact with parents/families for primary headteachers, and curriculum support for secondary headteachers.

- The majority of primary and secondary headteachers responding to the second questionnaire in 2009 reported that the above strategies were either well- or quite well-established features of their school's current ethos and practice. The least well-established strategy reported by primary and secondary headteachers responding to the 2009 questionnaire was home/site visits by senior members of staff (highlighted in the literature review for this study as being effective in enhancing the quality of home-school relationships).

- The case-study data echoed a number of the strategies identified as effective in the school survey. These included: having an identified key individual in school (who was instrumental in building positive relationships with pupils and families, thus facilitating feelings of safety and trust); increased monitoring and analysis of attendance (including first-day absence calls, contact with parents over attendance issues, and rewards for good attendance); a more flexible approach to the curriculum; and engaging Gypsy, Roma and Traveller parents with the school in

---

[2] Gypsy/Roma pupils include Romany Gypsies, English Gypsies, Welsh Gypsies/Kaale, Scottish Gypsies/Travellers

jointly addressing attendance issues (through dialogue and clearly communicated high expectations of good attendance and punctuality).

- The rate of permanent exclusion in 2007/08 was highest for Gypsy/Roma (0.56 per cent of the school population) and Travellers of Irish heritage (0.53 per cent of the school population) ethnic groups. A breakdown by gender clearly reveals the over-representation of boys in these figures.

- Similarly, the rate of fixed-term exclusion in 2007/08 was highest for Gypsy/Roma (18.71 per cent of the school population) and Travellers of Irish heritage (16.65 per cent) ethnic groups. Again, boys are over-represented in these figures.

- The numbers of permanent and fixed-term exclusions reported by headteachers in the first questionnaire to our survey schools in 2007 were small. The vast majority of respondents did not feel that Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils were disproportionately excluded from their schools.

- The findings from our 2007 questionnaire would appear to contrast with those reported in the national data for 2007-2008. It may well be, however, that the schools responding to our questionnaire were those likely to have an inclusive ethos, implicit in their policies and practice, which was reflected in the exclusion figures they reported.

Transfer and transition

- The findings from the 2007 and 2009 questionnaires and case-study interviews indicate that there is a whole range of strategies being implemented by schools to improve the transfer of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils.

- Strategies that survey schools found particularly successful in supporting the transition of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils between phases included: additional dedicated support for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils and their families (for example, the allocation of Teaching Assistant (TA) support, buddying systems, nurture groups, help with paperwork/form filling, and using a speaker of the home language); liaison with the feeder school; and liaison with other agencies (for example, through close links with Traveller Education Support Services (TESS)).

- There are a range of variables that obstruct and support the transfer and transition of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils. One of the biggest challenges was the common responses, or scripts, used consistently by Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities to justify actions for non-transfer.

- Potential areas for the development of effective practice in the primary phase emerged. This included the need for staff development to understand the importance of, and techniques for, communicating high expectations for the progression of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils into further education as early as possible in their educational journey.

- The case studies highlighted a great deal of good practice around dialogue with parents for transfer in the primary phase. To maximise this success, this may be an area in which secondary school staff could increase their involvement.

- From case-study interviews there emerged a sense that community attitudes were (in some cases) beginning to shift and there was a greater recognition among parents and pupils of the need for a secondary and post-16 education. There may be opportunities for school staff and other professionals to build on this and contribute to changing 'hearts and minds' in relation to attitudes and behaviours surrounding non-transfer.

Retention

- Just over half of the cohort of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils identified in Year 6 in 2003, and recorded as white Irish Traveller (WIRT) or white Roma/Gypsy (WROM) at some point during their secondary school experience, were still attending school in Year 11 (in 2008). This finding represents a substantial improvement in comparison to the earlier and smaller scale study conducted between 2000-2005 by Derrington and Kendall (2007) in which less than a third of the sample reached Year 11.

- Roma pupils with EAL had the highest retention rate, with just over 63% remaining in school until statutory leaving age. However, Travellers of Irish heritage left school earlier than the other groups, with only 38.3 per cent reaching statutory leaving age.

- Travellers of Irish heritage and Gypsy/Roma boys tend to leave school earlier than girls from these communities. Roma boys with EAL, on the other hand, are more likely to reach Year 11 than their female counterparts.

- Based on analysis of a single cohort of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils, almost 80 per cent of them transferred from primary to secondary school[3].

- The period of transition between Year 6 and Year 7 is the most vulnerable time in terms of retention. Around one in five Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils left the school system at this point in their education.

- Following transfer, the number of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils who dropped out of school early was noticeably higher in Year 8 and, to a lesser extent, in Year 10. Lower numbers dropped out in Years 7, 9 and 11.

- Almost 30 per cent of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils attended more than one secondary school (compared to 18 per cent of pupils not in these groups). A slightly higher proportion of female Roma pupils with EAL (36.8 per cent) changed secondary schools at least once.

- In the case-study schools, successful retention was associated with inclusive schools that reach out to parents and families, communicate high expectations and offer flexible curriculum arrangements.

- Staff perceptions about the social inclusion of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils were more positive than those of the pupils themselves. In focus group discussions, Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils often maintained that other pupils were unfriendly towards them. Coping responses included hiding their true identity and relying on social support from their cultural peer group.

---

[3] This figure is based on tracing one cohort of 1,389 pupils who were in Year 6 in 2003 and identified themselves as Gypsy, Roma or Traveller at any time between Years 6 and 11. The analysis does not include all possible forms of alternative provision.

- For most of those that do stay in school to take GCSEs, the prospect of continued progression into FE colleges to study for vocational qualifications is attractive and schools work hard to establish this expectation and open up new horizons for these young people.

- The case-study evidence suggests that staying on in school to gain qualifications is beginning recognised as a means of broadening employment opportunities. However, unless challenged, prejudice and discriminatory practice by employers may negate this encouraging development.

'Soft' outcomes

- Although difficult to define, soft outcomes were said to encompass a range of desired states or results that could be achieved for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils whilst at school. Some interviewees spoke in terms of Every Child Matters (ECM) outcomes such as enjoyment and health and well-being. Other softer, affective outcomes include attitude, motivation and engagement.

- Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils were said to face a range of social, cultural, economic and systemic barriers to maximising their experience of school and education. Interviewees highlighted the need to pursue softer outcomes as an essential basis for generating success in the more quantifiable outcomes, especially attendance and attainment.

- Case-study schools sought to achieve a variety of successful softer outcomes through multi-faceted approaches, entailing the provision of packages of support to meet the needs of different pupils. Often, the importance of meeting this wide range of pupils' needs was seen to be taken for granted and embedded in the everyday culture, ethos and practice of a school.

- Schools were often central in partnership approaches to promoting the health and well-being of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils. As well as direct provision (such as operating healthy eating programmes), schools worked in partnership with TESS and other local authority providers to signpost and support access to relevant provision and services. The expanding remit of schools acting as community-based organisations with increased commitment to full-service delivery was seen as a suitable context in which to work towards meeting the wider, non-educational/learning needs of pupils.

- School staff were well placed to act as intermediaries in relationships between health/social care provision and Gypsy, Roma and Traveller families.

- There is a central role for key, identifiable personnel in fostering and enhancing pupil well-being; providing consistency and familiarity within the school for families. Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils' feelings of safety and comfort in the school could be enhanced when pupils and families knew there was someone in the school they could approach with any issues and problems.

- Attempts to make the school experience more attractive and welcoming were shown to have enhanced the engagement of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils. At school level this involved the promotion of a school-level ethos and identity and inclusion to support integration and feelings of attachment. The employment of community members was identified as a particularly effective means of promoting pupil engagement and connection with the school.

- At the individual pupil level, interviewees highlighted the value of placing significant emphasis on circle-time, Personal, Social, Health and Economic education (PSHE) and Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) activities to directly support inclusion and personal and social development. Pastoral support in schools was also seen as key in supporting Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils (and families' engagement and relationships with the school).

- Engaging Gypsy, Roma and Traveller family and community members in the life of the school could lead to closer relationships between pupils and the school, evidenced by increased participation in educational visits and extra-curricular activities.

- Increasing the apparent relevance of school, through offering individualised and accessible activities and curriculum content was regarded as an effective means of securing increased Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupil (and family/community) engagement with school. Efforts to determine the needs and curriculum/learning interests of pupils were seen to be particularly effective in ensuring that relevant provision was put in place, e.g. an enterprise-related curriculum. In addition, the need to track levels of involvement was also highlighted as necessary.

- Whilst interviewees recognised the importance of improving softer outcomes, a challenge for schools relates to the selection of appropriate indicators that can effectively evaluate progress in relation to these outcomes.

The TARGET model: Traveller And Roma Gypsy Education Tool

- The Traveller and Roma Gypsy Education Tool (TARGET) shown diagrammatically below emerged as a result of our analysis of the case-study data and was first introduced as an analytical model in the interim report (Wilkin *et al*., 2009)

Figure 1: The TARGET model
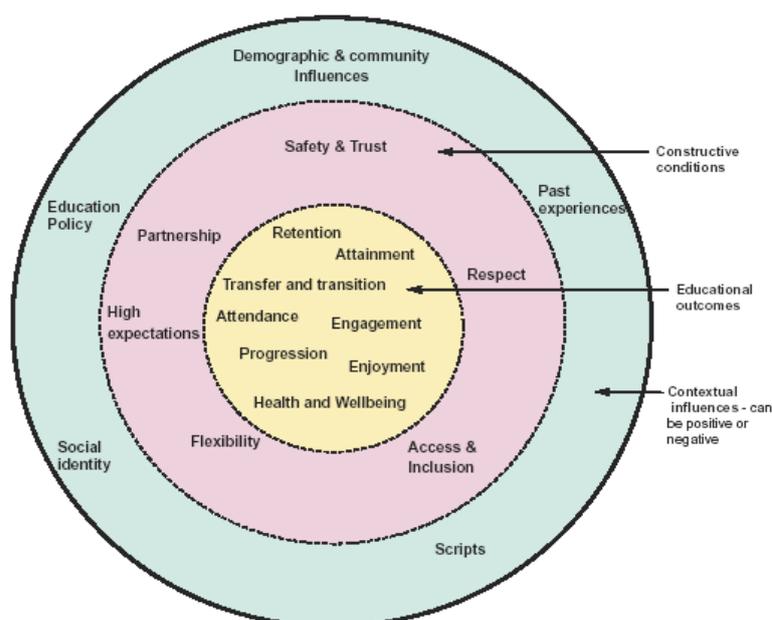
- Analysis of the case-study data has highlighted the complexity of issues associated with measuring outcomes for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils. It has also identified many variables that need to be considered when identifying approaches and strategies for improving a range of outcomes. Each school operated within its own unique demographic, organisational, political and historical context, and each of these influences could potentially support or impede efforts to improve educational outcomes for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils.

- At the core of the TARGET model are eight outcomes against which progress can be evaluated: five of which are considered to be 'hard' outcomes (Attainment; Attendance; Transfer and transition; Progression; and Retention) and three 'softer' affective outcomes (Engagement; Enjoyment; and Health and Well-being).

- The research confirms that these outcomes are essentially inter-dependent and it is important for schools to consider pupil progress holistically across all eight outcomes, maintaining a composite overview of academic and pastoral indicators in order to identify support needs and target interventions.

- Moving out from the core, the inner ring of the model contains six constructive conditions which were perceived to impact positively on all eight educational outcomes: Safety and trust; Respect; Access and inclusion; Flexibility; High expectations; and Partnership.

- Taken together, the six conditions can be said to characterise the inclusive ethos of a school and their effects are inevitably inter-woven. The research suggests that each of the conditions is important but it is their cumulative effect that 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.

- The outer circle of the model acknowledges the context within which individual schools are working to improve outcomes for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils. This aspect of the model is distinctive in that it takes account of external variables that lie outside the immediate influence of the school, but which can either support or obstruct the raising of outcomes for these groups of pupils.

- The contextual influences contained in the TARGET model are related to: Demographics and communities (e.g. the impact of community values and attitudes); Education policy (e.g. Academies or faith schools and schools in areas with single sex or selective systems); Social identity (e.g. the impact of individual and group identities); Scripts (e.g. the impact of common responses/phrases used consistently to justify actions); Past experiences (e.g. the impact of prior experiences in shaping attitudes).

- In recognising the existence of these influences and their impact, it is suggested that schools may feel better equipped to target their efforts on overcoming certain contextual barriers whilst capitalising on other positive influences.

Concluding comments

- This study confirms that whilst focused efforts and targeted interventions aimed at improving low educational outcomes for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils are beginning to make an impact, as a group, these pupils remain amongst the most

vulnerable (a term used in this report to refer to academic underachievement) in the education system.

- The national data collected as part of this research is the most comprehensive and illuminating to date, tracking an entire cohort of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils over a five-year period.

- Whilst there is some evidence that, as a community, there is a growing Gypsy, Roma and Traveller middle class with a number of educationally successful pupils (Ryder and Greenfield, forthcoming), our data reveals that Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils tend to be concentrated in schools with below average results, and that, even when controlling for gender, free school meals, deprivation and special educational needs, they make considerably less progress than their peers.

- This research reveals that an estimated 80 per cent of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils nationally transfer between primary and secondary school[4]. Despite encouraging evidence from the research that support for transition was a high priority for schools and the TESS, overall, it remains a serious concern that around one in five pupils from these communities continues to leave the school system at this point in their education.

- Just over half the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils in the national cohort were successfully retained in school until Year 11. This finding is more positive than those reported in the past (e.g. by OFSTED and in previous smaller-scale studies) and suggests that progress is being made towards the greater educational engagement of these communities. The study shows that a small majority of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils are now completing statutory schooling rather than leaving early.

- However, the pattern of retention is still far from satisfactory for almost half of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils and only 38 per cent of Traveller pupils of Irish heritage reach statutory leaving age. Furthermore, the data shows that pupils from all Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities are still likely to withdraw from the school system at particular points during KS 3 and, to a lesser extent, during Year 10.

- This report has identified common conditions or principles which appear to be instrumental in raising pupil outcomes. Collectively, these conditions can impact positively on all the identified outcomes. The unique context of each school has also been shown to enhance or impede the improvement of educational outcomes for these groups of pupils and although generic guidance is helpful, one size does not fit all.

- What is clear from all the responses is that change is achieved through a gradual process that responds to identified needs and challenges: there is no simple one-to-one correspondence between inputs and outcomes. The research found that there are complex, inter-related reasons why the outcomes for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils fall significantly below those for other children, and that schools are employing a range of strategies in response.

---

[4] This figure is based on tracing one cohort of 1,389 pupils who were in Year 6 in 2003 and identified themselves as Gypsy, Roma or Traveller at any time between Years 6 and 11. The analysis does not include all possible forms of alternative provision.

- National achievement targets provide little evidence of the efforts being made to improve outcomes and attention needs to be given to establishing a system for monitoring the progress of these communities using indicators and targets relevant to the challenges.

Key messages from the research:

The current situation:

- Findings from this study are a further reminder to policy makers and those responsible for providing education that much more needs to be done to achieve equality in educational opportunities for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils. Without a framework of targeted support at both local and national levels, the improvement of outcomes for these pupils is likely to remain unacceptably slow.

- Local authorities need robust strategies to engage with pupils who are not on the rolls of schools, to ensure that their educational entitlement is safeguarded. Policy makers, schools and other agencies also need to consider a variety of ways of increasing the expectations of all stakeholders (including teachers, pupils and parents) and maximising pupils' emotional well-being, both of which are believed to underpin improvements in attainment, attendance and retention.

- The maintenance of scripts can have a positive or a limiting effect on outcomes. Developing relationships of trust through dialogue with families and community groups is important, so that community and parental scripts can be used as a way of opening positive discussion, rather than acting as a barrier to it.

- The concentration of Gypsy Roma and Traveller pupils in schools that achieve below average results needs to be addressed at strategic and policy levels. Future research could usefully examine the characteristics and educational experiences of high attaining pupils from these communities.

The issue of transfer:

- A co-ordinated response between primary schools, secondary schools and local authorities is essential in order to further improve transfer rates and maintain pupil engagement through the secondary phase. Consistent messages and expectations relating to secondary transfer need to be coupled with targeted support for families and pupils, including those with a history of non-transfer in the immediate and/or extended family and those who are highly mobile.

- Attention needs to focus on challenging the negative impacts of scripts and assumptions accepted by both schools and communities around perceptions and beliefs of the inevitability and appropriateness of attitudes, decisions and actions in relation to non-transfer. Sensitive outreach work and proactive relationship building between secondary schools and communities are fundamental pre-requisites to address non-transfer.

- There may also be greater potential for school staff and other professionals to take the opportunity to work with Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities to increase understandings of the importance of transfer (as well as educational achievement and attainment). Key elements of this should include: increased dialogue; the employment of community members in schools; and the

promotion of 'success stories' of young people who have benefited from effective transition and progression through different phases of educational provision.

Retention:

- There is a need for a continued and consistent emphasis on high expectations and aspirations. This finding could be useful in challenging common scripts used by both families and schools. Alongside challenging the barriers and scripts that prevent or limit continued educational engagement, there remains the need to stress the importance and value of completing education.

- In the future, the message of education's validity and relevance to young people is helped by offering a personalised, vocational and flexible curriculum, as well as opening minds to professional career routes (that can be supportive and useful to their own community).

- The use of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller role models to promote this message of aspiration and achievement in schools and in the community is a particularly important strategy, and one that could be further developed. Above all, given that successful retention was associated with inclusive schools that reached out to parents, working with Gypsy, Roma and Traveller parents in equal partnership remains crucial.

Ascription:

- TESS coordinators who represented LAs in the case-study visits made it clear that they were not dependent on ethnic ascription alone to identify families. Usually they had close links with families, extended family groups, community organisations and other agencies. In any reorganisation of LA services, it is important that these services are able to respond with the same flexibility based in relationships of trust and broad safeguarding objectives.

Social and emotional well-being:

- Psycho-social factors are central to the question of raising outcomes. Schools need to fully recognise that, if Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils are unhappy in school, they are unlikely to attend or achieve. Social difficulties may lead pupils to self-exclude or behave in a manner that results in exclusion.

- It is crucial that schools seek and listen to the voices of pupils who are vulnerable to academic underachievement in order to monitor the effectiveness of their inclusion policy. Ensuring appropriate levels of funding to facilitate effective pastoral support for such pupils is likely to be important.

The principles for improvement:

- Each school will need to understand the impact of its context and focus its efforts accordingly. The TARGET model described within this report may thus be helpful to schools in analysing and determining their next steps.

- Local authorities and central government may need to monitor levels of engagement, exclusion and SEN identification to establish whether progress is being made locally and nationally to ensure pupils from these communities have the opportunities to reach their full potential.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

The issue of improving educational outcomes for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils has been a focus of research and policy for some time and is particularly serious for secondary age pupils. 'Whilst increasing numbers are registered in the primary phase, this pattern is not maintained in the secondary sector' (Derrington and Kendall (in Shevlin and Rose, 2003) p.206). Evidence suggests that where Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils do transfer successfully to secondary school, their attendance is unlikely to continue beyond the age of 14 (DfES 2006a). Even those pupils who have been 'settled' in the same area for a number of years are unlikely to complete their education and have little engagement with the secondary phase of schooling (Derrington and Kendall, 2004). Ofsted described Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils as 'the group most at risk in the education system' (Ofsted, 1999, p.7).

There are also issues regarding the monitoring of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller attainment, given families' and pupils' reluctance (due to fears of discrimination) to ascribe to these ethnic categories on the school census. Despite the acknowledged restrictions and limitations of the data and the small numbers recorded (many pupils are not entered for, or are absent during tests and examinations), it is clear that Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils are amongst the lowest achieving ethnic groups within schools in England. Although there is some evidence of growing economically and educationally successful Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities (Ryder and Greenfield, forthcoming), there is still concern that Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils are also more likely to be identified as having special educational needs (SEN) (Derrington and Kendall, 2004) and are four times more likely than any other group to be excluded from secondary school on account of their behaviour (DfES, 2005; DCSF, 2009a). Exposure to racism; the impact of having to cope with conflicting cultural expectation and norms; low teacher expectations and a curriculum which often fails to acknowledge the existence of their culture are all contributory factors that can affect young Gypsy and Traveller pupils' educational engagement (Derrington and Kendall, 2004).

It is within this context that the Department for Children, Schools and Families (now the Department for Education (DfE)) funded the present study, which examined the issues faced by Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils and what can be done to improve educational outcomes for this group. This report draws on the findings from all four methodological strands of the research conducted. More detailed information on the

contextual history of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities can be found in the review of literature conducted for this study (Wilkin *et al*., 2009).

1.2   Aims and objectives

The overall aim of the study was to explore the issues faced by Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils and to offer parents, schools and local authorities a range of possible methods for improving the outcomes for this group. In order to achieve this overarching aim, the research sought to:

- maximise the information to be derived from the National Pupil Dataset (NPD) to identify and quantify the impact of issues affecting outcomes for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils;

- separate out the effects of social and economic factors from issues specifically relating to Gypsy, Roma and Traveller learners through comparison with a carefully matched sample from the NPD;

- develop statistical models to analyse data, taking account of evidence from the other strands of the research (e.g. progress mapping through the school surveys);

- explore the interrelationships between educational outcomes and other aspects of the Every Child Matters (ECM) agenda (via case-study and progress mapping work);

- explore issues known to impact on educational outcomes but not currently identified within the NPD, such as accommodation type and Gypsy, Roma and Traveller learners not identifying as white Irish Traveller (WIRT) and white Roma/Gypsy (WROM) (via case-study and progress mapping work);

- draw on the relationships and expertise developed by TESS to analyse complex interrelationships between social and cultural values, and educational outcomes;

- establish the contribution of a strategic approach, at school and LA level, to improve outcomes for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller learners.

1.3   Methodology

The study involved four strands of research activity:

Strand one: National data analysis (autumn 2007–spring 2010);

Strand two: Progress mapping (through questionnaires to schools (autumn 2007–spring 2010);

Strand three: Literature review (summer 2008–autumn 2008)[5];

---

[5] The full literature review was published in February 2009 and is accessible from: http://publications.dcsf.gov.uk/eOrderingDownload/DCSF-RR077.pdf.

Strand four: Case studies (spring 2009–summer 2009)[6].

1.3.1 National data analysis

The development of the National Pupil Database has provided a rich source of data to allow researchers to undertake quantitative analysis without the need to return to schools to collect additional data. This data source enabled examination of a number of issues around pupil attainment, absence, exclusion and progression through the education system. In this study, attainment analysis primarily looked at Key Stage (KS) 2 results over a number of years to assess the progress made by Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils and whether this progress was in line with the progress made by other 'similar' pupils. A comparative sample of non Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils was randomly selected from the full database so that comparisons were based on a similar cohort of pupils, based on their KS1 outcomes, in similar types of school, based on the schools' KS2 outcomes.

In exploring the national datasets and creating datasets that were suitable for analysis, it was evident that there was a large amount of missing data for our cohorts of interest, and much more so than the levels of missing data for other pupils. One issue that was raised during the course of the project has been the accuracy of the ethnicity information contained within the NPD. A concern raised by the steering group for this research was that there is an issue with how ethnicity is recorded by parents, particularly at the major transfer point when moving from primary to secondary school. In view of this, we tracked a single cohort of pupils through their entire secondary education to see whether a pupil's ascribed ethnicity changed over this six-year period. It is accepted that there would be recording errors but these should be randomly distributed through all ethnic groups.

To understand more about other pupil behaviours, use was made of other national datasets to look at variations in absence and exclusions. Analysis of absence data looked at authorised and unauthorised absence, whilst also trying to identify the impact of absence attributed to travelling (not holidays). Exclusions analysis explored variations in the length of exclusion, as well as the reasons for exclusion.

---

[6] A report on the case-study phase of the project was published in October 2009 and is accessible from: http://publications.dcsf.gov.uk/eOrderingDownload/DCSF-RR170.pdf.

1.3.2 Progress mapping

Questionnaires were sent out twice during the course of the study to headteachers and governors in primary and secondary schools with relatively high numbers of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils. The questionnaires gathered information on a range of themes on the engagement of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils, including for example, transition, maintaining and improving attendance, raising achievement, race equality and inclusion.

Copies of the first questionnaire were sent out in the autumn of 2007 to headteachers and governors in 400 primary schools and 455 secondary schools. Table 1.1 below presents the responses of primary and secondary schools to the survey.

Table 1.1 Response rates to the NFER survey of primary and secondary schools, 2007

Instrument type	Number despatched	Number returned	Percentage returned
Primary headteacher	400	161	40
Primary governor	400	79	20
Secondary headteacher	445	128	29
Secondary governor	445	59	13

Source: NFER survey of primary and secondary headteachers, 2007.

Although the number of desired responses was achieved (200 schools: 125 secondary and 75 primary), the number of secondary school responses, in particular, did not allow for drop-off in the second round of the questionnaire, which was an area of concern. At the same time, the governor response rate was disappointingly low.

The pattern of non-response, particularly at secondary level, was continued in the second round of the survey. Follow-up questionnaires were sent in the autumn of 2009 to headteachers and governors in the 163 primary schools and 136 secondary schools from which a response was received to the first round of the survey. Table 1.2 presents the responses to the second round of questionnaires.

Table 1.2 Response rates to the NFER survey of primary and secondary schools, 2009

Instrument type	Number despatched	Number returned	Percentage returned
Primary headteacher	163	80	49
Primary governor	163	47	29
Secondary headteacher	136	39	29
Secondary governor	136	17	13

Source: NFER survey of primary and secondary headteachers, 2009.

As Table 1.2 shows, around half (49 per cent) of primary headteachers who replied to the first questionnaire responded this time around, but unfortunately, only just over a quarter of secondary headteachers who responded to the first questionnaire responded this time. The governor response rate was also substantially lower than expected.

1.3.3 The literature review

Acquiring the relevant sources

Parameters for the review were established and NFER's Library staff searched a range of education, social care and sociological databases, focusing chiefly on literature concerning the United Kingdom but including relevant international studies. Studies to be considered for the review dated from 1997 to the present. Search strategies were developed using the controlled vocabulary pertinent to each database. Terms were searched both as keywords and as free-text.

The review sought to identify relevant findings, evidence and discussion in the literature on Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils and their parents, from 1997 onwards, in relation to the following criteria:

- empirically-based research;
- policy documents;
- evidence exploring academic and social issues;
- evidence on improving educational experiences and outcomes;
- good practice examples;
- implications for future policy and practice.

Identifying the research for inclusion

Initial searches identified 322 sources as relevant to the literature review. However, when research abstracts were examined, it was evident that a number of sources were focused predominantly on issues relating to social and educational disadvantage, ethnicity, mobility and vulnerable groups, but not necessarily in relation to Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities. These, along with opinion pieces, were therefore eliminated from the review. In addition, a list of relevant European literature provided by the Steering Group for the project identified another 12 sources. Detailed examination of all these sources led to the final inclusion in the review of 91 pieces of literature fitting the required criteria.

Summarising the literature

Information and findings from these publications were then summarised according to a number of pertinent themes (including: attitudes; expectations; aspirations; relationships; parental involvement; attendance and mobility; behaviour; achievement etc.), which subsequently formed the structure of the review.

1.3.4 Case studies

During the spring and summer of 2009, case studies were undertaken in ten secondary schools, five primary schools and five alternative education provisions. The sample was selected from schools with Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils on roll that responded to the first questionnaire sent out in the autumn term 2007 as part of the national survey. The schools were chosen because of the good practice they were demonstrating in working with Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils. The main aim of the case studies was to explore in greater depth some of the strategies and approaches described by schools in the questionnaire returns. Researchers conducted face-to-face interviews with senior leaders and other key staff from schools and local authorities and held focus group discussions with pupils, parents and teachers.

1.4 The report

This final report draws together all the findings from each strand of the research. Following this introduction to the study, the report is divided into seven subsequent chapters.

Chapter two considers the attainment and progress of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils.

Chapter three presents findings relating to attendance and exclusion of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Pupils from school.

Chapter four focuses on the transfer of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils from primary to secondary school.

Chapter five contributes to, and expands, the existing body of evidence on the retention of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils in secondary education.

Chapter six explores the value of promoting softer outcomes for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils and considers the ways in which they can be pursued.

Chapter seven presents the Traveller and Roma Gypsy Education Tool (TARGET) model. It explains how the tool can be applied and provides five illustrative examples to demonstrate how case-study schools in different contexts targeted their efforts accordingly in order to improve educational outcomes.

Chapter eight concludes the report and identifies key messages for policy makers, schools and Gypsy, Roma and Traveller families.

2.   Attainment

We have to maintain the focus on getting them some good exam results – it's not enough to just get them to read and write. We need to equip them to be able to go off and get a trade, or work on getting them to go into 6th form. Raising aspirations is what we try to do here.

<div align="right">Assistant headteacher</div>

2.1   Introduction

In 2006, an analysis of school census data concluded that 'Gypsy/Roma, Traveller of Irish heritage, Black, Pakistani and Bangladeshi pupils consistently have lower levels of attainment than other ethnic groups across all Key Stages' (DCSF, 2006). Furthermore, Gypsy/Roma and Traveller of Irish heritage pupils 'make less progress at (primary and) secondary school than similar White British pupils'. Documentation published three years later by the National Strategies to support the Raising Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Achievement Programme, confirmed the same trend (DCSF, 2009b).

The literature review conducted for this study identified a number of barriers preventing Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils from fully accessing the curriculum including lack of engagement, interrupted education, negative experiences and lack of continuity. The National Strategies guidance pointed out that even where pupils have relatively stable school experiences 'their achievement rates are still significantly lower than those of their peers' (DCSF, 2009b, p.13). The guidance found that 'poverty indicators (free school meals [FSM] eligibility) are only marginal contributors to the underachievement of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils; the causes of their underachievement lie beyond these factors' (DCSF, 2009b).

2.2   The national data

The statistical analysis undertaken as part of this project confirms that a complex range of factors contribute to the underachievement of these groups. When compared to a matched cohort of non-Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils the levels of progress achieved between KS1 and KS2 were equivalent. However, the raw scores of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils were approximately one sub-level (two points) lower at both KS1 and KS2. Furthermore, the matching process may effectively exclude factors that are determined by culture and lifestyle. For example, the analysis discovered that Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils tended to be concentrated in

schools with below average results. Such schools are more likely to have vacancies than schools with better results and there is likely to be less competition for places. Accordingly, new arrivals, more mobile and less assertive families (e.g. those unlikely to challenge school placement decisions) are more likely to find themselves in these schools. Results showed that 41 per cent of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils with only KS2 SAT results (suggesting they had disrupted education), were in schools within the lowest quintile (1/5) of attainment.

Although those pupils in school for KS1 and KS2 tests showed equivalent levels of progress to a matched cohort of non-Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils, albeit from a lower baseline, the greater concern is the high proportion of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils for whom a progress score could not be calculated because they had not been assessed at KS1. In 2008, just over half (52 per cent) of the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller KS2 cohort did not have KS1 scores, and their average KS2 points score was 2.1 lower than those with KS1 data (the equivalent figures in 2007 were 35 per cent without KS1 data and 3.0 points lower scores). Pupils with missing KS test data had higher rates of FSM eligibility, suggesting a connection between poverty and disrupted educational experience.

Analysis also controlled for SEN, but it is important to recognise that Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils are defined as having the highest levels of SEN of all ethnic minority groups. This may be the result of interrupted schooling, families lacking information or experiencing problems accessing appropriate health care, or schools failing to respond appropriately to cultural difference.

Establishing pupil progress in the secondary phase presented additional difficulties. The KS4 sample was found to be much smaller than the equivalent KS2 sample. This is caused by three factors:

- the non-transfer of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils to secondary school;
- drop-out of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils during the secondary school phase;
- change of self-ascribed ethnic code by pupils.

In the 2008 National Pupil Database, there were 955 pupils in Year 11 that could be considered Gypsy, Roma or Traveller, because they had ascribed to one of the categories at some point between KS2 and 4. Of these, 568 (60 per cent) had Gypsy, Roma and Traveller ethnicity codes, whilst 387 (41 per cent) had other codes. The statistical analysis examined the data on the whole group and concluded that,

controlling for gender, FSM, deprivation and SEN, Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils made, on average, less progress. Including Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils in the analysis who had changed their ascription made no overall difference to this effect, although, Roma pupils with EAL who were categorised as such in Year 11, made significantly more progress than those who were not identified as such in Year 11.

Nine per cent of the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller cohort (85 pupils) were in the upper two quartiles of attainment at KS4. Compared to the cohort of lower performing Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils, a higher proportion of the higher attaining pupils Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils were female, a lower proportion had FSM and lower proportions also had SEN.

2.3   Findings from the survey schools

In the **first questionnaire** to primary and secondary schools in 2007, the most common type of strategy highlighted by both primary and secondary headteachers to raise the achievement of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils was the use of additional dedicated support, for example, in the form of TA or TESS support, employing staff who speak the home language, and by curriculum development/support. Where particular members of staff had designated responsibilities for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils 'Data analysis: monitoring and tracking' was identified as a key role (64 per cent of primary and 51 per cent of secondary headteachers).

As part of the **second questionnaire** in 2009, primary and secondary headteachers were asked to rate the extent to which a number of factors felt to impact positively on attainment were established features of their school's ethos/practice (see Table 2.1).

Table 2.1 Established features of current ethos/practice impacting on Gypsy, Roma and Travellers attainment

	Very well established		Quite well established		In need of some development		In need of significant development	
	Primary Headteachers	Secondary Headteachers	Primary Headteachers	Secondary Headteachers	Primary Headteachers	Secondary Headteachers	Primary Headteachers	Secondary Headteachers
	(n=80))	(n=39)	(n=80))	(n=39)	(n=80))	(n=39)	(n=80)	(n=39)
Performance data routinely tracked and analysed by ethnicity	52	20	23	14	2	4	1	0
Using positive role models	17	12	27	15	23	5	7	5
Personalised learning	28	13	35	21	13	5	1	0
Parents support school activities and offer services	16	3	39	5	19	19	6	9
Staff value and celebrate Gypsy/Roma Traveller culture	40	5	31	15	8	16	1	2
Distance learning for mobile pupils*	5	2	13	7	14	6	13	1
Learning support interventions available/used appropriately	29	17	36	12	11	8	3	1
Option of vocational curriculum **	-	13	-	21	-	5	-	0
Option of Blended Learning (e.g. FE, EHE) ***	-	9	-	12	-	5	-	1

* - 21 secondary heads and 35 primary heads responded "not applicable"
** - 2 secondary heads responded "not applicable"
*** - 9 secondary heads responded "not applicable"
Source: NFER survey

'Performance data being routinely tracked and analysed by ethnicity' was said to be very well established in half of the secondary schools and two-thirds of the primary schools surveyed. Only four secondary headteachers and three primary headteachers indicated this needed any further development in their school. 'Using positive role models' to improve attainment was less well established: roughly a third of both samples (ten of the 39 secondary headteachers and 30 of the 80 primary headteachers) suggested this needed some, or significant, development.

Curriculum flexibility, as evidenced by Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils having personalised learning opportunities, was seen as very well or quite well established in almost all the secondary schools (34 of the 39 secondary headteachers stating this). In primary schools, 14 of the 80 headteachers indicated this was an area in need of development.

The statement 'parents support school activities and offer services' was an example of where secondary headteachers noted the need for some, or significant, development. Well over two-thirds (28 out of 39) of secondary headteachers responded in this way, whereas this was the case for less than a third of the primary headteachers (25 out of 80).

In addition , the statement 'distance learning is provided for mobile pupils' was deemed 'not applicable' by 21 of the 39 secondary headteachers and 35 of the 80 primary headteachers, perhaps suggesting that many of our sample of schools worked with non-mobile families. Nevertheless, a third of primary headteachers who responded noted this as an area for some, or significant, development, as did a total of only seven secondary respondents. Nearly a quarter of secondary headteachers (nine out of 39) indicated their school needed some development relating to the statement 'a wide range of learning support interventions are available and used appropriately', compared to fewer than one in five of their primary counterparts (11 out of 80).

When comparisons are made between primary and secondary headteachers' responses to the questionnaire statement 'staff value and celebrate Gypsy/Roma Traveller cultures', there are marked differences. Half of the primary headteacher sample felt this was 'very well established' in their school compared with only five of their secondary counterparts. Nearly half of the secondary headteachers stated this aspect of respect for different cultures was in need of some development, but only nine out of the 80 primary headteachers responded this way.

Secondary headteachers were also asked to comment on statements about alternative curriculum opportunities, namely a vocational curriculum and blended learning. In the majority of secondary schools (34 of the 39 schools that responded), vocational opportunities were quite, or very well, established. Blended learning was less evident across the sample, with about half of the secondary headteachers in total indicating this opportunity was established, and nine stating that this was not applicable to their school.

Although headteachers believed parents felt comfortable to come into school to discuss their children's progress, only a minority of headteachers felt parental engagement was well established. Table 2.2 shows responses to a specific question asking about parental involvement in parents evenings or consultations. Just ten of the 39 secondary headteachers who responded said that more than half of their Gypsy, Roma and Traveller parents attended parents evenings or consultations, compared with almost half of primary schools.

Table 2.2 Proportion of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller parents involved in parents evenings/consultations

	None	Less than 25%	25-50%	51-75%	76-100%	No response
Primary schools (80)	3	14	21	10	29	3
Secondary schools (39)	4	14	10	4	6	1

Source: NFER survey of schools, 2009

2.4   The case-study data

Case-study interviewees including school staff, LA staff and parents were asked to comment on the challenges, key factors and successful strategies associated with the attainment of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils.

2.4.1 Factors which support and obstruct attainment of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils

Why are [Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils] *underachievers? Probably, persecution and racism. They are very self-sufficient, and not trustful of routes society provides for progression.*

Secondary headteacher

In our interviews with school staff, it was clear that attainment was being addressed in the context of a wide range of issues relating to inclusion, engagement, attendance, behaviour, identity, partnership working and culture. In many cases attainment targets, particularly the national threshold targets of five or more GCSEs at level C or above (including English and Maths), were regarded as unachievable for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils on roll, but schools adopted personalised targets to maintain engagement and realistic expectations.

Most of the schools felt that the attainment outcomes for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils were low in academic terms because of parental and community attitudes. Several mentioned that parents did not attach the same priority to formal education as the schools did. One senior teacher suggested that:

Parents are colluding, sabotaging aspirations. Achieving undermines community engagement. They could access the curriculum but from Y10 on they start sabotaging their own success…. Its just cultural. If no-one in the community goes out and gets a [mainstream] *job, they don't know where they're going.*

Some pupils who were on track to achieve reasonable GCSE grades, had been withdrawn from school because 'they feel old enough to be out working' (Traveller parent) and because the family business in which they plan to work has no requirement for formal qualifications. The decision to remain in formal education is often left to the pupil, with the parent, in this example, making clear what their preferred option is.

She wants to go [to University]*; if she said she didn't want to, that would be easy, but she's asking me to go and I don't feel I've got any right to stop her. There's certain things she wants to do and she'll need to go to college or university. I'll never ever stop them, I'll be there for them, but if I had my way then no, she wouldn't go.*

The aspirations of parents were felt to be limited by their own experiences of education resulting in their children experiencing difficulties making informed choices.

> *Mam says we need to come to learn how to read and write 'cos you need to read to do the driving theory test. … I want to be a lawyer, but I don't have the education – I can't read and write.*
>
> Female pupil

An assistant headteacher recognised there is a mismatch between the nature of the education system and the way of life of the communities.

> *Many Travellers move around which disadvantages the children – they move from school to school so the easy way out is not to go to school and this means that they don't achieve. National tests are geared towards children who are stable in one school so the system isn't set up for Traveller children to achieve.*

Schools also recognised diversity among their Gypsy, Roma and Traveller populations and were more inclined to adopt approaches that took account of different needs.

> *There is a very large number of* [Gypsy, Roma and Traveller] *pupils in the school and therefore there is diversity within this group. Varied experiences help to challenge and breakdown stereotypes of* [Gypsy, Roma and Traveller].
>
> Headteacher

> *It varies from family to family really. You know I have a chap in my class, his mum reads with him every night and does all the work that is sent home, whereas opposed to another one who they don't have the resources at home and obviously literacy skills to do so.*
>
> Teacher

Unfortunately, where the attitudes of pupils and families to education conformed to that expected by the school, there was a danger their identity could be overlooked.

> *People don't tend to think of* [name of pupil] *as a Traveller, because she's quiet, she works hard, she's never any bother, she helps out.*
>
> Teacher

One school noted a positive, generational change.

> *The daughters seem to be staying at school longer and there's a recognition by some in the community that education is valuable. For example, two mums*

of current pupils [who also attended this school] *are now going back to college to get basic literacy and numeracy qualifications, and accept that they didn't work hard enough in school at the time. But their daughters are doing well at school and they fully support and encourage them.*

Assistant headteacher

Parents in one primary school, who also had children attending a local secondary school, were clear they wanted all their children to complete the secondary phase. They felt that qualifications were now essential for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils to compete on an equal footing, in the areas of work with which they were familiar.

2.4.2   Strategies to improve the attainment of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils

Case-study schools were asked to identify strategies to improve the attainment of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils. They included:

- engaging parents;
- raising expectations;
- personalised approaches;
- additional support;
- school ethos;
- role of the LA.

Engaging parents

Schools recognised that they needed to encourage parents to engage in dialogue. It was suggested that those Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils who made most progress and were most likely to remain in education beyond 16 were those who had parental support. Targeting of specific pupils and families was necessary because the communities did not know what was available or how they might support their children's learning. Staff visited parents at home and made particular efforts to encourage them to attend parents' evenings.

The parents' evening for Roma families will be run in conjunction with the TESS and they will offer community transport to the event – it will be an open door session welcoming them to the school but also giving an insight into the school, the education system and examinations and expectations.

SENCO

Another school in a challenging locality cancelled lessons for the whole day in order that (all) parents could come in at a time convenient to them and staff had sufficient time to engage families appropriately.

In other cases, because of external factors, such as the parents' own experiences of school, it was felt to be necessary to engage in outreach work.

> *We have to educate the parents that the children have potential and we want that potential to be fulfilled here. Sometimes that is really hard, especially if they have had bad experiences. We have joined up working with the family link worker going out to talk to parents, and the learning mentor mentoring the kids. It means that the school can get out to them, rather than relying on the parents coming in.*
>
> Transition coordinator

One school noted that some Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils are high achievers and their parents have taken steps to not travel in order to support their learning.

Raising expectations

> *Most of our students are not underachieving if you look at where they have come from and what they have done.*
>
> EMA coordinator

Many of the schools made some reference to raising expectations of the pupils, their families and even their own staff. Successful role models were used to raise self-esteem and make pupils more aware of the options available to them through school.

In several cases, the expectations related to the pupil becoming an independent learner and finding the right skills they need for work and life, rather than necessarily achieving national target grades at GCSE.

In most cases, it seemed that Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils maintained friendship groups from within their own community and they preferred to spend time with friends who understood their lives. This understandable approach tended to minimise access to role models with raised expectations. Some of the Roma pupils interviewed felt they might learn better in a school with no other Roma pupils although there was no consensus in the focus group on this.

A member of staff with knowledge of Romania felt that the pupils' low expectations were a symptom of the discrimination Roma had suffered before coming to the UK.

> *In Romania pupils feel they won't have same opportunities. This school gives a sense of value and high expectations. In Romania, no pressure is put on pupils to achieve. It is not expected of Roma families to send their children to school; nobody puts pressure on them, nobody questions them.*
>
> EMA teacher

Through pupil tracking and data analysis, schools have sought to identify pupils who are achieving below their potential. Such exercises generated other questions, such as why more mobile Showmen's families achieved better than site-based Gypsies, and in another case, whether the strategies the school planned to raise achievement would be acceptable to the communities.

> *The families are supportive but the community works in a slightly different way in terms of expectations after you are 16.*
>
> EMA coordinator

A TESS coordinator offered an alternative view where a school with more modest expectations could be more inclusive.

> *Attainment is also generally low and* [this works] *in the favour of Traveller kids in that the school does not view them as a drain on results. It's not hugely 'pushy' academically and maybe that suits some of the Travellers. As a group, they don't stand out in this school as achieving lower than anyone else. There are no discernible differences in exclusions either.*

Personalised approaches

Several secondary schools adopted versions of primary practice at the start of KS3 to ease transition and offered nurture groups to help pupils cope with school. These arrangements were not designed specifically for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils but they were able to benefit from them.

> *The school has a* [name of group]*. Pupils are identified whilst still in primary on the basis of academic needs not behaviour. A group of pupils are taught in a separate building in a primary school type setting. Several Traveller pupils are in this provision. The pupils do join in some mainstream lessons like music, PE etc. The aim is to get them up to a higher standard of attainment so they can cope better in mainstream lessons.*
>
> Headteacher

In other schools, classes stayed with the same teacher for core curriculum subjects, which was felt to contribute to good relationships between staff and pupils, and added

security for those who might feel vulnerable. One school operated an EAL unit, available to all EAL learners, which aimed to establish fluency as rapidly as possible through a very structured, grammatically-based course taught through curriculum subjects.

> *The kids do love* [the lessons] *because they are so structured. They can see what they're doing, where they're going and the can see some outcome.*
>
> EMA coordinator

Schools have adopted strategies for supporting pupils capable of higher achievement, identified through pupil tracking and analysis and given monthly personal interviews with senior members of staff to check progress and give encouragement.

> *This makes the child feel important and there has been a difference in them... giving time to children who normally don't get that value in education really is important to them because I'm not treating them from an ethnicity or a culture, I'm treating them as an individual person and I think that they have all responded positively to that.*
>
> Assistant Headteacher

In other cases, pupils who might struggle with the GCSE curriculum are offered 'a bespoke curriculum' which allows them to study construction, hair and beauty, painting and decorating, alongside learning leisure pursuits and life-skills in the community.

> *When* [Gypsy, Roma and Traveller] *pupils arrive part-way through the year if they have been travelling this programme will allow them to slot into a particular programme or set of interests they have.*
>
> Assistant head teacher

Another school was prepared to persevere in its efforts to find a curriculum option that worked for the student.

> *Where students have struggled, a range of strategies have been used to keep them engaged including changed timetables, part-time attendance and reintegration. Use is made of the school counsellor, PSPs* [Personal Support Plans]*, external agencies and mentors. ...we exhaust all options before we resort to an ultimatum.*
>
> ECM support staff

A specialist college believed that the business and enterprise culture it promoted made a difference, helping Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils and 'make them see that

education can help them increase their future opportunities – help them set up on their own'.

One school offered a flexible curriculum from 14-19 with all students choosing a VTEC first diploma (equivalent to four GCSEs) and involving 8-10 hours per week input from students. Courses were offered in health, business, sports, performance, art and design, travel and construction. In addition, Roma pupils were able to elect an EAL option.

The personalised curriculum generally offered at KS4 and beyond seemed to meet with the expectations of parents interviewed. The consensus of opinion was that a flexible, work-related curriculum would encourage Travellers to attend more regularly and stay in school longer. Parents suggested a school timetable where half of the week pupils spent in school and the other half at college would enhance learning opportunities.

A mix of curriculum support and alternative certification was used to meet the needs of learners, keep them engaged and lay the foundations of future learning.

> *Access to the curriculum is supported by the presence of specialist provision. For example, curriculum support for Year 10/11 and a non-GCSE English class. JET qualifications* [Junior English Tests] *and Senior English Tests. Hopefully this will prepare them for GCSEs when they go to college.*
> SENCO

Additional support

Schools used interventions, particularly those developed through the National Strategies programmes, to boost the attainment of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils. Those schools engaged in the National Strategies' Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Achievement programme targeted underachieving pupils and used funding from the programme to offer extra support to boost their attainment.

Most schools used pupil tracking to identify underachieving pupils and offered appropriate support. This was usually the offer available to all children in the school and was not particularly targeted on Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils.

Booster sessions and basic skills support [are offered] *as soon as any need is identified* [through data monitoring/tracking]. *Particularly vulnerable children can also work one to one with a teaching assistant. In addition, a psychologist is available.*

<div align="right">Deputy headteacher</div>

In some schools, additional support in the form of a more flexible curriculum was put in place for pupils identified as being capable of higher achievement, to enable them to reach their full potential. An interviewee noted:

Travellers are becoming more successful in our school – we are working harder at it. They are more successful academically, and in sport and in drama. Success has come from increasing flexibility in the curriculum.

<div align="right">Headteacher</div>

Schools found extended school activities, such as homework clubs and holiday courses supported achievement. An assistant headteacher gave the following example, highlighting the risk for the school.

The school offered the young person [with very poor attendance] *the opportunity to attend a holiday course in the half term holidays to do a BTEC course worth four GCSEs and another computer course equivalent to one GCSE. She will attend a holiday course but will not attend during term time for a number of reasons.*

School Ethos

One of the schools was a lead in the area for the SEAL (Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning) programme. The school felt that this approach had an impact on all areas of learning. Other schools adopted similar principles:

We have a reward system, each week, for most-improved, best answers and overall. [Each term we have] *celebrations of academic, personal social achievement.*

<div align="right">SENCO</div>

One school stressed the importance of good teaching and learning.

[The key is] *providing an accessible curriculum delivered in an interesting way – lessons need to be enjoyable and kids will learn.*

<div align="right">Assistant headteacher</div>

Another school noted how its offer of a flexible curriculum with other efforts to engage pupils had resulted in improved attendance and achievement.

Role of the LA

Schools worked in partnership with TESSs to raise the achievement of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils.

> *As part of the National Strategies, the school is being asked to monitor all GRT pupils' academic progress. Looking at the children where they are now and the TESS will work with the school to analyse what can be put in place by the school to help to raise this.*
>
> TESS coordinator

Schools also valued the outreach work undertaken by the TESS although they believed it was more effective when the service helped build direct relationships between families and school staff. In other cases, services organised activities on sites to support achievement in school.

One LA had parallel projects to raise achievement with Roma and Somali pupils across a number of schools, where staff would plan together and discuss pupil outcomes.

3. Attendance and exclusion

3.1 Introduction

As the literature review conducted for this research has shown, the attendance of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils continues to be identified as a significant problem, particularly in the secondary phase (Ofsted, 1999; 2001; 2003). Day-to-day attendance is regarded as problematic throughout the literature and as Lloyd et al. (1999) and Derrington and Kendall (2004) point out, this applies to housed or otherwise settled Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils, as well as those that maintain a mobile lifestyle. Persistent absenteeism has been found to lead to incremental discontinuity in terms of academic attainment which, in turn, can lead to further absence and disaffection (Reynolds *et al.*, 2003).

The literature also consistently highlights the over-representation of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children in official statistics on exclusion (Ofsted, 1996; Save the Children, 2001; Parker-Jenkins and Hartas, 2002; DfES, 2006; ACE, 2007; Lloyd and McCluskey, 2008). Parker-Jenkins and Hartas (2002) argue that the use of exclusion as a sanction for these groups is especially 'ironic' given that their attendance is shown to be so poor. At the same time, these pupils are said to be particularly vulnerable to being excluded – school is seen as an institution in which differences in culture can often lead to Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils being seen as 'different' from the norm and their behaviour as 'problematic' (Lloyd and Norris, 1998, p. 362).

This chapter firstly discusses attendance, presenting the national picture for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils, and then reporting on the findings relating to attendance from our survey of primary and secondary school headteachers and governors, as well as from the case-study phase of the research. Secondly, the chapter explores the national picture in terms of the exclusion from school of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils, before presenting the findings on exclusion from the first questionnaire in the survey of primary and secondary school headteachers and governors. Exclusion rates were not a specific focus of either the second questionnaire or discussions in the case-study visits, which were very much concerned with 'what works' in terms of improving educational outcomes for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils. However, improving levels of exclusion was implicit in the accounts of inclusive ethos and the range of strategies identified in the individual schools.

3.2   Attendance: the national data

Table 3.1 below presents the official figures from the 2008 National Pupil Database for absence from primary schools, firstly for all pupils, then for Travellers of Irish heritage, Gypsy/Roma pupils and Roma pupils with EAL.

Table 3.1 Average absence rates in primary schools for 2007/08

	All pupils	Travellers of Irish heritage	Gypsy/ Roma	Roma (EAL)
	%	%	%	%
Total absence	5.3	24.2	19.0	20.2
Authorised absence	4.7	17.8	14.5	11.0
Unauthorised absence	0.6	6.5	4.5	9.2

Source: National Pupil Database, 2008
Percentage of half day sessions missed

Table 3.2 then presents the official figures in the same format in relation to absence from secondary schools.

Table 3.2 Average absence rates in secondary schools for 2007/08

	All pupils	Travellers of Irish heritage	Gypsy/ Roma	Roma (EAL)
	%	%	%	%
Total absence	7.4	27.3	23.5	25.9
Authorised absence	5.9	17.9	14.4	11.8
Unauthorised absence	1.5	9.4	11.8	14.0

Source: National Pupil Database, 2008
Percentage of half day sessions missed

The above tables clearly show that, nationally, in both the primary and secondary phases, Travellers of Irish heritage, Gypsy/Roma pupils and Roma pupils with EAL have significantly higher levels of overall absence from school than pupils from other ethnic groups. Within that (again in both primary and secondary schools), Travellers of Irish heritage have slightly more absences than either Gypsy/Roma pupils, or Roma pupils with EAL. Of these three groups, Gypsy/Roma pupils have the lowest level of overall absence.

When we consider the levels of authorised and unauthorised absence in the primary phase (see Table 3.1), for all pupils, as well as for Travellers of Irish heritage, Gypsy/Roma pupils and Roma pupils with EAL, levels of authorised absence are

higher than levels of unauthorised absence (although much less so for the latter group of pupils).

Interestingly, when we compare levels in the secondary phase (see Table 3.2 above), for all pupils, for Travellers of Irish heritage, and for Gypsy/Roma pupils, levels of authorised absence remain higher than levels of unauthorised absence, although the difference has reduced (particularly so for the latter group). However, for Roma pupils with EAL, the situation has reversed – levels of unauthorised absence are higher than levels of authorised absence in the secondary phase. One explanation for this could be that Roma parents might be less likely to contact the school due to a lack of confidence or fluency in English.

Absence tables were also broken down by gender. In the primary phase, levels of absence for Travellers of Irish heritage and Roma pupils with EAL are very slightly higher for girls than for boys. In contrast, for Gypsy/Roma pupils, girls have very slightly lower levels of absence than boys. At secondary level, the picture changes – levels of absence for Travellers of Irish heritage and Gypsy/Roma pupils are slightly higher for boys than for girls, while for Roma pupils with EAL, girls still have a slightly higher absence rate than boys. This situation is reflected in the retention figures shown later in Chapter 5 (see Table 5.2) which show that Roma boys with EAL are more likely to reach Year 11 than their female counterparts. We suggest in Chapter 5 that this might be due to fewer opportunities for the boys to join established family businesses – thus the incentive to attend and stay on in order to gain vocational or academic qualifications may be greater.

3.3   Attendance: findings from the survey schools

In **the first questionnaire** in autumn 2007, primary and secondary school headteachers were asked to state the percentage of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils in their school that travelled during the school year because of their parents' work and/or cultural activities, thereby missing periods of school. Table 3.3 presents headteachers' responses.

Table 3.3 Percentage of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils that travel during the school year because of their parents' work and/or cultural activities

Percentage	Primary Headteachers		Secondary Head teachers	
	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)
Less than 1%	26	16	52	41
1–5%	9	6	6	5
5–10%	6	4	3	2
10–20%	15	9	11	9
20–35%	16	10	12	9
35–50%	8	5	3	2
50–70%	15	9	7	6
More than 70%	43	27	8	6
Missing	23	14	26	20

Base: Primary headteachers: 161; Secondary headteachers: 128
Source: NFER survey of primary and secondary headteachers, 2007.

Table 3.3 reveals that responses of primary and secondary headteachers to this question differed quite considerably. Of most interest is the fact that two-fifths of secondary headteachers (41 per cent) stated that less than one per cent of their Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils travelled during the school year, compared with one in six (16 per cent) primary headteachers. In contrast, over a quarter of primary headteachers (27 per cent) reported that more than 70 per cent of their Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils travelled during the school year, whereas only six percent of secondary headteachers stated that this was the case. There are a number of possible explanations for this, for example, families sending their children to secondary school may be less nomadic, or it may be that primary teachers have closer relationships with Gypsy, Roma and Traveller families and therefore code cultural absences more accurately.

Headteachers were also asked to indicate the length of time pupils generally travelled for. The most common response, reported by over a third of primary headteachers (36 per cent) and just under a quarter (23 per cent) of secondary headteachers was that the time spent travelling during the school year varied. However, around one in five primary and secondary headteachers (22 per cent and 19 per cent respectively) stated that their Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils could be away travelling for months during the school year.

Previous studies have reported that absence is not always followed up quickly by schools (Kiddle, 1999; Derrington and Kendall, 2004) with inconsistencies reported in

the way non-attendance is recorded, often owing to a lack of understanding of the regulations, particularly to the use of the 'T' code (DfES, 2006b), which should relate to the act of travelling for occupational purposes as opposed to being a Traveller. As part of the second questionnaire in 2009, primary and secondary headteachers were asked to report the percentage of absences during the school year that had been recorded as travelling-related absences (i.e. using the 'T' code), as authorised family holidays or as unauthorised absences. Headteacher responses to this question are shown in Table 3.4 overleaf.

Looking at Table 3.4, we can see that one-third of both primary and secondary headteachers (29 and 14 respectively) reported that over 80 per cent of absences were recorded as travelling-related absences. In contrast, fewer than one-fifth (13) of primary headteachers and one in ten (4) secondary headteachers reported that 20 per cent or less of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absences were recorded as authorised family holidays, while just over a fifth (17) of primary headteachers and just over one in ten (5) secondary headteachers reported that 20 per cent or less were recorded as unauthorised absences.

Table 3.4 Percentage of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupil absences recorded as Travelling-related absences, authorised family holidays or unauthorised absences

Percentage of recorded absence	Travelling-related absences		Authorised family holidays		Unauthorised absences	
	Primary headteachers	Secondary headteachers	Primary headteachers	Secondary headteachers	Primary headteachers	Secondary headteachers
	(n=80)	(n=39)	(n=80)	(n=39)	(n=80)	(n=39)
0	5	2	8	4	5	3
1 – 20	5	2	5	0	12	2
21 – 40	2	1	1	1	4	2
41 – 60	1	1	0	0	2	0
61 – 80	8	0	1	0	2	0
81 – 100	29	14	1	0	3	2

Base: Primary headteachers: 80; Secondary headteachers: 39
Source: NFER survey of primary and secondary headteachers, 2009

3.3.1 Strategies for maintaining and improving attendance

The **first questionnaire**, in the autumn of 2007, asked headteachers and governors to identify the strategies that they had found to be particularly successful in relation to maintaining and improving the attendance of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils, and these are shown in Table 3.5 below.

Table 3.5 Strategies to maintain and improve the attendance of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils

Strategy	Primary headteachers		Secondary headteachers	
	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)
Dedicated support re attendance	143	89	102	80
Contact with parents/families	124	77	44	34
School organisation/ethos	59	37	46	36
Curriculum support	5	3	57	45
Out-of-school hours support	5	3	4	3
Other	24	15	13	10
No response	16	10	12	9

Headteachers cited more than one strategy, so percentages do not sum to 100.
Base: Primary headteachers: 161; Secondary headteachers: 128.
Source: NFER survey of primary and secondary headteachers, 2007.

The most common type of strategy for maintaining and improving the attendance of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils, at both primary and secondary level, was the provision of dedicated support for attendance, in particular from the EWO, TESS or through a member of staff in school with responsibility for attendance issues. This was highlighted by almost nine out of ten (89 per cent) primary headteachers and four-fifths (80 per cent) of secondary headteachers in the survey schools.

The second most common response from more than three-quarters (77 per cent) of primary headteachers was contact with parents/families, including procedures for contact on the first day of absence and site visits and/or meetings to explain and encourage attendance. In contrast, this was highlighted by slightly over a third of secondary headteachers (34 per cent), with, perhaps surprisingly, only six per cent of these headteachers reporting procedures for contact on the first day of absence. For secondary headteachers,

the second most common response was curriculum support, for example, an individualised or flexible curriculum and the provision of distance learning packs. This was highlighted by almost half (45 per cent) of secondary headteachers compared with only three per cent of primary headteachers.

The remaining types of strategies shown in Table 3.5 were mentioned by similar proportions of survey primary and secondary headteachers. School organisation/ethos including, for example, data monitoring, permitting late arrivals, encouragement/rewards, flexible/reduced timetables and support with uniforms, were highlighted by more than a third of primary and secondary headteachers (37 and 36 per cent respectively). Out-of-school hours support for attendance, such as breakfast/after school clubs and walking buses, was highlighted by only three per cent of primary and secondary headteachers. The 'Other' category in Table 3.5, in the main, includes comments made by primary and secondary headteachers as opposed to suggestions for specific strategies, for example, 'attendance is good when they are not travelling' and 'nothing works with some'.

In the **second questionnaire** in the autumn of 2009, primary and secondary headteachers were asked about the extent to which a range of factors were established features of their school's current ethos/practice. Included in this were a number of the strategies that primary and secondary headteachers had reported in the initial 2007 survey to be particularly successful in relation to maintaining and improving the attendance of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils (as shown in Table 3.5). The charts overleaf set out primary and then secondary headteachers' responses in the 2009 questionnaire, indicating the extent to which these strategies were established features of the school's current ethos/practice.

Strategies to maintain and improve attendance
Primary headteacher responses
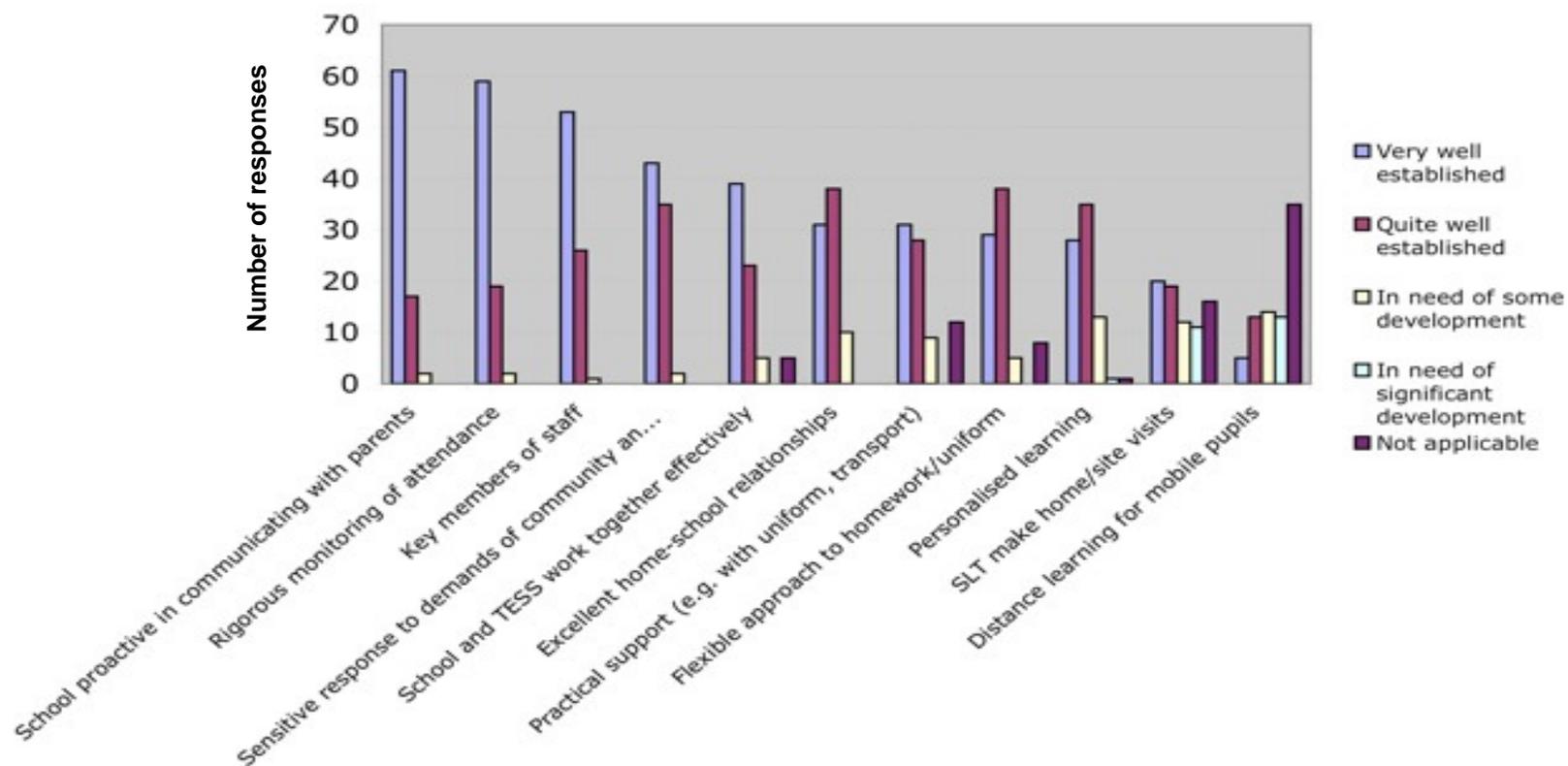
Strategies to maintain and improve attendance
Secondary headteacher responses

Number of responses (y-axis): 0, 5, 10, 15, 20, 25, 30, 35

Categories (x-axis):
- Rigorous monitoring of attendance
- School proactive in communicating with parents
- Key members of staff
- Option of vocational learning (secondary)
- Excellent home-school relationships
- Practical support (e.g. with uniform, transport)
- Personalised learning
- School and TESS work together effectively
- Sensitive response to demands of community an...
- Option of blended learning (secondary)
- SLT make home/site visits
- Flexible approach to homework/uniform
- Distance learning for mobile pupils

Legend:
- Very well established
- Quite well established
- In need of some development
- In need of significant development
- Not applicable

The strategies that the vast majority of both primary and secondary headteachers felt were either very well- or quite well-established features of their school's current ethos and practice were having key members of staff who have developed close working relationships with Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils and parents, proactive communication with parents, providing a sensitive response to the demands of the community and extended family, and rigorous monitoring of attendance. However, a higher proportion of secondary headteachers did report that these strategies were in some need of development in their school.

More than three-quarters of primary and secondary headteachers stated that excellent home-school relationships were a very well- or quite well-established feature of their school's ethos and practice. However, more than a quarter (11) of secondary headteachers reported that this was a feature in need of some development. Indeed, the literature review for this study highlighted how positive home-school relationships often change once pupils transfer to secondary school (Derrington, 2005).

A much higher proportion of primary than secondary headteachers reported that a flexible approach to homework or uniform was an established feature of their school's ethos and practice. What is interesting is that a quarter (10) of secondary headteachers did not feel that having such an approach was applicable to their school. In the case-study schools (see Section 3.4), a more flexible approach to homework (such as giving project-based and/or practical tasks in certain subjects) was appreciated by both Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils and their parents, and was found to increase the engagement and motivation of pupils. Primary headteachers were also more likely to report that working proactively with their TESS was an established feature of the school's ethos and practice.

A higher proportion of secondary than primary headteachers highlighted practical support with, for example, uniform or transport as an established feature of their school's ethos and practice. This was identified in our case-study schools as being effective in facilitating pupils' access to school. Interestingly, one in three primary headteachers felt such assistance was not applicable to their school, perhaps suggesting that Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils do not always come from poorer family backgrounds. Indeed, some families are economically well off.

The strategy in the charts that primary and secondary headteachers reported to be the least well established in primary and secondary schools was home/site visits by senior members of staff. The willingness to engage in outreach work with Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities was highlighted in the literature review for this study as being effective in enhancing the quality of home-school relationships. Given this, and the fact that in the case-study schools, home/site visits were found to be an important way of showing respect for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities, as well as a key element in building effective partnerships with parents and thus engendering mutual trust, the finding that a fifth of primary headteachers (16) and almost a third (12) of secondary headteachers did not feel such visits were applicable to their school is perhaps worrying.

3.4   Attendance: the case-study data

In each of the 15 case-study school visits (which included five primary and ten secondary schools), school staff, governors, pupils and parents were asked to reflect on the strategies employed in their school to encourage the attendance of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils, many of which have been highlighted in the survey responses described in the previous section.

3.4.1 Key individuals in schools

Interviewees in the majority of the case-study schools referred to the benefits for attendance of having an identified key individual in school; someone who was instrumental in building positive relationships with pupils and their parents and thus facilitating feelings of safety and trust.

In several of the schools, this was the role of a home-school/family liaison officer who often undertook home visits (sometimes together with TESS workers or Ethnic Minority and Traveller Achievement Service (EMTAS) staff), which was felt to demonstrate understanding of, and respect for, Traveller culture. In one of the case-study primary schools, the home-school liaison worker met the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children from the school bus and accompanied the KS1 children to their classrooms. In this way, she

was able to deal with any concerns that the children might have and then liaise with the school's pastoral team, acting as a 'go-between'.

In two schools, the presence of specialist Teaching Assistants (TAs) was felt to be particularly beneficial. One TA, in the nursery of a primary school, was from the local Traveller community, which was reported to have been a major factor influencing attendance. Parents were said to feel safe and thus more comfortable about letting their children come into school at a younger age, which had implications for both children's attendance and their subsequent retention in school.

> *Getting them in nursery is a big thing – if we get them young, it's better and easier for them in the rest of school. That's when they progress.*
>
> Teaching Assistant

Some schools had a dedicated Education Welfare Officer (EWO) working in the school for at least part of the school week, while interviewees in others referred to attendance officers and, in one case, a senior member of school staff having responsibility for attendance.

For Roma pupils, especially those with EAL, having a member of staff who could speak their home language and had a good understanding of their cultural experiences was reassuring, and much welcomed by their parents.

3.4.2 Monitoring of attendance

References to greater monitoring and tracking of attendance, in order to identify patterns and put the most appropriate strategies in place, featured in a number of accounts: 'We can try and ensure that nobody slips by the wayside, and we can access all the support that is in place across the school' (deputy headteacher). First-day absence calls, usually conducted by the dedicated staff highlighted in the previous section, were seen to be influential in increasing attendance.

Once patterns of absence had been identified, several interviewees referred to following this up with parents, either through targeted telephone calls or invitations to come into school where parents' attention was drawn to the

number of days their child had been absent. This was said to have surprised a number of parents and to have promoted much discussion about attendance. In one secondary school which ran attendance 'clinics' with individual parents to discuss poor attendance, local Gypsy, Roma and Traveller parents had been invited to attend as a group so that they would feel more comfortable about coming into school; 'It's about breaking down barriers for parents' (headteacher). However, as one primary headteacher pointed out, there was a delicate balance to be found, 'If you push it too hard you undo a lot of the good we have done'.

References were also made to the use of stickers and certificates for individual pupils where good attendance had been identified.

3.3.3 Flexible curriculum

A more flexible approach to the curriculum was seen by a number of case-study interviewees to be an effective strategy for improving the attendance of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils and was one that was particularly welcomed by their parents. There were examples of primary schools incorporating a thematic approach to teaching and learning, in some cases developed in conjunction with the pupils. Several of the secondary schools offered a flexible, work-related or vocational curriculum which was perceived by both parents and children to be more relevant to their way of life and culture, and therefore more likely to engage pupils. Where such opportunities could be offered at an earlier age, this was seen as particularly effective, providing a focus for pupils and improving both attendance and retention.

Also highlighted were 'enrichment' activities, often offered through clubs before and after the traditional school day, as well as, in one primary school, through a 'university' day where a wide range of different activities were on offer to pupils with an emphasis on independent learning. Such activities were identified by teachers in the school as a good opportunity for children to discover new talents, thus increasing engagement and motivation. In another primary school, drama had proved to be an influential medium in engaging Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils, with parents becoming involved in attending performances at the school.

3.4.4 Engaging parents

Several interviewees referred to the importance of 'getting parents on board' in order to engage them, with the school, in jointly addressing attendance issues.

> *Those* [parents] *that are supportive of school, are engaged, and you can have great discussions with them about standards ... their children are having an easier life in school – they attend well, they are doing well – those children are engaged and see the purpose and value of school. Where we struggle to engage with the parents, those are the children that struggle.*
>
> Headteacher

Schools that were successful in raising the attendance of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils were the ones that had been able to build up such positive partnerships with parents. This was achieved through ongoing dialogue with parents and clearly communicated high expectations of good attendance and punctuality.

There were also examples of parents being directly involved in ensuring that their children arrived at school, for example, by operating a rota system for dropping off and picking up children, and the employment as a school bus escort who was a Traveller parent. In the latter case, the provision of transport for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils was perceived to be particularly influential in improving levels of attendance in the primary school involved.

In one of the case-study secondary schools, a 'parents' forum' had been established where parents could come into school to talk about the issues affecting them (one of which might be their children's attendance), and what the school could do to try and improve the situation. In a recent drive to increase the numbers of parents from ethnic minorities attending this forum, particularly those with EAL, specific sessions had been set up, for example, for Somali parents. There were plans in place at the time of our visit to set up a similar session for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller parents.

3.5 Exclusion: the national picture

Statistical First Releases (SFRs) provide information about permanent and fixed-term exclusions from primary, secondary and special schools and

exclusion appeals in England. The chart below is based on data for 2007/08 when, for the first time, a breakdown of fixed-term exclusions by ethnicity at Local Authority level was included.
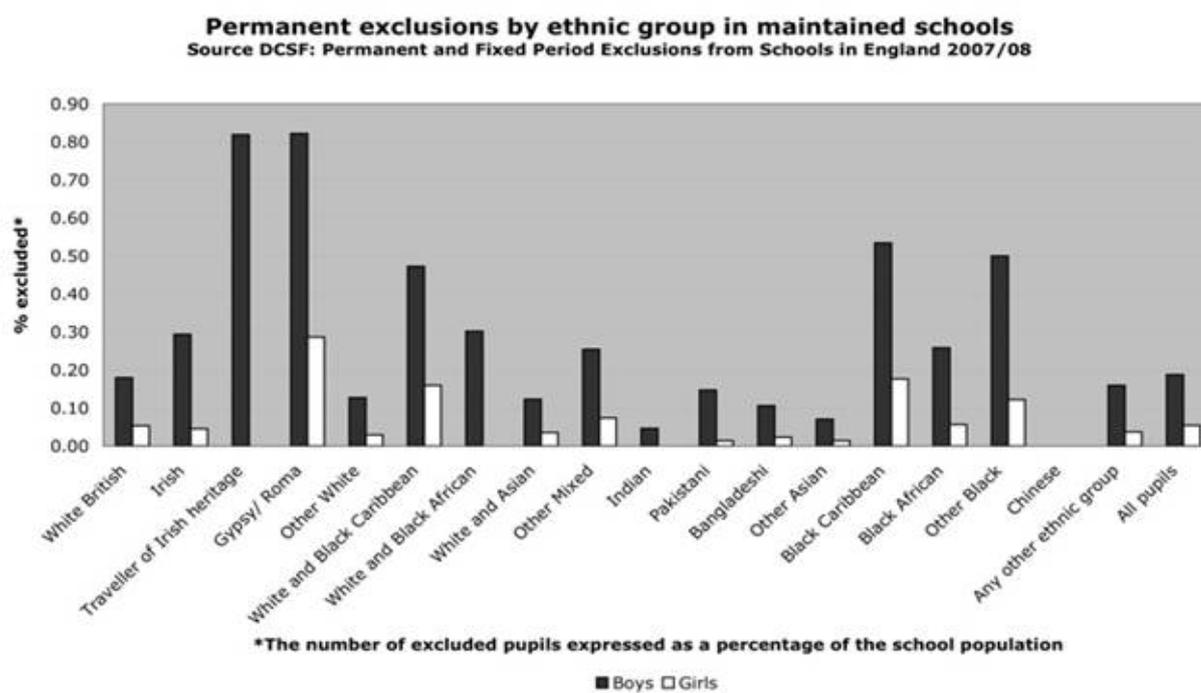
Permanent exclusions by ethnic group in maintained schools
Source DCSF: Permanent and Fixed Period Exclusions from Schools in England 2007/08

*The number of excluded pupils expressed as a percentage of the school population

■ Boys □ Girls

The rate of permanent exclusion in 2007/08 was highest for Gypsy/Roma (0.56 per cent of the school population) and Traveller of Irish heritage (0.53 per cent of the school population) ethnic groups. The breakdown shown in the charts clearly reveals the over-representation of boys in these figures. The figure for permanent exclusions of Travellers of Irish heritage relates solely to boys, while the permanent exclusion rate for Gypsy/Roma boys was almost three times higher than that for Gypsy/Roma girls.
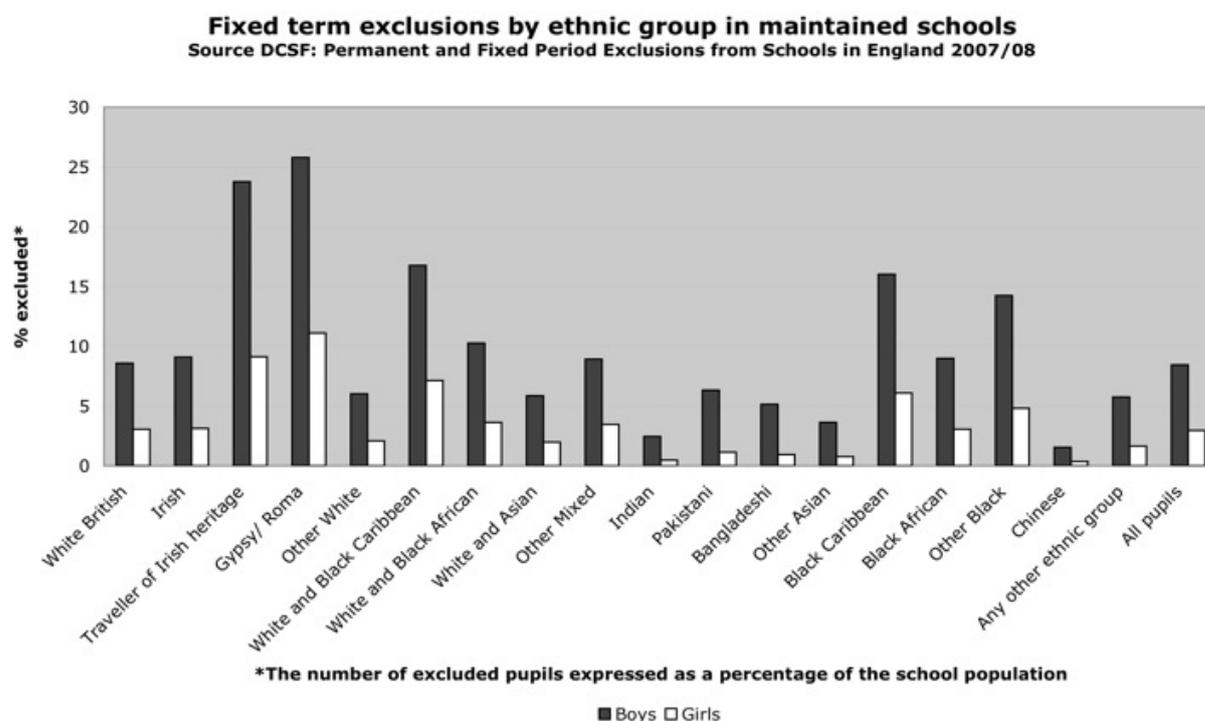
Fixed term exclusions by ethnic group in maintained schools
Source DCSF: Permanent and Fixed Period Exclusions from Schools in England 2007/08

*The number of excluded pupils expressed as a percentage of the school population

■ Boys □ Girls

The rate of fixed-term exclusion in 2007/08 was highest for Gypsy/Roma (18.71 per cent of the school population) and Traveller of Irish heritage (16.65 per cent) ethnic groups. Again, boys are over-represented in these figures. The fixed-term exclusion rate for Traveller of Irish heritage boys was more than 2.5 times higher than that for Traveller of Irish heritage girls, while the fixed-term exclusion rate for Gypsy/Roma boys was more than twice that of Gypsy/Roma girls.

For all groups of pupils, the most common reason given for exclusion (both permanent and fixed-term) was persistent disruptive behaviour.

However, as DCSF note, and our literature review confirms, parents and pupils from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities are often reluctant to disclose their identity on official documents and therefore, 'Caution is recommended in interpreting the data for Traveller of Irish heritage children and Gypsy/Roma children due to potential under-reporting for these ethnic classifications' (DCSF, 2009a).

3.6   Exclusion: findings from the survey schools

In the **first questionnaire** in 2007, primary and secondary headteachers were asked to state the number of permanent exclusions received by Gypsy, Roma

and Traveller pupils in the academic year 2006-2007. Table 3.7 sets out headteachers' responses.

Table 3.7 Numbers of permanent exclusions received by Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils in the survey schools during the academic year 2006 to 2007

Number of permanent exclusions	Primary headteachers		Secondary headteachers	
	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)
None	136	85	96	75
1	5	3	5	4
3	-	-	1	1
No response	20	12	26	20

Base: Primary headteachers: 161; Secondary headteachers: 128.
Source: NFER survey of primary and secondary headteachers, 2007.

As Table 3.7 shows, the numbers of permanent exclusions received by Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils were reported to be low. More than four-fifths (85 per cent) of primary headteachers and three-quarters (75 per cent) of secondary headteachers responding to the first questionnaire stated that no permanent exclusions had taken place in their schools during the academic year 2006-2007. Only three per cent of primary headteachers and four per cent of secondary headteachers reported one permanent exclusion during this time, while one per cent (representing one single respondent) reported three. However, one in five (20 per cent) secondary headteachers did not respond to the question.

Looking at the number of fixed-term exclusions received by Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils in the academic year 2006-2007, nearly three-quarters (71 per cent) of primary headteachers and just over two-fifths (41 per cent) of secondary headteachers in our survey schools reported that there had been none.

The numbers of fixed-term exclusions that *were* reported to have taken place over that time period in primary schools were small, with only five per cent of headteachers reporting one, and six per cent reporting two. In the secondary schools, one in 6 (16 per cent) of headteachers reported one fixed-term exclusion during the academic year 2006-2007, while fewer than one in ten

reported two. It should be noted that headteachers were not asked in the 2007 questionnaire to report on the prevalence of the numbers of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils receiving 'unofficial' exclusions where they may be sent home to 'cool off', as reported in Derrington and Kendall's (2004) study.

In the first questionnaire, we also asked headteachers whether or not they thought disproportionate numbers of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils were excluded from their school (a 'Don't know' option was also provided). In spite of this being the case nationally, the vast majority of the survey primary and secondary headteachers (94 and 84 per cent respectively) stated that they thought Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils were not disproportionately excluded from their school. Only two per cent of primary and six per cent of secondary headteachers indicated that they thought they were.

The findings from our 2007 questionnaire would appear to stand in contrast to those reported in the national data for 2007-2008 above. It may well be that the schools responding to our questionnaire were those likely to have an inclusive ethos, implicit in their policies and practice, which was reflected in the exclusion figures they reported.

4.   Transfer and transition

4.1   Introduction

The transfer of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils from primary to secondary school is variable, with some families opting for Elective Home Education after Year 6. Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities often have fears and concerns about children's transfer to secondary school and in some families there is a tradition of non-transfer. The expectations and responses from schools are an essential part of the success of the transfer process. While there is evidence from the 2008 national data (see Chapter 5) which suggests that Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils are more likely to transfer than in the past (i.e. 80 per cent of the national cohort transferred from primary to secondary school[7]), ongoing attention is required to improve this trend further in order to bring this in line with transfer rates for other pupils.

This chapter presents results from the 2007 and 2009 headteacher and governor surveys and sets out strategies for the successful transfer of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils. Case-study interviews with school staff, LA staff, parents and pupils illustrate the factors which support and obstruct the transfer of pupils and highlight good practice for effective transition.

4.2   Findings from the school survey

In the **first questionnaire** to primary and secondary headteachers in 2007, respondents were asked to highlight examples of strategies that they had found particularly successful in supporting the transfer of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils between phases. Primary and secondary school governors were also surveyed and asked how they contributed to their school's strategies to support transition.

Table 4.1 sets out an overview of the types of strategies identified by primary and secondary headteachers in the 2007 survey.

---

[7] This figure is based on tracing one cohort of 1,389 pupils who were in Year 6 in 2003 and identified themselves as Gypsy, Roma or Traveller at any time between Years 6 and 11. The analysis does not include all possible forms of alternative provision.

Table 4.1 Strategies to support transfer between phases

Strategy	Primary Headteachers		Secondary Headteachers	
	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)
Additional dedicated support for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils and families	73	45	68	53
Liaison with feeder schools	71	44	64	50
Liaison with other agencies	46	29	29	23
Increased communication with parents	36	22	11	9
School organisation/ethos	20	12	13	10
Specific programmes/projects	17	11	17	13
Other	20	12	14	11
No response	32	20	21	16

Headteachers cited more than one strategy, so percentages do not sum to 100. Base: Primary headteachers: 161; Secondary headteachers: 128
Source: NFER survey of primary and secondary headteachers, 2007.

Table 4.1 shows that the responses of primary and secondary headteachers were fairly similar, with one interesting exception. Increased **communication with parents** including, for example, home visits prior to admission to provide greater information and meetings with Gypsy, Roma and Traveller parents to encourage retention at transfer, was mentioned by nearly a quarter (22 per cent) of the survey primary headteachers, but by fewer than one in ten (nine per cent) of the survey secondary headteachers. Given the fact that many Gypsy, Roma and Traveller parents are often extremely anxious about their children transferring to secondary school, either because of negative or limited personal experiences (Kiddle, 1999; Ofsted, 2003; Derrington and Kendall, 2004), this would seem to be an area worthy of greater attention.

The most common type of strategy, used in both primary and secondary survey schools, to support transfer between phases was **additional dedicated support for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils and their families**. This was reported by almost half of primary headteachers (45 per cent) and just over half of secondary headteachers (53 per cent) and included, for example, the allocation of TA support, buddying systems, nurture groups, help with paperwork/form filling, and using a speaker of the home language.

The next most common response, from both primary and secondary teachers' survey schools, was **liaison with feeder schools**, which involved both Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils and their parents visiting secondary schools, as well as secondary

pupils visiting the primary school to share their experiences. Over two-fifths (44 per cent) of primary headteachers and half (50 per cent) of the secondary headteachers highlighted this strategy. **Liaison with other agencies** (e.g. through close links with TESS, the Minority Communities Achievement Service (MCAS), and through multi-agency planning meetings) was identified by more than a quarter (29 per cent) of primary headteachers and by just under a quarter (23 per cent) of secondary headteachers.

Very similar proportions of primary and secondary headteachers (12 and 13 per cent respectively) highlighted the **school organisation/ethos**, which included extending time in Year 6 to avoid drop-out at transfer, ensuring an inclusive ethos and environment, flexible approaches to starting school and, for secondary headteachers only, a modified or reduced timetable and an alternative/flexible curriculum.

Specific transition programmes or projects were reported by a small number of primary and secondary headteachers (11 and 13 per cent respectively) perhaps indicating that further support is required for schools to develop and resource such initiatives.

In the **second questionnaire** in 2009, primary and secondary headteachers were asked about the extent to which a range of factors were established features of their schools current ethos/practice. Included in this, headteachers and governors were asked to rate how well established expectations were in relation to the transfer and progression of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils. Table 5.2 sets out an overview of primary and secondary headteachers responses.

The majority of primary and secondary headteachers felt that **liaison to maintain expectations through transitions** were either a very- or quite-well established feature of current practice in their schools. Results do, however, indicate that further liaison around Gypsy, Roma and Traveller transfer may be required in primary schools, as 11 of the 80 primary headteachers who responded felt this was an area in need of either some or significant development. Research has shown that the transfer and retention of Traveller pupils in the secondary phase is of widespread concern and is not restricted to mobile families. Parents' apprehension at this stage about negative cultural influences, bullying and racism contribute to a cumulative negative effect on attendance (Marks, 2006).

Table 4.2   Established features of current ethos/practice in relation to Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupil's transition and progression

	Very well established		Quite well established		In need of some development		In need of significant development		Not applicable	
	Primary Headteachers	Secondary Headteachers	Primary Headteachers	Secondary Headteachers	Primary Headteachers	Secondary Headteachers	Primary Headteachers	Secondary Headteachers	Primary Headteachers	Secondary Headteachers
	(n)	(n)	(n)	(n)	(n)	(n)	(n)	(n)	(n)	(n)
Liaison to maintain expectations through transitions	41	25	27	11	8	2	3	0	1	0
School staff communicate high expectations for progression into FE	6	20	10	14	6	1	2	0	49	3

Base: Primary headteachers: 80; Secondary headteachers: 39
Source: NFER survey of primary and secondary headteachers, 2009.

In order to overcome issues around transfer it is important for schools to address concerns and communicate high expectations as early as possible. Results from our survey suggest that this is an area which is currently overlooked in some primary schools.

Similarly, while **communicating high expectations for progression into FE** was an established feature of current practice in secondary schools, this was less so in primary schools, with only six primary headteachers reporting this as well-established practice. Perhaps unsurprisingly, over half of primary headteachers reported that communicating high expectations for progression into FE was not applicable to their current ethos/practice in relation to Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils. However, staff training and guidance to understand the need for, and importance of, communicating high expectations for the progression of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils as early as possible in their educational journey could be a useful area of development.

4.3 The case-study data

Case-study interviewees including school staff, LA staff and parents were asked to comment on the challenges and key factors associated with the transfer of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils. They were also asked to report any successful strategies to support the transfer of Gypsies, Roma and Travellers from primary to secondary school, KS3-KS4 and post-16 destinations.

The following sections outline the variables that may obstruct and support effective transfer and emerging good practice.

4.3.1 Factors which support and obstruct the transfer and transition of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils

Case-study interviewees identified a range of variables which may lie outside the immediate influence of the school and can either support or obstruct the transfer and transition of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils.

There were a number of **common responses and phrases** or 'scripts' used by both Gypsy, Roma and Traveller parents and pupils (and occasionally education professionals) to justify actions for non-transfer of children from primary to secondary school (see Chapter 7). A number of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller parents for example talked about secondary school attendance not being commonplace in

their cultures. One parent commented that: 'it's natural for our children not to go to secondary school'.

Although some parents recognised that numeracy and literacy skills are important for Gypsies, Roma and Travellers, other academic knowledge and qualifications were of little relevance or value to them. Hence, once these abilities were established at the primary stage there was little value in children transferring to secondary.

There was strong feeling from many of the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller parents interviewed that secondary school was not for girls, as it coincided with their transition into adulthood. This was a common theme used by members of Gypsy and Traveller communities in particular as reason for the non-transfer of female pupils. One Traveller mother described how secondary education was of little relevance as her daughter had a useful role within family to develop:

> *I don't think she needs to learn any more than she's learnt here because she's not going to have a job, she'll do what I do, cook, wash, clean, be a housewife, have kids. It's the hardest job of all really. And I think the high schools, they seem to be like men and women and it's too much for her at this stage. I don't think she needs to go any further. She can read, she can write that's it. Learning about volcanoes and things is not going to get her no fantastic job.*
> Traveller mother

For boys, developing their role within the family business was perceived to be important and secondary school was often said to be unnecessary as 'they need to learn from their fathers and grandfathers' rather than receive a formal education. Young people themselves often gave standardised rationales for why they would not transfer, which included: 'I am not going to big school because my brother didn't go'.

Fear of cultural erosion including the negative influence of peers was another common response offered by several Gypsy, Roma and Traveller parents involved in the study. Secondary schools were often perceived as 'dangerous places', where young people could be introduced to drugs and alcohol and/or subjected to racist bullying by other pupils.

There were, however, a number of common replies from parents and pupils which were supportive of transfer. For example, there was a growing recognition from interviewees that 'you need exams to go to college and get a good job'.

> *My husband and me supported our daughter, we wanted her to get on at school and get qualifications and get a good job, but a lot of the other families don't want that. She's 23 now, and in most families, she'd be married and staying at home cleaning. We don't want that for her. It's a big world out there.*
>
> Traveller parent.

There was some acknowledgment that traditional Gypsy, Roma and Traveller lifestyles could be too restrictive. Several parents acknowledged that they wanted to give their children 'the things I didn't have', which included a secondary education. There were also references to the changing economic climate and the need for improved capabilities to gain employment in new areas.

There were particular challenges for school staff where **relatives and other community members (particularly those from Gypsy and Traveller communities) discouraged transfer to secondary school**. There were examples of where some primary pupils (and occasionally their mothers) had expressed a desire to teachers that they would like to transfer to secondary, but their fathers had prevented them from doing so. One Traveller mother noted: 'I'd let my girls come if it was up to me, if they wanted to, I wouldn't hold them back but their dad won't let them so that's the end of that.' In some cases, education professionals were reluctant to challenge parents' plans for non-transfer in the future in case they withdrew their children from school even sooner. They also commented on the 'knock on effect' that non-transfer had on pupils in the last few months of Year 6 as some pupils did not see any value in remaining at school. There were also influences from the wider community for example, when relatives and community members living on a site did not transfer to secondary and instead were home educated. This sent a message out to other families that they should/could do the same.

There were, however, examples of where community influences were having a positive influence on transfer. For example, where Gypsy, Roma and Traveller families would 'spread the word' amongst their community that a local secondary school was particularly welcoming and supportive of Gypsies, Roma and Travellers, and that staff could be trusted. Based on feedback from other members of the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller community, some parents sent children to secondary schools many miles away from where they were living simply because of its good reputation.

There were certain aspects of **education policy** that deterred Gypsy, Roma and Traveller parents at the point of transfer. These included, for example, selective schooling and sex education. There were also challenges for education professionals

working with Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities due to aspects of education policy such as the right to Elective Home Education (EHE). There was a professional view that EHE was a major hurdle in discussions with families about transfer to secondary school. Yet, single sex schools and faith schools were often preferred by Gypsy, Roma and Traveller families and the policies of these schools facilitated transfer in some cases.

The **social identity of Gypsies, Roma and Travellers** was also a factor in parents' decisions about whether or not they would allow their children to transfer. There were examples where parents would not allow transfer to secondary despite children wanting to, because no other Gypsy, Roma or Traveller pupils attended. One parent commented:

> *What we tend to do is put them all together […]One, they can look out for each other. Two, they're friends anyway, they're amongst each other, they play with each other, […] they know each other and three, so they're all in the one area in case one of us is unable to get to the school we will say 'can you fetch?*
>
> Traveller mother

In one of the case-study areas, the high demand for secondary places presented a challenge for transfer. Where Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils were allocated places in different schools to their friends, relatives and other members of their communities, parents threatened to withdraw and home educate unless their children were able to attend the same school.

Some of the parents recalled **past experiences** of the unsuccessful transfers of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils from primary to secondary school which made them reticent to send their own children. Several parents for example talked about their own unhappy and negative experiences of secondary school and wanted to protect their children from potential harm. For some Roma families, previous experience of different education systems in their home countries (e.g. where pupils would attend the same school from 6-17 years old) led to some concerns about transfer. The primary and secondary divide in the UK was unusual for some families, many preferring children not to be separated from siblings and other family members throughout school.

Equally, there were also examples of schools where most/all Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils had transferred to secondary school in the past and there was an expectation and established pattern for transfer. This was particularly the case where

Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils attended from Foundation Stage to Year 6, as there was found to be less divergence between schools' and parents' expectations.

4.3.2 Good practice for the effective transfer and transition of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils

Case-study schools were asked to identify emerging good practice in the successful transfer of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils. Much of the practice was akin to strategies previously identified by headteachers and governors in the 2007 and 2009 surveys (see section 4.2.).

The emerging good practice identified included:

- partnership working between schools;
- liaison with parents;
- dedicated member(s) of staff;
- role models;
- practical assistance;
- flexible approaches to the curriculum.

One of the key elements of emerging good practice around the successful transfer of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Pupils is **effective partnership working between schools**, particularly between secondary schools and their feeder primaries, and primary schools and early years providers. The likelihood of successful transfer is increased where there is good early exchange of information about the potential difficulties/needs of pupils so that they can be identified and acted on in advance of the child's arrival. In addition, ongoing liaison with staff who have established relationships with families from these communities and have experience of the young person can be valuable, and help with the transfer and subsequent retention of pupils.

Visits to secondary schools prior to transfer were commonplace for all pupils but were often more intensive for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils to get the students used to coming to the school. They included additional visits in small groups, and taster sessions of a variety of activities. These visits not only made pupils themselves more at ease with the new school but also their parents (e.g. where children spoke about how much they had enjoyed the visit and how they wanted to be allowed to transfer). There was also an example where Traveller pupils who had transferred successfully,

returned to their primary school as role models and talked to other pupils from their communities about secondary transfer.

Supporting the progression of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils into post-16 education, some secondary schools arranged visits for pupils to local FE colleges. In other cases, effective use was made of role models from these communities who had progressed successfully onto further and higher education and returned to secondary school to talk about their experiences. In one school with a large number of Roma pupils who arrived late in key stage 4, young people were offered alternative provision and ESOL courses delivered by a local college. Attendance at these sessions built up pupils' familiarity with the college and facilitated progression.

Much of the emerging practice to facilitate the successful transfer of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils into secondary school focused on **liaison with parents**. One primary school for example ran meetings for all Year 5 parents to provide information and practical help (e.g. who to contact, how to complete forms). There were also examples of home visits and coffee mornings to facilitate communication with parents and encourage secondary transfer. One school was particularly proactive and supportive in terms of transition choices for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils and invited secondary headteachers to meet with families in order to discuss which might be the most appropriate school for their children to transfer to. In another school, Gypsy, Roma and Traveller parents attended admission interviews with the EMA coordinator to build up relationships and open up lines of communication as early as possible.

Additional support to facilitate the effective transfer and integration of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils was often provided by **dedicated members of staff**, including key workers and learning mentors. In one case-study school for example, the in-house connexions worker specifically supported and encouraged the transfer of Roma pupils into post-16 learning. It was particularly effective where such staff were members of Gypsy, Roma or Traveller communities themselves. In these cases, parents were more willing to engage as there was a feeling they had similar beliefs and values. A teaching assistant at a primary school who was a Traveller noted:

> *When I first came in, a boy in Year 6 said 'I'm not going to secondary school, we don't believe in it, but you're a Traveller so you know we don't believe in it'. I said, 'Well I send my children to secondary school'. He looked at me and said, 'Can I get my mum to come in and talk to you?' She came in, she felt comfortable because she knew I understood her […] we are the only ones that really understand the culture. I told her that my kids were doing really well*

and were enjoying it. She agreed, and he went to school and has got his GCSEs.

Partnership working with the TESS is often essential for the successful transfer of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils. TESS' were involved in a variety of activities to raise transfer rates and set high expectations around transition. School staff acknowledged that they would be unable to give the same amount of time and support offered by TESS staff (which included for example, accompanying young people on induction days and staying with them for the first few days of transfer to the new school). In one case-study area, more rigorous tracking and monitoring of Year 6 destinations data by the TESS was taking place, to ensure that Traveller pupils did not 'slip through the net' at the point of transfer.

Practical assistance, including providing new uniforms for secondary, and transport to collect and return pupils to a nearby site when attending pre-transfer visits, was identified as being effective in facilitating pupils' transition to secondary school, as well as removing access barriers borne out of possible 'safety and trust' concerns from parents.

The importance of offering a **personalised and flexible curriculum at secondary school** and ensuring young people and their families are aware of it whist in primary is key. It is important that school staff explain to parents how the curriculum can be applied so that it has meaning to them. It is also important that schools are aware of, and recognise skills that are valued by Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities (e.g. construction) and develop relevant programmes around these skills whilst including core subjects such as English and Maths within them.

One of the case-study schools has been successful in achieving this through a combination of vocational and work-related learning and extended work-placements. Teachers liaise with Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils and their families to ascertain pupils' intended/preferred career direction and try to arrange a relevant training/experience opportunity. This usually equates to two days in school and three days placement.

In supporting transfer, case-study schools recognised that Years 5 and 6 were important in 'hooking children into learning' and engaging them in activities that they wanted to continue with at secondary school. Sometimes transfer was aided where children (and their families) were offered the opportunity to work in small groups in

secondary schools until they felt more comfortable to integrate into the wider school community.

5. Retention

5.1 Introduction

The term 'retention' is used in this report to refer to the continued enrolment and engagement of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils in school until the statutory school leaving age[8]. As a group, Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils are less likely to complete secondary education than their peers and many are believed to withdraw from school altogether by the age of 14 (DfES, 2005; Derrington and Kendall, 2004). The main focus of this chapter is retention in secondary school which, according to LA data, is particularly problematic (DCSF, 2009b).

A previous longitudinal study which tracked the progress of 44 Gypsy and Traveller students over five years (Derrington and Kendall, 2007) found that more than two-thirds had left school before the end of Key Stage 4. This finding was particularly noteworthy given that the majority of the sample lived permanently on local sites or in housing. Data from the same study indicated Year 8 to be a particularly vulnerable time in terms of retention and suggested that boys were proportionately more likely than girls to drop out of school early. Whilst several commentators have identified cultural influences that might encourage young Gypsy, Roma and Traveller people to leave school early (Reynolds et al., 2003; Padfield, 2005; Levinson and Sparkes, 2006; Lloyd and McCluskey, 2008), Derrington and Kendall (ibid) concluded that psycho-social factors (affecting the pupils' emotional well-being) could be more important than cultural 'pull' factors in ensuring continued engagement.

Derrington and Kendall also noted that students who were successfully retained in school to 16 were likely to have demonstrated:

- a regular pattern of attendance;
- involvement in extra-curricular activities;
- secure friendship networks that included both Gypsy/Traveller and non-Gypsy/Traveller peers (and other indicators of bi-culturalism);
- high aspirations;
- having older brothers and/or sisters successfully completing their secondary education;
- having parents with a sustained positive attitude about the value of secondary education.

---

[8] As opposed to the practice of placing pupils in year groups below their chronological age, to which the term is sometimes applied.

This chapter contributes to and expands the existing body of evidence on the retention of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils in secondary education. Firstly, it presents the national data and then reports on the findings from our survey of headteachers and governors. Finally, examples of practice are considered from the case-study phase of the research.

5.2   The national data

In order to discover more about Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupil retention on a national scale, data from the Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC 2003-2008 [now known as the School Census]) was used to identify a single academic cohort of 687,594 pupils born between 1 September 1991 and 31 August 1992 and attending maintained schools. Within this cohort, it was established that 1,706 pupils ascribed their ethnicity as either Gypsy Roma (WROM) or Irish Traveller (WIRT) at some stage during the six-year period; representing 0.3 per cent of the total cohort.

In tracking the movement and progression of these pupils between Year 6 and Year 11, the study aimed to compare patterns of retention between Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils and those not in these groups. However, as the literature confirms (Padfield, 2005, Lloyd and McCluskey, 2008, DCSF, 2008), parents and pupils from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities can be reluctant to disclose their ethnicity on official documentation such as school enrolment and data collection forms and therefore closer analysis is necessary in order to obtain more reliable data. Analysis at the individual pupil level revealed that a very high proportion of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils, almost 70 per cent, ascribed themselves differently at some point over the six year period and approximately 50 per cent of pupils changed their ascribed ethnicity at the point of transfer between primary and secondary school. The pupils most likely to change their recorded ethnicity were male Roma whereas male Travellers of Irish heritage were least likely to (National Pupil Database, 2008). This finding underlines the importance of capturing accurate data for effective ethnic monitoring of all educational outcomes.

A breakdown of the PLASC data revealed that just over half the cohort of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils identified in Year 6 (50.9 per cent), and recorded as WIRT or WROM at some point during their secondary school experience, were still attending school in Year 11 five years later. This finding represents a substantial improvement in comparison to the earlier and smaller-scale study conducted by Derrington and Kendall (2007) in which less than a third of the sample reached Year

11. As Chapter 4 has noted, the national data also demonstrated that almost 80 per cent of the cohort successfully transferred from primary to secondary school.

The national data shows a steady and disproportionate decline in the progression of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils from one year group to the next throughout Key Stages 3 and 4. The table below (5.1) provides a comparison between Gypsy, Roma and Traveller and non-Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils' progression from the end of KS2 (Year 6) to the end of KS4 (Year 11), by identifying the proportion of the Year 6 pupils that remain in each year. The figures show that the overall pattern of dropout from year to year is broadly similar for both groups, although the percentage of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils missing from the data set at each stage is by far higher. By Year 11, only 50.9 per cent of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils were recorded on school rolls compared with 92.4 per cent of non-Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils.

Table 5.1 Retention of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils between end of KS2 and end of KS4 compared to non-Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils

Year group	% of all Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils	% non-Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils
Year 6	100	100
Year 7	79.5	96.4
Year 8	73.4	95.7
Year 9	63.6	93.9
Year 10	61.0	94.2
Year 11	50.9	92.4
Base (n)	*1389*	*606368*

Source: National Pupil Database, 2008

Figure 5.1 show this data in graphical form

Figure 5.1 Retention of pupils between Y6 and Y11
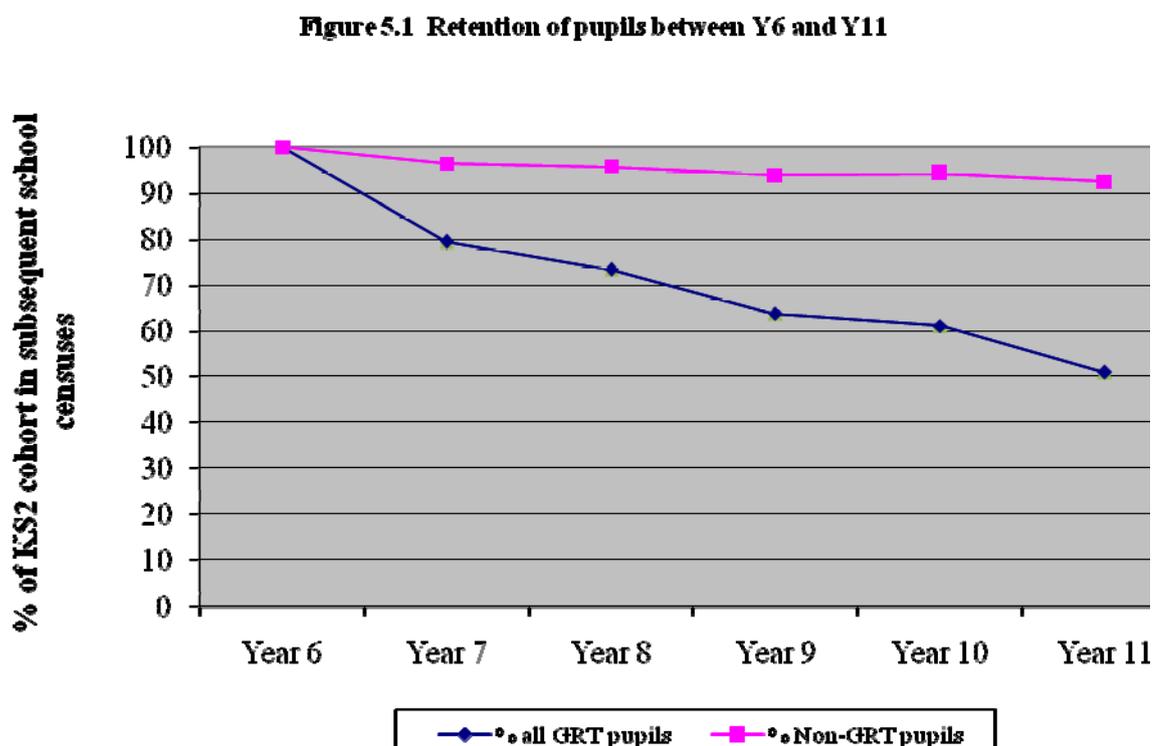
The most vulnerable point (as far as retention is concerned) appears to be the transition between Year 6 and Year 7 which almost always involves a change in school from primary to secondary. Just over 20 per cent of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils were missing from the data by the end of the first term in Year 7. Since the PLASC data is collected in January each year, the proportion of pupils who failed to transfer altogether cannot be determined as some pupils may have transferred but then dropped out within the first term. The data also suggests that Year 8 may be a potentially vulnerable time (confirming earlier findings), as is Year 10, when pupils reach the age of 14 and may be considered adults within their communities with occupational opportunities to hand.

When this data is analysed further, some differences are apparent between different Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities.

Figure 5.2:   Retention of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils between end of KS2
                    and end of KS4 by sub-groups
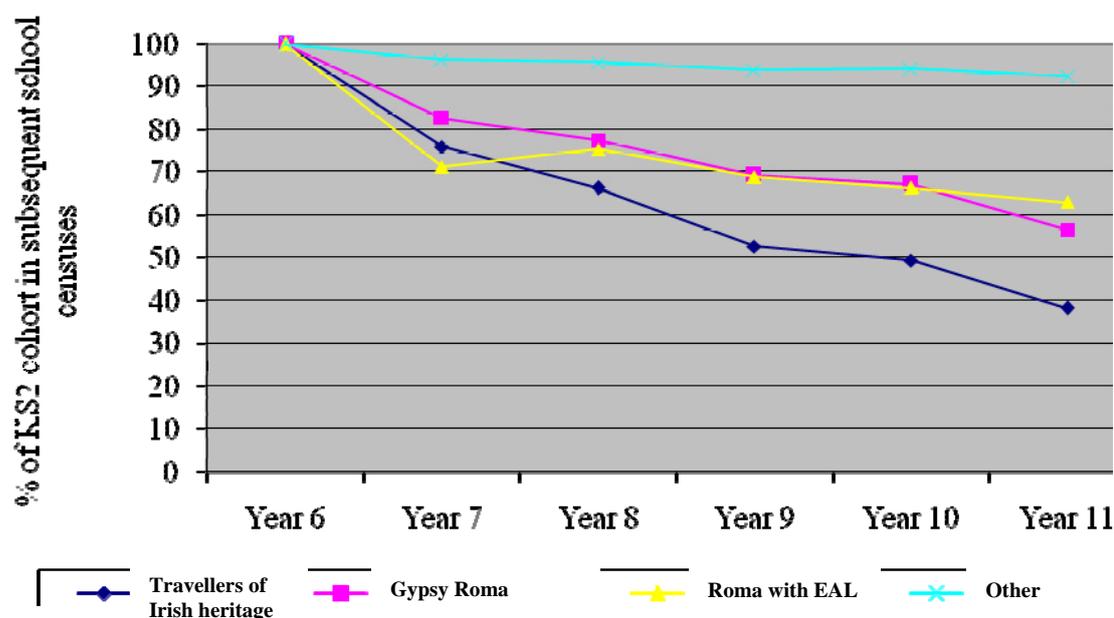
The data here indicates that Roma pupils with EAL have the highest retention rate, with just over 63 per cent remaining in school until Year 11. Travellers of Irish heritage, on the other hand, left school earlier than the other groups, with only 38.3 per cent reaching Year 11.

Again, the data suggests that there are potential hot spots linked to slight increases in pupil drop-out at the point of secondary transfer and, to a lesser extent, during Year 8 and Year 10.

In considering whether boys are proportionately more likely than girls to drop out of secondary school early (as suggested in earlier studies, for example Derrington and Kendall, 2004; 2007), the national data was analysed by gender and ethnicity.

Table 5.2 Retention of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils between end of KS2 and end of KS4 by different Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities

Year Group	Travellers of Irish heritage		Gypsy/Roma		Roma - EAL		National	
	m	f	m	f	m	f	m	f
	%		%		%		%	
Year 6	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Year 7	74.2	78.0	82.3	83.4	71.9	70.8	96.4	96.3
Year 8	65.4	67.2	76.8	78.2	73.7	76.9	95.6	95.8
Year 9	50.0	55.6	68.3	70.5	68.4	69.2	93.7	94.1
Year 10	47.5	51.5	64.0	70.5	68.4	64.6	93.9	94.4
Year 11	35.0	41.5	52.3	61.4	64.9	61.5	91.9	93.0
Base (n)	*240*	*241*	*400*	*386*	*57*	*65*	*310244*	*296124*

Source: National Pupil Database, 2008

The data presented in the above table indicates that boys may be more vulnerable than girls in terms of their retention in school to the age of 16, with the exception of Roma (with EAL) boys who were slightly more likely to reach Year 11 than their female counterparts. This pattern of retention could be linked to fewer opportunities for Roma boys (whose families may have only recently arrived in this country) to join established family businesses, hence a greater incentive to gain vocational or academic qualifications.

The national data shows that almost 30 per cent of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils attended more than one secondary school over the five-year period (compared with 18 per cent of non-Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils). A slightly higher proportion of Roma girls with EAL (36.8 per cent) changed secondary schools. It is not clear from the data obtained, however, whether this movement between schools was related to voluntary or enforced family travelling patterns or whether it was a result of 'managed moves' to avoid permanent exclusion.

Possible explanations for the drop-out of almost half of all Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils between Year 6 and Year 11 are explored later in the chapter.

5.3   Findings from the survey schools

Headteachers surveyed in 2007 were asked to estimate the total numbers of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils in each year group (irrespective of whether they have officially self ascribed or not) who would regard themselves as being from those

communities. Table 5.3 below provides a breakdown of the data collected from the sample of 128 secondary school headteachers that responded.

Table 5.3 Numbers of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils reported in each year group

	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Y12	Y13	Total
Gypsy	40	44	37	44	32	4	3	204
Roma	24	26	29	29	20	4	3	135
Irish Traveller	27	26	22	17	13	0	1	106
Fairground/Show People	3	5	6	5	8	1	0	28
Circus families	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
New Travellers	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	2
Total	**95**	**101**	**95**	**96**	**73**	**9**	**6**	**475**

Source: NFER survey of primary and secondary headteachers, 2007

The data presented here shows a substantial drop in numbers of pupils reported in Years 12 and 13 (sixth form), although it should be pointed out that many schools that participated catered for pupils up to Y11 only.

5.4   The case-study data

Visits were made to ten secondary schools as part of the case-study phase of the research. The number of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils in each year group provided by case-study schools (in the 2007 questionnaire), and confirmed at the time of our visit, are shown in the table below:

Table 5.4 Number of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils by year group in the case-study schools

Schools	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Y12	Y13	Gypsy, Roma, Traveller groups
1	7	2	16	10	11	7	6	All Roma
2	3	4	4	3	2	N/A	N/A	Mainly Roma
3	7	4	6	4	0	0	0	All Gypsy
4	1	4	5	1	3	N/A	N/A	Mainly Roma
5	4	6	2	0	0	0	0	All Irish Traveller
6	4	6	6	6	5	N/A	N/A	Mainly Gypsy
7	12	10	6	14	6	N/A	N/A	All Roma
8	6	7	2	3	4	N/A	N/A	All Gypsy
9	8	2	3	7	4	N/A	N/A	All Roma
10	10	11	9	10	2	N/A	N/A	Mainly Irish Traveller

Source: NFER survey of primary and secondary headteachers, 2007

Table 5.4 shows that seven of our ten secondary schools did not cater for Year 12 and 13 pupils. Of the three that did, one, an Academy, had successfully retained a number of its Roma pupils in the sixth form. The figures for most of the schools show a drop in numbers as pupils progress into KS4, although, interestingly, figures for some of the schools, particularly those with Roma pupils, show higher numbers of pupils in Years 10 and/or 11. In line with the national data, figures for the case-study schools with all, or mainly, Travellers of Irish heritage as a group, show very few pupils in Year 11.

Interviews and focus group discussions were conducted in each school with staff, governors, local authority representatives, pupils and parents. The following section identifies factors perceived to encourage retention as well as perceived barriers that may prevent pupils from staying in secondary school to Year 11 and beyond.

5.4.1   What helps to encourage retention?

Inclusive ethos

When reflecting on the reasons why some Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils buck the historical trend and continued to engage in secondary education, several school staff members and governors that were interviewed referred to a culture, or climate, of inclusion that permeated policy and practice in their organisations. These interviewees presented a positive view of 'difference' in which diversity was seen as a form of enrichment for the school community, rather than a disadvantage or problem to be overcome or passed on to other more 'specialist' colleagues. As one TESS teacher put it; 'there is no feeling of 'we don't want these Travellers here' and this message was, in his opinion, directly linked to the school's success in retaining pupils.

In some schools, a strong and distinctive inclusive ethos was clearly driven by school leaders who acted as proponents of inclusive practices, fostered a vision where individuality is celebrated and who were prepared to take risks and look for innovative solutions to include all students. One school leader, for example, took outreach action to make links with the Roma community and encouraged a large number of 'out-of-school' children to enrol as a result. In another school, the headteacher was described by staff who were interviewed as inspirational in her commitment to inclusion: 'I've never heard the head say we can't afford a person who can help students' progress... computers may not get upgraded, but never when it's the human side'. This 'can do' approach, fostered and supported by senior leadership teams and external agencies, seemed to encourage a collegiate culture; 'the school is like a family' in which multiple identities were acknowledged and celebrated. The

climate of inclusion was perhaps more obvious in those schools with diverse populations, where staff and students spoke many different languages between them and where there was empathy for new arrivals.

An emphasis on developing emotional literacy and social skills was also identified in descriptions of inclusive practice in culturally-responsive schools. Several interviewees mentioned peer support initiatives such as mentoring and, in one school, all members of staff had received Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) training. Elsewhere, a nurture group type of provision had been established specifically for pupils in Year 8 who were considered to be 'vulnerable' and in a different school, a horticultural therapist provided one-to-one provision where pupils could engage in practical activities whilst talking through their problems.

In some schools, interviewees described comprehensive induction programmes that had been introduced to help and prepare newly arrived pupils with limited English, or Year 7 pupils with weak basic skills. In these cases, pupils would be taught separately as a group before being integrated into mainstream classes. Whilst the aim of this approach was to help pupils cope more easily and therefore feel more included and confident in the longer term, some interviewees suggested that it could serve to reinforce a sense of separateness if pupils spent too much time in such provision 'the longer it goes on ...the harder it is to get back in'. Whilst pupils and parents were supportive of the targeted provision and felt that pupils would not otherwise receive the help they needed in mainstream lessons, some commentators may question whether this complies with inclusive principles.

Interestingly, focus group discussions with Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils did not always reflect the optimistic perspectives of the staff in relation to inclusive practice. Although some pupils agreed that the other children in the school were friendly towards them or that they had a mixture of friends including 'Gaujes'[9] and those from their own community, it was more common for pupils to say that 'other' pupils were unfriendly and that they were 'picked on.' The majority of pupils maintained that their friends at school were other Travellers (including those in different year groups), 'we just get on better with them'. The pupils also mentioned that they are not always allowed out by their parents after school, which limited social contact with non-Traveller peers.

This notion was borne out by staff who acknowledged that Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils 'stuck together' which did not help with social cohesion. However,

---

[9] A Romani term used to describe a non-Traveller.

this was not seen as particularly problematic, with the exception of one example where a teacher recalled a time when Roma pupils walked around the school 'crocodile fashion' in a large extended friendship group and where individual disputes could easily escalate into community conflicts. This teacher reflected that the situation had 'improved a lot' since that time and one response had been to set up a Boxercise club in school to tackle inter-racial tension and encourage friendships between Roma and white working class pupils.

Safety and trust

Descriptions of inclusive practice also included examples of staff investing in relationships with parents and families, to help reduce barriers to learner participation and encourage pupils to stay and progress through the school. Parental anxiety about their children's physical and emotional well-being in secondary education is well evidenced in the literature and, as Derrington and Kendall (2004) concluded, the onus on secondary schools to win the trust of Gypsy and Traveller parents is commonplace. Unlike the experience in most primary schools, parents typically find it more difficult to gain direct access to secondary school leaders and subject teachers to discuss their concerns. Equally, not all Gypsy, Roma and Traveller parents have spent time as pupils in the secondary school environment, which can seem alien and daunting. A feature of the case-study schools was that certain individual members of staff seemed to work tirelessly and went 'the extra mile' to build and foster relationships with Gypsy, Roma and Traveller parents who, as a result, felt able to come into school to discuss their children's needs and progress.

> *In some schools parents can be wary of coming into school but because of* [name] *they come in here. They trust the school but it's been a long journey, it's not happened overnight.*
>
> Teacher

In the case of schools with Roma pupils, multilingual teachers or family workers were able to converse freely with parents who had little or no English.

Winning the trust of parents and reassuring them that their children were safe in school was regarded as crucial by the staff interviewed. By adopting a proactive stance and developing strong partnerships in this way, a sense of loyalty became apparent which enabled a more open and trusting dialogue to be held when tensions arose and needed to be resolved amicably. In this respect, these key members of staff often took on the role of mediator. However, the case studies also confirmed the suggestion (ibid) that whilst parental support is important (and examples were cited where parents had supported the school and refused to allow their children to leave

school early), responsibility for deciding whether or not to remain in secondary school is sometimes passed to the young people themselves and, if they are unhappy, then parents will not compel them to attend. The following quote from one of the parents in a focus group discussion illustrates this well.

> *I can see the benefits, as a parent, but he's got itchy feet and was feeling a bit pressured 'cos he knew he could leave. If he said 'Mam I've had enough', he knows that we'd support him in that. So he was fighting with his own self. He was having to do things in school that he didn't think was necessary, baking and dance and that and he's a big old butch fella you know! He was saying 'I feel like I'm a Gauje and I should be going out to work with me dad' and he was arguing with his own self and he was quite depressed. It was hard for him emotionally. So we had a meeting in the school and I said 'come out of school then baby and get home education until you can go to college at 16'… but he took it on his own and said 'no I done this much, I'll see it through to the end now.' He does regret coming here in the first place but he won't pull out now. But he has said to me 'I wouldn't let me brother come though Mam to be honest.' He feels like he don't fit in properly.*

This extract also highlights issues around identity and pressures relating to cultural dissonance. This phenomenon has been examined in the previous chapter and was a feature recognised widely by staff and parents in discussions around retention. One support assistant for example observed:

> *There is a point where they go past their 'sell-by date'. They have a different culture, they're older beyond their years ... their maturity. They must feel it in their blood that it's time to work and it's time to be doing something else.*

The mother quoted above implied that her son's mental health was being affected as a result of this dissonance. Derrington (2007) has suggested that cultural dissonance may be inevitable, but that Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils generally avoid psychological discomfort (manifested by depression or anxiety) by adopting particular coping strategies for dealing with this (as well as experiences of racism) in secondary school. Adaptive (or productive) coping strategies include seeking social support from cultural peers, 'who understand me basically', or mixing freely with peers from the dominant culture, by working hard and through cognitive re-framing. Maladaptive coping strategies include responding with physical or verbal defence (Fight), self-exclusion (Flight) and denial, or masking, of their ethnic identity (Playing White).

Examples of these maladaptive coping strategies were identified during interviews and focus groups. One group of Gypsy pupils claimed that they would stay in school and attend every day if they could be taught separately as a discrete group away from other pupils (self-exclusion). Others said they hid their identity and 'Played White.' In

the case of European Roma pupils, this particular protective strategy may be related more to their experiences of racism in their home countries.

> *No one knows I'm a Gypsy.*
>
> Slovakian Roma girl, Year 11

> *When I came here I never said I was Roma. I was always Polish in school. Basically I was worried 'cos when I listen to other kids' conversations they say 'look at him, he's a Gypsy!' and they laugh at him. So I think if I say I'm a Gypsy they'll laugh at me as well.*
>
> Roma support worker

Interestingly, in the same school, pupils said they were happy to describe themselves as 'Roma', 'but if you say Gypsy the other students cuss you and say "I can't be your friend".' This suggests that other pupils have not made a connection between Roma and Gypsy people.[10] Some of the staff interviewed showed a heightened awareness of the potential issues and sensitivities around identity. 'We have just done the Holocaust and I did ask them if they wanted to look at Travellers within that and they didn't want to do it because they didn't want to suddenly be the centre of attention. It is about sensitivity'. Another teacher spoke about the need to 'get the balance between acknowledging and celebrating their [Gypsy, Roma and Traveller] culture, but not making them stand out as being different.' As one family support worker put it:

> *Traveller pupils are very proud of their heritage and culture and need to be given the opportunity to value and celebrate this, but this is only just one part of their entire school experience. They are Travellers, but they are also school pupils.*

Psycho-social factors are important to consider. If Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils are unhappy in school, they are unlikely to achieve and may well self-exclude or behave in a manner that leads to exclusion. Self-exclusion includes the option of elective home education which, according to one teacher, was starting to be seen as an easier (and legitimate) way out of a difficult situation. Another teacher concurred and warned of a snowball effect, 'if one of those goes home-ed, others are likely to follow. Especially if some are having 'wobbles' at school'.

Promoting high expectations

Despite cultural pressures to leave school early and take up adult roles in the community, the study shows that just over half of the national cohort tracked, did stay

---

[10] Roma is a generic term used to describe many different groups of Romani people including, for example, Gypsies, Tsiganes, Sinti Kalé, and Romanichal.

in school until at least the age of 16. In the parent focus groups, several participants said they recognised that times had changed and that it was important for their sons and daughters to obtain GCSE qualifications that would open up more opportunities for further education and securing 'a good job' in the future. There were also instances reported of families choosing not to travel during term time in order to maximise opportunities for success. In the focus group discussions with pupils, these views were largely echoed, although in one school, the majority of pupils in the focus group said that there was little point in them being in school and claimed that they only stayed to avoid their parents from being prosecuted.

More commonly, staying on in school to take GCSEs was seen as a means to an end, even though there was a scripted perception that 'English and maths are all you need ... and ICT'. One mother predicted that her son would pass his GCSEs but then, 'put 'em in his back pocket and just sit on 'em for a couple of years and go out hawking with his dad. I don't think he's going to use what he's got immediately'. If the prognosis for achievement in GCSE examinations seemed doubtful, then this could jeopardise retention. In one case, a pupil was pulled out of school because his parents thought he would not achieve good enough grades to get into a further education (FE) college and follow a vocational course there. This may go some way to explain the apparent rise in drop-out rates during Year 10.

Tracking data from the national cohort also suggests that Gypsy Traveller boys are more likely than girls to leave school before Year 11. This perception was confirmed in some of the focus group discussions, for example, one of the boys expressed the opinion that Gypsy fathers want their girls to get a good education and get a job, but sons are expected to join their fathers and male relatives at work. Another male Gypsy pupil told the researchers that his brother had left school at 13 to work with their father and that he intended to do the same when he was 15. Most of the parents of Gypsy and Traveller boys said they wanted their sons to have a trade of some sort.

When considering destinations beyond Year 11, most participants in the case-study phase talked about vocational courses at FE college or, in the case of one school, at sixth form. School staff noted that where pupils had older brothers and sisters who had gone on to college, this served as a motivating effect and drove them on to succeed. One school planned to invite former pupils back to talk to pupils about their experiences and achievement in college:

> *If we have these role models of boys going through school, being successful and going on to college, that's breaking the cycle, developing an ethos of staying on.*

Headteacher

In another school, a young Roma male was employed as a support assistant and provided a very effective role model for students.

Few references overall were made by pupils or their parents to academic aspirations, including options for Higher Education and professional careers. Staff in one school emphasised the need to raise aspirations and had been working closely with local universities to encourage pupils to aim higher. More commonly, colleges of Further Education were the expected destination. 'They know they can get into the local college with very low GCSEs, they have no ambition to go on to university so they are very easily satisfied which is really frustrating'. One Year 9 pupil told the researchers that he was in high sets for all subjects but really wanted to be in the vocational group because they were doing construction.

In the meantime, for those that do stay in school to take GCSEs, the prospect of continued progression into FE colleges to study for vocational qualifications does appear to be attractive to the pupils and their parents, and there is evidence that schools work hard to establish this expectation and open up new horizons for these young people. Close partnership working with Connexions in one of the schools ensured that all the Roma pupils applied for a college course. They would be reminded about their college appointments and when the young people collected their examination results, a member of staff and the Connexions worker were on hand to give immediate advice about accessing and securing college placements. These pupils were also given an EAL option which allowed them to drop one GCSE subject and have extra time to do coursework and catch-up sessions in the EAL unit to boost their grades.

Another school claimed to overcome the pattern of drop-out amongst Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils by using mentors and counsellors to raise the pupils' awareness of the labour market and explaining that they may need a 'fall back' position in case they are not able to go into the family business. 'We do a lot of taster sessions and often the children see things at college that they want to do, for example, equine studies ... hair and beauty'.

Vocational curriculum

Improvements in retention rates may be linked to a more flexible approach to the curriculum in KS4. As one school leader put it, 'the curriculum is the heart of the school but is it appropriate [for all pupils]?' In this school, which was in an area

where the selective education system existed, all students took part in a vocational 'round robin' in Year 9 and were able to choose from a menu of vocational options from Year 10. Elsewhere, the intention to provide an effective vocational (or alternative) route relied strongly on funding streams and available options in local FE colleges. In some cases this could lead to rather ad hoc packages designed to engage the young people throughout the week. A TESS coordinator explained:

> *The reality is the kids may spend one or two days in college and the rest of the time they are doing ASDAN[11] type courses and that can be hard to 'sell' to parents and it's not quite what a lot of the kids might be expecting.*

This problem was also raised by a parent in one of the focus groups who was angry that her son (along with a number of other Travellers) did not get onto the over-subscribed construction course he applied for and was put on a motor mechanics course instead. This parent felt let down and misled:

> *That was the whole reason for him to come here – to do the college, what he wanted to do. And what me and his dad wanted him to do and that were the only reason he were allowed to come to this school.*

In this and in another case-study school, teachers took it upon themselves to champion the rights of their Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils and challenge existing policy and practice in their partner FE colleges in order to achieve more equitable outcomes, 'We fought that battle and won it'. In both cases, necessary developments were achieved and relationships between the school and college were restored.

A lot of the parents wanted greater flexibility in the curriculum at an earlier age than schools usually offer. It was generally agreed by all groups of participants that offering vocational or alternative provision in Year 9 rather than Year 10, would be the ideal scenario. In two of the case study schools, pupils in Year 9 were offered three year vocational pathways (which they opted for in Year 8) and could study a bespoke curriculum with options in construction, hair and beauty, painting and decorating, leisure pursuits, life skills and community work. In a different school, pupils were able to access extended work placements in establishments which were related to family businesses.

There was a feeling amongst staff that the 14-19 reform and the personalisation agendas were helping pave the way for schools, whereas in the past it was often left

---

[11] The Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) is a curriculum development organisation and awarding body. It provides opportunities for learners to develop their personal and social attributes and levels of achievement through ASDAN awards and resources.

up to the TESS to push for alternative provision for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils. However, with these developments comes the need to heighten the awareness of all providers, as well as employers, if young Gypsy, Roma and Traveller people are to enjoy the same opportunities as their peers.

> *One thing we have found is that when they leave school and apply for a job, the employers don't want to know because they are Travellers. It's the address, at the site. It's wrong...it's just how it is.*

Traveller parent

6.   'Soft' outcomes

If we are turning out students who are emotionally well balanced, happy, confident, know where they are going, are sure of their roots and culture, then have we done a good job? (Teacher)

6.1   Introduction

Alongside impacts on attendance, attainment, transfer and retention, interviewees discussed various 'softer outcomes' during case-study visits. Although difficult to define, soft outcomes were said to encompass a range of desired states or results that could be achieved for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils whilst at school. Some interviewees spoke of softer outcomes in terms of the outcomes specified in the Every Child Matters agenda, including a focus on enjoyment and health and well-being, in addition to the focus on affective outcomes such as attitudes, motivation, engagement and emotional literacy. This chapter explores case-study interviewees' thoughts on the value of considering/promoting softer outcomes for these groups of pupils and then considers the ways in which they can be pursued.

6.2   The value of improving softer outcomes for pupils

As noted in the literature review conducted for this research, it is widely acknowledged that, (as with other individuals and groups of pupils), Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils (and communities) face a range of social, cultural, economic and systemic barriers to maximising their experience of school and education. Interviewees highlighted the need to pursue softer outcomes as an essential basis for generating success in the more quantifiable outcomes, especially attendance and attainment. When discussing softer outcomes, a variety of issues arose including what constitutes 'soft outcomes' and how they could be measured/monitored. Typical elements of soft outcomes included improvements in behaviour and attitude, engagement with peers and school/other agency staff, as well as developments in self-confidence and self esteem, motivation and aspiration.

Frequently, the importance of meeting this wide range of pupils' needs was seen to be taken for granted and embedded in the everyday culture, ethos and practice of a school. Hence, the pursuit of softer outcomes, and other impacts more easily identifiable and directly measurable, was seen to be heavily interdependent.

6.3   Promoting health and well-being

In terms of health and well-being, school staff, and other agency interviewees noted that some Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils faced significant difficulties and disadvantages in accessing appropriate support and services.

> *It is holistic, it is not just an education problem, it's everything, housing is wrong, health is wrong, access to just about every agency you can think of is wrong, we have to get back to basics and create a responsibility and a belief that they belong before we can do anything else.*
>
> Police representative

Hence, the link between meeting wider needs and increasing educational attainment was highlighted, and it was suggested that 'better quality sites give them [pupils] a better quality of life in terms of education', because of security of tenure and the lower likelihood of disturbance or unplanned moves. As a result, a partnership approach had been developed in this context in which a whole range of statutory and third sector agencies were working together, closely with the school, to pursue a range of softer outcomes for pupils and their families.

Other schools also employed a variety of strategies to improve wider outcomes, including whole-school level approaches, such as the provision of healthy meals and the promotion of active lifestyles. In addition, there was close working with other specialists, namely TESS and other local authority partners, to signpost and support access to relevant provision and services. The expanding remit of schools acting as community-based organisations, with increased commitment to full-service delivery, was seen as a suitable context in which to work towards meeting the wider, non-educational/learning needs of pupils.

Some interviewees did, however, note that there were still difficulties in accessing input and provision from other non-educational agencies, such as specialist health-related services. Interviewees from several schools suggested that school staff were well placed to act as intermediaries in relationships between health/social care provision and Gypsy, Roma and Traveller families.

> *Recently, I was involved in the Joint Area Review and picked up that there were issues to do with health. Addresses were not often correct so letters were not reaching families and appointments were not going through. We have to be advocates for the families.*
>
> SENCO

In addition, it was recognised that there were also challenges in encouraging buy-in from the families themselves. Hence, involving families in early years provision was seen as an effective way of encouraging parents to access some of the health-related services on offer in, or through, the school setting.

Fostering relationships with Gypsy, Roma and Traveller families, including home and site visits provided effective means of developing school staffs' understanding of the contexts and backgrounds of their pupils. The role of key, identifiable personnel (either from the school or from the TESS) was seen as essential in this. Well-being could be enhanced when pupils and families knew there was someone in the school they could approach with any issues and problems. The importance of this was stressed at both primary and secondary level.

> *All the other children have someone of their own to go to in school, but Gypsies don't have anyone. There needs to be a Gypsy working in schools.*
>
> Gypsy parent

6.4   Engagement

Alongside health and well-being related outcomes, interviewees highlighted the need to work towards increasing the two main (and not mutually exclusive) elements of pupil engagement and pupil enjoyment of school. These were seen to be crucial elements underpinning all other strategies, approaches and attempts to improve educational outcomes for these pupils. Fundamentally, if pupils enjoyed school, they were more likely to have better attendance, and when at school, were more likely to engage and participate in the activities and experiences it offered. As such, their achievement and attainment could benefit.

Attempts to increase pupil engagement with school and learning included the following strategies:

- make the school experience more attractive and welcoming;
- engagement of family and community members in the life of the school;
- make the life and work of the school appear more relevant.

6.4.1 Make the school experience more attractive and welcoming

Maximising pupils' relationships with, and experience of, school, including the extent to which they felt part of the wider school community, was identified as a key soft outcome to be achieved.

School-level approaches

Interviewees, particularly those from schools with the most diverse ethnic groupings, highlighted the need to support integration and cohesion within the school. This could be achieved by fostering and developing **a school ethos and identity** which welcomes and celebrates diversity, encouraging feelings of safety and belonging for different pupils – including those from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities.

> *We have a strong pastoral structure. We are described as a welcoming school, we are more confident now.*
>
> Headteacher

> *The school has a reputation for being a very caring, supportive school that embraces difference. As a parent you feel reassured, you know they will get a good education but they will also be looked at individually for what they need.*
>
> School governor

Several interviewees highlighted the development of comprehensive induction programmes for newly arrived (or returning) pupils. This was seen to be of particular value to Roma pupils in easing their transition into the school, the education system, and into the structures and processes of a new country. A key part of this in the school is the buddy system – having someone speaking the same language in the school is seen as highly effective in helping students to settle and adjust to their new contexts.

The need to **track** levels of involvement and participation in the life of the school was raised as a means of identifying where additional attention was required to ensure pupils' engagement:

> *We have compiled a report to governors on equality and diversity. We have checked how many of our vulnerable groups access school life, so how many Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils go on the school residential, how many take up activities, how many access more expensive activities to see if we need to support financially. It's to check that we are fully inclusive.*
>
> SENCO

The **employment** of community members was also seen as an effective means of supporting pupils' engagement and connection with the school. In order to maximise

the impact of this, community members need to be employed in significant roles and positions of responsibility. Hence, acting as learning mentors and role models, community members can assist in consolidating pupils' attachment to the school, increasing their confidence that they belong, can achieve at and can enjoy school. In one case-study school, a Traveller parent employed as a teaching assistant was also a member of the school's governing body. Several school and local authority interviewees in other areas noted that, despite encouragement, they had been unsuccessful in their attempts to secure Gypsy, Roma and Traveller community members' involvement in this way.

Representatives of a primary school noted that considerable efforts had been made to build trusting relationships with parents and the approachability and credibility of the school had been enhanced by the employment of community members. It was contended that parents felt happier, so were more likely to support pupils' attendance. Visits from ex-pupils with successful post-school progression were seen as an effective means of increasing pupil **motivation and aspiration**. A third sector representative noted that in one secondary school, for example, pupils' engagement with school was increasing because of the growing awareness of the success and progression experienced by other Traveller pupils:

> *There are now good role models with young people who have gone through school and done well, so the underlying message is that school is good.*
>
> Third sector representative

Similarly, in another secondary school, several current pupils were said to be fulfilling highly effective roles as mentors for others:

> *Some of these kids are now role models – they are not the trouble-makers they would have been seen as a few years ago. They are achieving and enjoying coming to school and they are helping to make the school an attractive place to be.*
>
> Headteacher

Participation in national schemes and programmes could enhance a school's ability to promote feelings of inclusion and cohesion amongst Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils. Several primary school representatives noted their schools' involvement in the National Strategies' Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Achievement Programme, with a special focus on early years. In terms of soft outcomes, increased engagement in early years settings could be a potentially significant factor in (i) maintaining a connection with the school and education in general, and (ii) empowering pupils to engage and

achieve in relation to literacy and numeracy at primary school, so increasing their potential to successfully transfer to, and remain at, secondary school. Initial presence at primary school (often based on a successful experience in an early years setting) is an essential building block for subsequent positive educational experience and performance.

Individual pupil-level approaches

Pupil-level approaches included schools placing significant emphasis on circle time activities to directly support inclusion and personal, social development, complemented by strict moral and behaviour codes. In one primary school, these strategies were said to be made more effective by the presence of a large on-site unit for children with SEN, including many with physical disabilities. This was seen to help to promote positive and anti-discriminatory thoughts and behaviours throughout the whole school community, and as such, Traveller pupils were said to feel a greater connection to the school.

In another primary school, staff and parents of Traveller pupils noted that families feel that their children are safe in this particular school. Whilst parents highlighted the atmosphere of the school as a key part of this, some staff identified the school's focus on working with pupils on an individual level. It was suggested that the school's commitment to providing high levels of pastoral support, again complementing a 'tight behaviour policy', supported the drive to nurture pupils and address the emotional roots of challenging behaviour. Developing pupils' emotional literacy was seen as an essential basis for all other work and relationships in the school.

Similarly, interviewees from another primary school stressed the importance of the school's emphasis on developing pupils' emotional intelligence, through PSHE education and SEAL, the ECM agenda and approaches such as Webster Stratton[12]. A key underlying principle of this school's approach to increasing pupils' self esteem involved a focus on generating understandings and applications of different cultures, on individual pupil- and whole-school levels. Interviewees from a primary school cited the example of a pupil who, following 11 fixed-term exclusions for aggressive and bullying behaviour, was at risk of permanent exclusion. The school had deployed significant resources to enable one-to-one support to help the pupil celebrate elements of his culture and background as a basis for increasing his self-esteem and tackling the roots of his bullying behaviour.

---

[12] A positive parenting programme.

Hence, interviewees from different schools supported humanistic perspectives on learning and promoted the assertion that if pupils are not happy, their attainment will be negatively affected. As a result, these schools employed staff in support roles to ensure that individual needs are met and pupils receive individual one-to-one attention. One interviewee noted that, 'children are made to feel valued, whatever stage they are at with their learning'. In this particular school, two teaching assistants had special responsibility for supporting Gypsies and Travellers as part of the school's inclusion agenda. In this way, schools were demonstrating a commitment to fulfilling softer outcomes through the direct deployment of resources.

Training

The softer outcomes of integration, cohesion and feeling safe can be supported where the school is committed to providing quality **training and awareness-raising for staff** – often delivered by specialists from TESS. Interviewees suggested that pupils will feel more settled if staff have, and demonstrate, genuine understandings of their backgrounds and cultures. One primary school, for example, had taken part in a local authority-run equalities project, and the SENCO from a secondary school had the opportunity to travel to the country of origin of a group of Roma pupils.

Similarly, interviewees from another secondary school suggested that securing and improving pupils' engagement with, and trust of the school required firm demonstrations that staff understood them as individuals:

> *We recognise that the Traveller community is not a homogeneous one … The way we work with them is not to define them as a group.*
>
> Headteacher

6.4.2 Engagement of family and community members in the life of the school.

Interviewees from some case-study schools highlighted the need to secure improved parental involvement with the school. Staff from a primary school, for example, noted that there had been an increase in both the quantity and quality of parental interaction with the school. Improved relationships were evidenced by improved attendance at parents' evenings and greater support for school activities. Interviewees highlighted parents' increasing willingness to allow their children to attend school trips and events as a key part of this. The school had achieved this situation through building trust and respect, demonstrating understanding of Traveller culture(s) and reasons for parents' worries and concerns and supplying quality information in a timely fashion. In terms

of outcomes for pupils, interviewees suggested that this improved school-parent relationship led to greater integration into the wider social and cultural life of the school, with possible implications for inclusion and mixing of Travellers and non-Travellers. Pupils' experiences are enhanced and their potential for benefiting from school opportunities can be increased.

Similarly, staff at a secondary school were said to 'work very hard at nurturing and mentoring [Roma] pupils' to increase their engagement with school. Much of this stems from the joint working of school and TESS staff with mentors working with families (especially newly-arrived families) to help them settle. Hence, a key soft outcome necessary for successful pupil engagement relates to increased engagement of, and relationship-building with, parents, families and the communities.

6.4.3 Make the life and work of the school appear more relevant

It is about making the curriculum relevant and making school welcoming, as well as making sure Traveller culture is incorporated into the whole-school ethos.

TESS teacher

In terms of pursuing softer outcomes of engagement and enjoyment, interviewees from both primary and secondary schools noted that certain areas of the curriculum were particularly attractive to Gypsy, Traveller and Roma pupils. Drama activities were seen as particularly effective in engaging students and were also regarded as an effective means of increasing self-esteem, supporting attendance (as noted in Chapter 3), and also for encouraging parents to come into school (increasing their connection and strengthen relationships) by attending performances.

In order to successfully engage pupils, lessons and curriculum content (and means of delivery) need to be accessible and seen as relevant and interesting to them. Interviewees spoke of the effectiveness of devising bespoke curriculum pathways for each pupil, based on their interests, strengths and possible progression intentions. Alternative, work-related and vocational provision, as well as out-of-hours activities – such as sports and leisure activities – were seen as effective approaches which could be used to foster pupil engagement and enjoyment.

We recognise their strengths and give them things to work to that lets these talents come out, like drawing, or working in the school garden – parents are really grateful that we give them these opportunities.

Teacher

Several secondary school staff also noted the importance of having sufficient scope and flexibility within the curriculum to allow the school to, 'work to the strengths of the pupils to raise their self esteem'. In practice, this entailed conducting initial assessments of newly arrived pupils to find out about the person and their interests, rather than just focussing on past academic performance. Having gained some background information on individuals, school staff could use this to encourage pupils to participate in related activities at school. An example of this involved finding out what languages particular pupils spoke, then trying to find an appropriate GCSE so that they could achieve straight away, boosting their self esteem, so encouraging engagement with school and learning.

In another secondary school, it was suggested that the pursuit of an enterprise-related curriculum supported Traveller pupils' engagement as pupils and families recognised the value and relevance of the content available to them:

> *The business and enterprise culture that we're promoting here is making a difference. It is helping to engage them and make them see that education can help them increase their future opportunities – help them set up on their own.*
>
> Headteacher

Several primary school interviewees highlighted the effectiveness of curriculum enrichment days whereby practical examples of Traveller cultures and lifestyles were used to explore areas of the curriculum. This helped to promote integration and improved the self-esteem and confidence of the Traveller pupils involved. Firstly, it was suggested that using such curriculum content could help make newly-arrived pupils feel more welcome in the class. Secondly, it could encourage all class members to understand more about each others' cultures and backgrounds.

In addition, following the learning outside the classroom agenda, for example, which can include the transfer of learning activities to spaces outside the classroom environments, was seen as particularly effective. Many pupils, including Traveller pupils, may feel increased levels of comfort and confidence in such non-traditional learning environments.

6.5   Increasing enjoyment

> *Over previous decades, there is a feeling that Travellers have had a good experience here, and it's not all been about exams.*
>
> Teacher

Although inextricably linked with engagement, interviewees also highlighted the importance of trying to make the school experience enjoyable for pupils. Efforts to increase enjoyment of school and education were seen to be especially important at specific times, such as the time surrounding the transition from the primary to secondary phase. As a result, one secondary school, for example, invested heavily in terms of school staff and TESS staff time in visits for prospective Traveller pupils: 'If they enjoy these visits, they'll be more likely to pester their parents to let them transfer' (teacher).

> *The kids like coming here. It's a fun place to be and the atmosphere makes them want to attend. They enjoy it.*
>
> Teacher

Interviewees highlighted a series of direct measures to provide students with 'enjoyable' activities/content whilst at school as a means of building their relationship with school and fostering their engagement. As highlighted in the literature review, a key concern was the low level of participation in after school and extra-curricular activities. Given the evidenced relationship between involvement in such activities and increased attendance and retention at school (Derrington and Kendall, 2004), this is clearly an area where schools were focusing increased attention. Interviewees, from both primary and secondary schools, noted their schools' commitment to after school clubs. It was said that, once trusting relationships had been established, Traveller parents really appreciate and value these events. The key to promoting engagement with, and enjoyment of, these activities stemmed from the identification of individual pupils' strengths and skills, and giving them the opportunity to participate, enjoy and excel. Activities mentioned included gardening/horticulture, music, drama, art, and sport. One primary school teacher interviewed suggested that pupils' attendance was closely related to the provision of such activities, as their fear of 'missing out' encouraged pupils to want to stay and attend them.

In one secondary school, the extended school day enables extra-curricular activities to take place during school hours. Elsewhere, interviewees noted the effectiveness of a lunchtime club/group designed to give Traveller pupils access to advice and support in school, as well as providing opportunities for other pupils to participate and find out more about Traveller culture. Developed as a result of requests from Traveller pupils in the school, this club provided pupils from different year groups with the opportunity and resources to meet and interact whilst at school. Pupils interviewed in

all the other case-study schools suggested that they would welcome similar opportunities in their schools.

7 The TARGET model (Traveller And Roma Gypsy Education Tool)
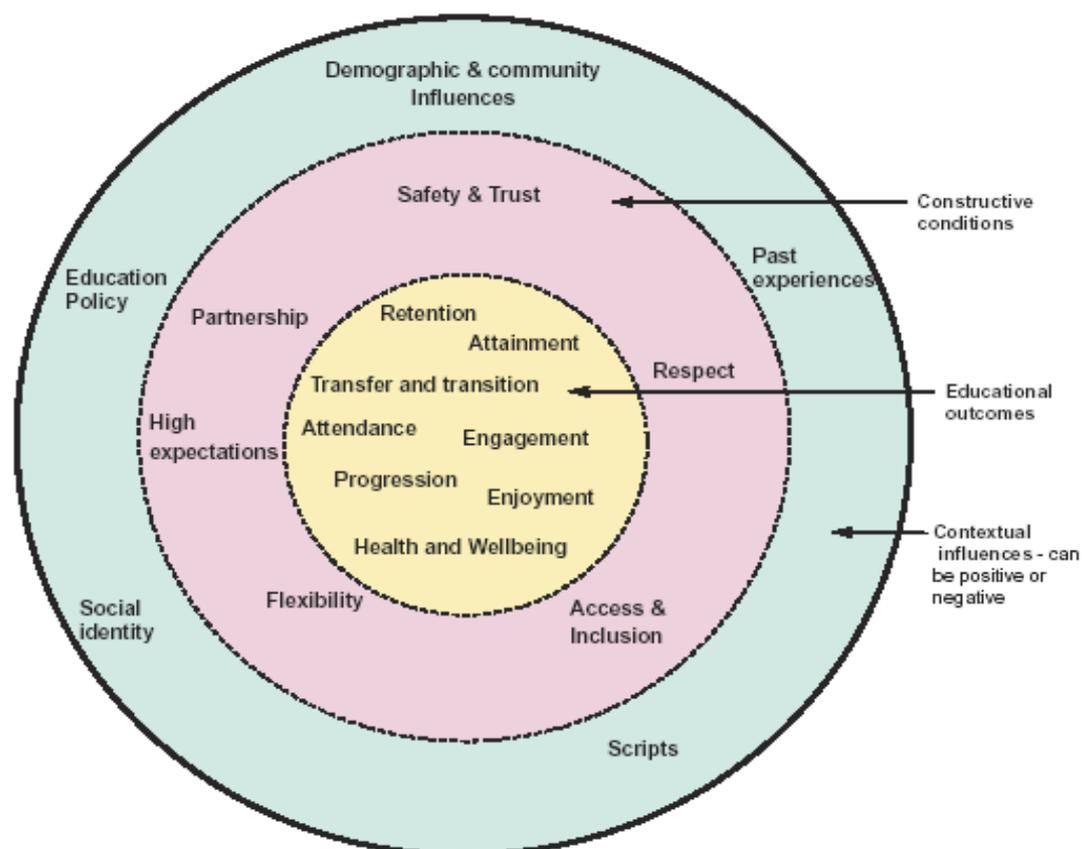
Figure 7.1: The TARGET model

7.1 Introduction

The Traveller and Roma Gypsy Education Tool (TARGET) shown diagrammatically in Figure 7.1 above emerged as a result of our analysis of the case-study data and was first introduced as an analytical model in the interim report: *Improving Educational Outcomes for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Pupils: What Works?* (Wilkin *et al.*, 2009).

The collection and analysis of data for this study has highlighted the complexity of issues associated with the measurement of outcomes for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils. It has also identified many variables that need to be considered when attempting to identify approaches and strategies for improving a range of outcomes. It was found that acknowledged success in improving different educational outcomes (shown at the core of the model above) was variable within, as well as across, different schools. For example, a school might offer flexible and cultural responses in its approach to the curriculum or in supporting pupils' access to the school, but may

not communicate particularly high expectations in relation to transfer or retention, or vice versa. Thus, a school's approach and response could be effective in improving certain outcomes at the expense of others.

Furthermore, no two schools visited were alike in terms of their demographic, organisational, political and historical context, and each of these influences could potentially support or impede efforts to improve educational outcomes for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils. Some schools we visited had long and established relationships with the Gypsy community in their local area, others worked with a large and recently arrived group of Roma pupils, there were faith schools and those that served socio-economically deprived or highly diverse catchment areas. Because of this diversity, specific interventions and approaches may lead to quicker results in some schools than others which are operating under very different circumstances. The TARGET model emphasises the significance of these **contextual influences** which may lie outside the immediate influence of the school, and which can either support or obstruct the raising of outcomes. This said, conceptual analysis of the types of approaches and strategies described by case-study schools identified a broad pattern of common themes which were believed to be important for improving outcomes. These are referred to in the TARGET model as **constructive conditions**.

This chapter explains how the tool can be applied and provides five illustrative examples, taken from the case-study phase of the research, to demonstrate how schools in different contexts targeted their efforts accordingly in order to improve educational outcomes.

7.2   Applying the TARGET model to audit and improve outcomes

The TARGET model is an evidence-based tool that can be used to help schools and policy makers analyse their current position and identify where effort should be placed to further improve all educational outcomes for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils. The model, which comprises three concentric circles is based on the following four assumptions:

- Educational outcomes take different forms and include affective as well as cognitive foci. 'Hard' outcomes are more apparent and readily measurable (for example, attendance or attainment in national tests) whereas other, 'softer' outcomes, are less discernable and quantifiable (e.g. attitude, enjoyment and emotional well-being), as discussed in Chapter 6.

- Educational outcomes are essentially inter-dependent and improvement in one area inevitably impacts on another.

- The unique context of the school can enhance or impede the improvement of educational outcomes for these groups of pupils. Schools may need to focus their efforts on different aspects more strongly than others, depending on their context.

- Despite the existence of these contextual differences, there are some common conditions which can impact positively on all educational outcomes, but it is important that these are balanced.

7.2.1 Evaluating educational outcomes

At the core of the TARGET are eight outcomes against which progress can be evaluated. Five of these are considered to be 'hard' outcomes, the remaining three are 'softer' affective outcomes. As mentioned above, the research confirms that these outcomes are essentially inter-dependent. For example, the link between attendance and attainment is already widely acknowledged and progression into Further Education usually depends on retention into Key Stage 4. In turn, retention may be determined by levels of enjoyment and engagement, and so on. It is important, therefore, for schools to consider pupil progress holistically across all eight outcomes and maintain a composite overview of academic and pastoral indicators, to identify support needs and target interventions.

As a first step, schools may find it useful to evaluate strengths and areas for development across the eight outcomes and review and develop success criteria for each.

Figure 7.2 Achieving outcomes – strengths and areas for development

OUTCOME	STRENGTHS	AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT
Transfer and transition		
Attainment		
Attendance		
Retention		
Progression		
Engagement		
Enjoyment		
Health and well - being		

7.2.2 Constructive conditions

Moving out from the core, the inner ring in the TARGET contains six constructive conditions:

- Safety and trust;
- Respect;
- Access and Inclusion;
- Flexibility;
- High expectations;
- Partnership.

These fundamental conditions emerged from the data analysis and were perceived to impact positively on all eight educational outcomes. Taken together, they can be said to characterise the inclusive ethos of a school and their effects are inevitably inter-woven. For example, where a school works hard to establish principles of *safety and trust* it can further facilitate *access and inclusion* for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils. Conversely, where there is imbalance, school responses may be effective in improving certain outcomes at the expense of others.

Strengthening each of the constructive conditions through the implementation of national strategies and approaches such as SEAL, the Mid-term Arrivals Project and the National Strategies' Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Achievement Programme

(GRTAP) to achieve greater balance can improve educational outcomes. This research suggests that each of the conditions is important, but 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. The constructive conditions have been explored in our previous work (Wilkin et. al 2009) which also contains an audit tool to help schools reflect upon and evaluate their development against each condition. Key points for effective practice outlined below may also be helpful in this respect.

---

1. Safety and trust

- Feelings of safety and trust can be encouraged if school staff members demonstrate understanding and awareness of the experiences over time of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities in wider society.

- Trusting relationships between Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities and schools can stem from, or be enhanced by, building on the existing interactions that community members have with TESS professionals. Collaboration between school and TESS personnel can increase a school's ability to engender and nurture trusting relationships with community members.

- Schools effectively advocating and demonstrating defined and strict behaviour policies are often attractive to Gypsy, Roma and Traveller families.

- Key individuals in schools, whether formally designated or not, can act as accessible and approachable human points of contact for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller families. It is important that such capacity is developed throughout the school.

---

2. Respect

- Respect needs to be promoted as a two-way process – mutual respect between the school and Gypsy, Roma and Traveller families.

- Vision and leadership are central to creating a culture of mutual respect in the school, whereby cultural differences could be accepted and celebrated in the school's whole systems and values. Parents were seen as more likely to be respectful of school rules and policies that were clearly defined and fairly applied.

- Locating responsibility for raising the achievements of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller students with a senior member of school staff can signal to families that they are valued and respected members of the school community.

- Knowledge of, and respect for, Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities could be enhanced in schools through building on training and development work by TESS and community organisations. Increased emphasis on different cultures and lifestyles at initial teacher training stage could also promote increased awareness and respect amongst school staff in the future.

3. Access and inclusion

- Access and inclusion can be supported via offering practical assistance, such as help with transport and uniform requirements. Accessibility can be increased when schools are proactive in assisting parents with the admission process.

- The active promotion of, and support for, distance learning opportunities can contribute to the maintenance of pupils' engagement in learning and relationships with the school when travelling. Re-admission and reintegration of pupils on their return can also be made easier if such links have been maintained.

- The integration of culturally-specific resources and programmes into wider curriculum areas for all pupils could serve to support and communicate Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils' inclusion and belonging in the school.

- The promotion of a 'school identity' can be an effective way of encouraging all pupils to interact and integrate, breaking down social and cultural barriers.

- Schools can also be seen to be more accessible through the provision of additional services, resources and facilities, including for example, family learning opportunities. The employment of community members can be a key element in increasing a school's accessibility to Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils and their families.

4. Flexibility

- Flexibility in the curriculum approach of a school can be effective in engaging many Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils, responding to their needs and offering individual pathways, skills and opportunities that have direct relevance to their aspirations and futures.

- Work-related curriculum opportunities are often particularly valued by pupils and families at secondary school level. The offer of accredited, vocationally orientated courses can furnish pupils with relevant learning experiences and provide schools with the means to sustain motivation and engagement, as well as facilitating onward progression. Offering such experiences to appropriate pupils at an earlier age may be particularly beneficial in encouraging, engaging and retaining pupils.

- A school's willingness and ability to negotiate and pursue a 'problem solving approach' to policies, such as behaviour, attendance and homework policies, based on dialogue with parents and understandings of cultures and lifestyles, can be particularly valuable, often indicating a commitment to meeting families and pupils 'half way'.

5. High expectations

- Generating and sustaining high expectations and aspirations are key elements underpinning improvements in outcomes for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils.

- Communication of such expectations (including attainment, attendance and behaviour) throughout the school and communities, represents a key element of success. This could involve the promotion of joint 'scripts' (between schools and

communities) that can be evidenced, supporting the message that, for example, 'Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils do well at this school'.

- The use of role models from within the communities can be effective in communicating and embedding high expectations and aspirations, evidencing the positive relationships between schools and members of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities, and so encouraging others.

- Performance data needs to be monitored in order to track the progress and achievement of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils, to ensure that the most appropriate provision is made available (reinforcing the need for flexibility and relevance of curriculum content and delivery).

6. Partnerships

- The development of partnerships at individual, parent, school and community level are crucial drivers in the access and engagement of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils and communities.

- Effective collaboration between pupils and school staff can be facilitated through, for example, pupil-led initiatives to promote greater understandings of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller culture in the school.

- Maintaining and enhancing links with previous pupils who have left the school and progressed to higher or further education destinations can be an effective way of helping to support school-pupil partnership approaches.

- School-parent partnerships are important. Employing community members provides crucial links into, and for the communities, as well as fulfilling official roles in the school. Schools can be more successful in building a partnership approach with parents when they proactively reach out to the communities. This might include senior members of school staff visiting families, sites and attending various community events and occasions.

- Within the school, partnerships between staff are important so that the responsibility for supporting Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils is not seen to rest with a specific individual. Whilst certain key individuals can be essential in supporting these pupils, it is important that **all staff** take a joint ownership approach to meeting the needs of all pupils in the school.

- The development of strong and supportive partnerships between primary and secondary schools are essential in ensuring effective transfer. These partnerships need to be based on dialogue and communication between staff at the different schools. In this way, secondary schools can, for example, capitalise on the often good relationships developed between primary schools and community members.

- School partnerships with TESS are valuable, with TESS often able to broker partnerships between schools and communities, based on their long-standing relationships with Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities. In practice, this could involve joint home visits (involving school and TESS staff) and TESS's role in developing capacity and expertise within schools to effectively engage with Gypsy, Roma and Traveller families and their communities.

7.2.3 Contextual influences

Finally, the outer circle of the model acknowledges the context within which individual schools are working to improve outcomes for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils. This aspect of the model is distinctive in that it takes account of external variables that lie outside the immediate influence of the school, but which can either support or obstruct the raising of outcomes for these groups of pupils. The contextual influences contained in the TARGET model are related to:

- Demographics and communities;
- Education policy;
- Social identity;
- Scripts;
- Past experiences.

In recognising the existence of these influences and their impact, it is suggested that schools may feel better equipped to target their efforts on overcoming certain contextual barriers, whilst capitalising on other positive influences.

Demographic and community influences

As noted by Myers and Bhopal (2009), where there are established Traveller sites in close proximity to schools, Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities can exhibit strong and loyal attachments to the school and its staff. This attachment is likely to be further strengthened if there is a large presence of other Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils, and if previous generations have attended the school in the past. In some schools visited, long-serving members of staff had developed good working relationships with families over a number of years and families felt reassured that their culture was respected and understood. In some areas, Gypsy, Roma and Traveller families were seen as well-established and integrated members of the local community rather than being viewed as 'outsiders'. Within this context, Gypsy, Roma and Traveller parents might express their trust and confidence in the school (to keep their children safe) by recommending the school to other families, allowing their children to take part in off-site activities and ensuring that their children attend school as regularly (and for as long) as possible. For schools operating within this context, where relationships are secure, there is great potential for focusing efforts on partnership working, creating open dialogue, and communicating even higher expectations in relation to issues such as transfer and retention.

However, community influences can also present challenges. Word can travel quickly within a close-knit and mutually supportive community and, if a parent or pupil feels they have been let down or treated unfairly by staff, this can affect relationships between the school and other members of the Gypsy, Roma or Traveller community. Similarly, isolated accounts of unhappy experiences in secondary school can be transmitted and preserved by community members (see 'scripts' below), acting as a barrier to transfer and retention. In these situations, the re-establishment of safety and trust is a priority but can take time to be restored. Elsewhere, community cohesion in the local area may be problematic. Where open hostility and racism directed towards Gypsy, Roma or Traveller families from the wider community is apparent, this is likely to be reflected in school and could have a detrimental effect on every outcome. In this context, a whole-school emphasis on respect, human rights, inclusion and safety is an important starting point.

Demographic and community influences: case-study illustration

Background

This secondary school is located in an urban inner city area. Around half of its pupils are eligible for FSM. The school has over 40 Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils on roll (mainly Travellers of Irish heritage), drawn from a number of local sites. This represents the highest proportion of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils across all the city's secondary schools. The school also experiences a high percentage of pupil mobility (this includes Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils and other pupils).

Contextual consideration: Difficult/complex relationships between the school and local communities

There were tensions between the school and some Gypsy, Roma and Traveller families around the engagement of pupils in the school. On occasion, the school's management of particular behaviour-related incidents (for example, through the use of permanent exclusions) were seen to have led to inappropriate and unhelpful reactions from family and other community members. This compounded the difficult relationships between the school and some members of the local Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities.

Response: Developing mutual respect

The school implemented a number of strategies to counteract these tensions and develop informed relationships with Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils, their families, and members of the wider communities. This involved the development of a strong pastoral structure where the pastoral manager and heads of year had pro-active roles in liaising with Gypsy, Roma and Traveller parents. This pastoral ethos in the school was broadened out and encompassed, for example, by the school Chaplin working with local churches and the local Irish centre (which were attended by Irish Travellers) to enhance school-community relationships.

Within the school, efforts were also made to recognise, understand and meet the needs of individual pupils. For example, members of the pastoral team invested time to uncover the reasons behind the barriers to one Traveller pupil's participation in an overseas school trip. This culminated in the school providing appropriate financial and

logistical support and the family subsequently consenting to the visit, thus demonstrating the development of mutual understanding of, and respect for, each other's positions, with the needs of the child at the centre.

The school also demonstrated its respect and understanding for the community's needs and desires for a certain curriculum offering. It did this by providing a broader range of subjects and activities including vocational and work-related learning opportunities that would give pupils skills in areas that were relevant and useful to them.

Lots of the Traveller boys like the engineering courses, brick-laying and joinery… The families will support them when it is something practical… It has to be seen as beneficial for the family unit… The aim was to give them something that will give them credibility in the job market (Headteacher).

Within this, whilst respecting families' desires for a vocational curriculum, there was also strong emphasis on raising aspirations and promoting wider academic pathways and opportunities.

We have to maintain the focus on getting them some good exam results. It's not enough to just get them to read and write. We need to equip them to be able to go off and get a trade, or work on getting them to go into 6th form. Raising aspirations is what we try to do here. In the whole school, hardly anybody knows anybody who has been to university. We're doing a lot of work with the local universities to get them to think higher, aim higher, get them to think that there are other jobs out there. (Headteacher)

Impact: Increased engagement

There was evidence that the strategies implemented were leading to better relationships with Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils and families. Anecdotal evidence suggested that there was an increasing confidence within the communities that education is worthwhile. For example, two parents of current pupils have returned to college to achieve literacy and numeracy qualifications, accepting that they did not maximise learning opportunities whilst at school themselves. Significantly, their daughters are said to be achieving well at the school and are fully supported by their parents in this endeavour.

Another family changed their intentions to travel for a prolonged period because of the academic progress their children were making. Demonstrating respect for the importance of education, the family decided to defer travel plans until their children had completed their examinations at key stage 4.

It was suggested that achievement and attainment were increasing. Similarly, attendance, which was previously below average had improved to match the national average. 'That's down to the flexible curriculum and other efforts to help engage pupils' (Headteacher).

Pupils are staying in school longer especially now that the traditional trades and skills are changing. There is increased commitment from the community. Girls still want to get married, but might delay this for a couple of years until they have increased their education/training. They retain their culture, but engage more with education (Headteacher).

Past experiences

As implied above, parental and community expectations of, and attitudes towards, school and education can be a powerful influence on the improvement of outcomes. Equally important are the attitudes (and expectations) held by all members of the school community.

Attitudes are shaped either directly through personal experience or indirectly through observational learning and, once established, are not always easy to change. A number of interviewees (parents, pupils and staff) made reference to either direct or indirect experiences when explaining or justifying their beliefs and actions. For example, some parents who themselves experienced a difficult or unhappy time at secondary school, tended to communicate anxiety about the prospect of secondary schooling for their own children.

> *I chose to put* [name] *into an all girls' school because I didn't want her to communicate with people from the area that go to the other secondary school and I'd been to one of the other secondary schools in the area and didn't have a very good time, we used to get bullied.*

Similarly, the less than positive experiences of other family members or acquaintances could be enough to put the continued engagement of some pupils in Key Stages 3 and 4 at risk. Where good relationships had been developed between parents and a key member of staff, these anxieties were reportedly overcome and parents were persuaded to place their trust in the individual. In other cases, social influence can be more effective than persuasion, particularly if the source is perceived as credible. Stories of success, where pupils had achieved good qualifications in school and progressed to college or university, were used effectively to motivate others and raise the aspirations of parents. Several teachers interviewed spoke about the value of engaging former or senior pupils to act as role models and describe their own experiences of secondary school or college to younger students. This could be particularly helpful as part of preparation for transfer or in encouraging KS4 students to further their education.

The literature has consistently shown that positive teacher attitudes and expectations are crucial to the achievement of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils and these too are shaped by experience. The expectations of some teachers may be borne out of limited insight into Gypsy, Roma and Traveller culture, which could impact negatively on outcomes. For example, low expectations in relation to pupils' attendance, behaviour or retention may be grounded in fairly limited prior experience and left unchallenged.

In one school that had a very high proportion of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils, the varied experiences were said to have helped to challenge and break down stereotyped attitudes.

Past experiences and impacts on pupil outcomes: case-study illustration

Background

This school is an 11-16 business and enterprise college. The number of pupils from ethnic minorities is small but increasing. There are 24 Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils (ascribed) on roll (mainly Gypsy). Many of the pupils are from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Contextual consideration: Poor past experiences

In the past, the school was said to have had a poor reputation in the local area. There were perceived to be bullying and behaviour problems and there were also negative connotations regarding Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller pupils attending the school. Some parents believed that the school was not meeting the needs of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children and was not an environment in which their children felt safe. This was said to be reflected in low attendance figures for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils. There was a low level of engagement between school and community.

Response: Development of safety and trust

In response to the issue of poor past experiences, the school went about developing safety and trust through a wide range of approaches and interventions. Central to this was the appointment of a key member of staff to nurture and develop a liaison/support function within the school to help (re)engage the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils and families. In addition, the second key element for developing feelings of safety and trust took the form of the establishment of a comprehensive multi-agency approach which involved input from a diverse range of key partners from the school, the LA (e.g. TESS, Housing, Connexions), the Police, and third sector organisations.

What we've gradually done is deal with issues of racism, of bullying. We've turned behaviour around significantly. There has been a massive change in the culture and operation of the school. We've built up trust (Headteacher).

Examples of how this was achieved included:

- Site visits from the school and partners (e.g. around transition);

- Group attendance 'clinics' for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils and parents (rather than sessions for individual parents);

- Appointment of a specialist TA (who has previous established relationships with Gypsy, Roma and Travellers in the local community);

- Programme of peer mentoring (to support transition from primary and to post 16);

- Ongoing support and relationships (e.g. assistance with post-school progression opportunities such as help with writing job applications and CVs);

- Better established post-16 progression routes working with local colleges and employers.

Impact: Improved educational outcomes

There was said to be 'an extremely inclusive ethos embedded across the school'. This was reflected in the school being awarded 'outstanding' in relation to care and guidance in its last Ofsted inspection report. As a means of redressing the difficulties associated with past histories, advances in safety and trust were said to have led to the following impacts:

- Improved relationships with, and engagement of, parents and pupils;

- Increased inclusion and integration in the school (including participation of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils in residential trips and school visits);

- Reduced bullying incidents;

- Improved attendance of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils (69 per cent in 2004 to 94 per cent in 2009);

- Role models who have successfully completed post-16 transfer into college have helped 'to break the cycle (of not completing secondary school), developing an ethos of staying-on'.

Through its approaches and responses, the school has tackled issues and difficulties associated with past experiences and is now in a situation where it has an enhanced reputation in the local area, including Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities. It is this more positive situation that is beginning to inform the experience and perceptions of, as well as impact on, future generations. Previous negative histories have been transformed into positive experiences and the enhanced reputation of the school as a safe, welcoming and relevant place underpins the new messages being transmitted and promoted within the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities in the area.

Scripts

Scripts were used by staff in schools, as well as by members, both pupils and adults, of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities. In the TARGET model, the term 'script' is used to describe a common response or phrase which may be consciously or unconsciously applied as a form of personal or cultural observation, defence or protection. Scripts can be used, therefore, by any community members in response to perceived challenge to cultural norms or organisational practices. They are a collective way of spelling out, justifying, or negotiating shared cultural conventions and boundaries or school responses and, because the wording used is frequently identical, there is a sense that responses are pre-prepared answers to questions which may or may not be asked. Previous studies into the education of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils have consistently revealed parental scripts which are used to defend decisions against sending children to secondary school, or to justify reasons for allowing children to leave school before the age of 16. These scripts often refer to the prevalence of substance abuse; 'We heard there was children taking drugs there'; the irrelevance of the curriculum; or the maintenance of traditional gender roles, and are echoed by the children and young people themselves. One mother said that she told her daughter, 'you belong to me and you say what I say'.

In some school contexts, scripts such as these can be promoted widely and potentially create a barrier to improving outcomes. Scripts may even be met with passive acceptance by staff who feel unable or unwilling to challenge cultural values and who may adopt parallel scripts themselves to explain, or justify, gaps in attainment or

differences in attendance, engagement, transfer and retention between Gypsy, Roma and Traveller and non-Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils: 'Travellers don't go to secondary school' or 'Their parents won't allow them to go on trips' and 'Education is not seen as a priority at home'.

Alternatively, cultural scripts can have a positive impact on outcomes. Several school staff indicated that they were seeing glimpses of changing scripts about secondary education, and some parents were articulating that they were desperate for their children to get qualifications from secondary schools, because they acknowledged that their work life would look very different in the future. This perception also featured in many of the parent focus group discussions: 'Travellers need exams these days – times have changed' or 'I want them to have the education that I didn't have'. In these cases, scripts were felt to have a positive impact on the achievement of outcomes.

Scripts and the impact on educational outcomes and transfer: case-study illustration

Background

This Church of England primary school is located in a predominantly white working class area experiencing severe socio-economic deprivation. Gypsy, Roma and Traveller groups are well established in the local community living in houses and on a local site. There is a long history of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils attending the school and community relationships are generally said to be good.

Contextual consideration: Common scripts used by Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities

Within this context of good school/community relationships, scripts are often used by parents (and pupils) to create barriers and place limitations on the extent to which Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils engage in school, education and learning. In particular, the application of these scripts often relates to the non-transfer of pupils from primary to secondary school.

Response: Developing partnerships with Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities

In order to counter the detrimental impact associated with these scripts, the school invested in developing partnership approaches with the communities to increase mutual understanding and respect. It was seen as essential to develop this level of understanding and trust as a basis for then unpicking negative effects of the scripts. The school employs several members of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities to work in the school in various support roles (e.g. teaching assistant). These members of staff are well placed to tackle scripts because they understand them and are able to challenge them 'from within'.

They [parents] *come and open up to us more. They feel like they've got someone on the inside. They tell us things that they can't tell anyone else in the school* (Teaching Assistant).

Challenging scripts, and overcoming the barriers to education that they can

perpetuate, occurs on various levels, but it was seen as especially powerful when the challenge is made by somebody who is trusted and respected by the community. Hence, examples were given where a community member employed by the school was able to share her own and her family's experiences of school with other parents. This individual noted that she had challenged the script that her son had used when he had wanted to leave school at the age of 15 as all his friends had done, because that was what was expected. In response to this script: 'I said yes you can leave if you want to sit at home all day and have no money and no car then leave school'. The result of this challenge was that this young person remained at grammar school, completed GCSEs and was engaged in further education. 'I tell the other parents, if my children can do it so can yours' (Teaching Assistant).

This position of being employed by the school, and known, trusted and respected by the rest of the community, mean that this TA was able to draw upon her own experiences and knowledge of the community to challenge scripts she herself knew and understood.

A key element in successfully challenging scripts stemmed from the need to ensure that the challenge centered on securing the 'best' outcomes for the child. Hence, when a parent suggested she would be taking her daughter out of the school because she had been confronted about wearing large earrings, the TA was able to speak from a position of knowledge in both the community and the school, and suggested that wearing smaller earrings would carry less of a risk for the child.

Her mother said, 'they're part of our religion and she has to wear them, and I said – it's not. She just wears them because you tell her she can, and I'm a Traveller and I know. She said, Oh, Ok then. They need educating. Attitudes will change slowly' (Teaching Assistant).

Similarly, scripts underpinning parents' 'cultural' rights to take children out of school during term time could also be successfully challenged in relation to protecting the right of the child to education, as well as the potentially detrimental effect on friendship networks and social opportunities that long periods away from school could have.

Institutional scripts were also said to need challenging – even though potentially well-meaning, attempts to make life easier for certain groups of children could have a detrimental impact on them. For example, colluding with parents around the threat of taking pupils out of school if they were required to participate in sex education lessons was seen as a script that schools often perpetuated. Similarly, another Traveller working in this school noted that as a child, she was automatically given easier work than her classmates as it was expected, by teachers, that she would not be able to cope with more difficult work, and that she would probably soon be moving on. Scripts, therefore, need to be challenged in terms of children's rights and the promotion of high expectations.

Impact: Improved engagement and educational outcomes

The quality and nature of relationships and partnership approaches between the school and Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities, in this context, were said to have contributed to high levels of sustained pupil engagement and achievement at school. This was seen to be underpinned by challenging scripts and barriers to participation and achievement and the promotion of high expectations, centered on meeting the needs of the child. The employment of community members who could demonstrate understandings of Traveller culture, and then negotiate elements of school policy and practice, provided a context that supported and encouraged greater involvement with the school. Hence, parents were seen to be more likely to work with the school in supporting their children's attendance and attainment. Of central importance here were the small, but significant transformations in attitudes towards transition from primary to secondary school.

> *Traveller families are moving back into this area because they want their children to come to this school. Some families who used to move around now stay in the area so they can come to this school. They can see the children are progressing and want them to stay in* (Teaching Assistant).
>
> There is an increase in the number of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils participating in after school activities and trips, including residential trips. Much of this was said to stem from the impact of Travellers working in the school, as well as changing attitudes: 'The kids used to be told by their parents, you won't enjoy it, so you're not going. Now, we have won them round and they go, and they enjoy the trips' (Teacher).

Education policy

Contextual differences in terms of education policy were also found to impact positively or negatively on schools' efforts to improve outcomes for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils. Included in the case studies were faith schools, 'National Challenge' schools and schools in areas with selective systems and/or single sex provision in place.

Some parents expressed implicit trust in faith schools, linking high expectations of pupil behaviour and a sense of justice with the ethos of a faith school, especially in the secondary phase. Staff interviewed in a Catholic secondary school believed that Gypsy, Roma and Traveller parents were particularly attracted by the values of the school, including the promotion of the ethos of inclusion and safety. In another faith primary school, it was felt that parents were reassured by the regular presence of a priest wearing a cassock at the school although this was 'probably not as important a factor as the proximity of the school [to the site]'. Faith schools therefore may have a slight advantage as far as the establishment of safety and trust is concerned.

Two National Challenge schools (where fewer than 30 per cent of pupils attained 5 A*-C grades at GCSE) were included as case studies. By the nature of these schools, there were inherent challenges in improving outcomes for all pupils, not just Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils. Interviews with staff, however, revealed some perceived advantages as well as challenges. Although pupil attainment was generally low, one TESS teacher saw this as working in the favour of Traveller pupils in that the school did not view them:

> *...as a drain on results. It's not hugely 'pushy' academically and maybe that suits some of the Travellers. As a group, they don't stand out in this school as achieving lower than anyone else.*

The attendance of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils was also considered 'less of an issue' given the circumstances of the school. Another TESS co-ordinator believed that:

> *… schools going into special measures doesn't have the same impact on Traveller parents as it does on middle class parents – as long as their kids are happy and they have some positive contact with the staff, it doesn't make a huge difference.*

Views about single sex schools and grammar schools were inconclusive. Although no single sex secondary schools were visited, interviews with parents and staff in feeder primary schools suggested that proximity factors and the presence of other Traveller pupils were probably more important than single sex provision, particularly if these schools were selective: 'The area has single sex grammar schools but many of the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils choose to go to the local comp' (Headteacher).

Finally, it was suggested that where schools had Children's Centres attached, this could be advantageous in making early links and developing good relationships with Gypsy, Roma and Traveller families.

Education policy: case-study illustration

Background

This Academy has around 800 pupils on roll. It has almost 60 Gypsy, Roma, Traveller pupils (most of which are Roma). With a new open plan building, it is a well resourced 21st century extended school and, as such, works within a multi-agency framework. The local library, Adult Education, Youth and Social Services and a Police Liaison Officer are all based at the school. It has a dual specialism in performing arts and business enterprise. Pupils are mainly drawn from local areas of high socio-economic depravation. The proportion of students entitled to FSM is well above the national average and attendance is below 90 per cent. The school supports large numbers of new arrivals, particularly those from Eastern Europe.

Contextual consideration: Education policy – area of selection/Academy status

The academy is located in a local authority which operates a selective school system. It inherited a legacy of underachievement and pupils continue to arrive at the school with well below average attainment, particularly in literacy. There are low levels of engagement. Many of the new arrivals have EAL support needs. Being an Academy, the school has state-of-the-art facilities and greater flexibility in the use of resources. As an Academy, it is not bound by the National Curriculum.

Response: Flexible arrangements in terms of school organisation and the curriculum

The school challenges traditional educational approaches and has introduced some innovative responses to drive up standards and engage young people. Longer lessons of two hours were introduced to reduce movement and enable more in-depth vocational studies and out of school visits. The school day is extended from 8.30am-5pm (with the addition of a breakfast club from 7.30am) and all pupils benefit from a daily two-hour supervised study session. This ensures that every pupil has access to ICT facilities and homework is completed in the school environment so as not to disadvantage any child. There are no

school bells and no generic break-times (where pupils are all together on a playground) instead, subject teachers determine when to offer 20 minute breaks for pupils within learning sessions and there are staggered half hour lunch breaks scheduled in. At the heart of the building is a communal café area where staff and students have breaks and eat lunch together. This provides an adult learning environment.

The school has a holistic ethos where personalisation of the curriculum is key. Pupils enjoy learning because the flexible curriculum 'captures their interest' and 'prepares [them] for the world of work very well' (Ofsted). Courses are designed around pupils' needs and all students have access to VTEC first diplomas. There is a wide-ranging menu of extra-curricular activities which can be accommodated during the official school day.

Impact: impact on enjoyment, attainment and retention

The following impacts were highlighted:

- Greater engagement of pupils in extra-curricular activities that are held during the extended school day;

- Improved achievement at GCSE/equivalent level;

- Engagement, participation and retention of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils supported by the 'college-style' learning environment and approach, in which learners feel they are treated more as adults;

- Increasing numbers of pupils are continuing into the sixth form.

Social identity

As suggested previously, most parents and almost all pupils interviewed said that they preferred to be in a school with other children from their own ethnic community.

> *It makes a big difference for them to be together ...Children who've been brought up the same as them. It's hard to explain but it's how they interact with each other.*
>
> Gypsy parent

This has implications for transfer and retention and schools with few Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils on roll may find it more difficult to 'sell' the idea of secondary school if pupils are isolated culturally. One Gypsy parent, for example, was quite adamant that her daughter would not be transferring to a high school where there were no other Gypsy pupils. Where there are several Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils in the school, the research confirms that they tend to stay together as a social, mixed age-group outside the classroom. Staff were aware of this and, in some cases, made determined efforts to widen friendship groups through the provision of lunch time and after school clubs which brought different pupils together with a common purpose. Parents confirmed that there was very little mixing between their children and non-Traveller peers out of school and the pupils themselves also mentioned that they are not always allowed out after school either. Often, this is because Traveller sites are

separated geographically. One parent told a story of when a little girl came to play with a school friend on the site and the cry went up from one of her nephews, 'Auntie, there's a Gauje on the camp!'

On the other hand, Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities may be well established in the local area. In these contexts, community cohesion can impact positively on peer and home-school relationships. Similarly, a school might serve a diverse population with many different community groups and pupils with a variety of needs. In these situations, Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils may be less likely to feel like 'outsiders.'

Social identity: case-study illustration

Background

This large, diverse inner city primary school has over 400 pupils on roll, of which around 16 percent are Gypsy, Roma and Travellers. There is a higher than average percentage of pupils with statements of SEN, EAL and a higher proportion of pupils eligible for FSM. There is a large, well-established Gypsy, Roma and Traveller site situated on the outskirts of the town.

Contextual consideration: large cohort of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils with a strong social identity around non-transfer

There is a large local Gypsy, Roma and Traveller community exhibiting unified sets of beliefs, actions and behaviours in relation to school attendance, transition and retention. There is a strong whole-school ethos of inclusion and there is no evidence of racial, ethnic and cultural tensions and difficulties in the school. However, it is said that the impacts of the strong cohesive identity among local Gypsy, Roma and Travellers, which originates in the home environment, may also be felt in the school. For example, it was said that when attending school events, such as parents' evenings, community members tended to remain as a group, and also gather as a group each day when collecting their children from school. Similarly, Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils tend not to mix with other pupils at playtimes and assemble as a large group. One teacher commented:

[Gypsy, Roma and Traveller] *pupils all stick together in the playground. Only rarely do they play with other children. Sometimes they go round in a really large group which can be quite daunting for other children. They like each other's company and know each other inside out and they get comfort from that so it's partly a protective thing.*

Pupils reinforce this view noting that: 'We all live on [name of place]… we go down each others' [homes] all the time'. These young people noted that they had never been to play at non-Gypsy, Roma and Traveller class peers' houses or attend birthday parties. They commented: 'We wouldn't feel safe'; 'My mum she says 'you can't play with them because I don't know them.' When discussing transition, these pupils also reported that they would like a secondary school for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils only.

Several implications or impacts of this situation were identified:

- Attendance: It was suggested that many of these parents do not work outside the home so attitudes towards non-attendance were fairly relaxed. There was said to be less of an imperative to attend school as there was always someone on site

to look after the children. This has a potential multiplier effect whereby the absence of one pupil could quickly spread to include siblings and friends.

- Transfer: It was suggested that there was a history of non-transfer among the local communities, partly due to the possible employment of young people in successful family businesses. According to school staff, of the 13 pupils in Year six, only two were expected to transfer.

Response: Efforts to promote access and inclusion

A series of strategies and approaches were implemented to try and develop pupils' and families engagement with school and education. This included:

- School involvement in the National Strategies' Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Achievement Project (GRTAP).

- School-level promotion of high level expectations of attendance facilitated by the headteacher meeting and greeting parents at the beginning and end of the school day. This provided opportunities for parents to raise any areas of concern and for the headteacher to try and resolve them as soon as possible. 'It's not the work you do with the pupils so much as the work you do with the parents' (TESS).

- Attendance in the school was also supported through the presence of a dedicated EWO for two and a half days per week. This included a focus on efforts to improve understandings surrounding the importance of continued and regular attendance at school. However, when travelling was undertaken, distance learning packs and support were provided to help families maintain engagement.

- The establishment of a programme of support prior to transfer, including partnership working between primary and secondary headteachers and the opportunity to undertake additional visits to the secondary schools. There is also a dedicated TA to work on support for transition.

- Key members of the community who have had successful experiences with the school have a role to play in promoting and facilitating the engagement of other families in the life of the school.

Impact: Improved attendance and engagement

Several impacts were identified from the responses implemented:

- The work of the school and EWO was beginning to challenge parents' views on attendance and transfer.

- There was greater engagement of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils and their families in the life of the school. For example, parents were more likely to allow children to participate in school trips and afterschool activities.

- There was anecdotal evidence of improved integration and informal mixing of Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller pupils and other pupils.

- Greater involvement of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller parents in promoting their cultures in the school (e.g. their involvement in cultural displays), helping to build relationships.

Contextual influences, such as those outlined above, are important to consider and there are inevitably other local effects not discussed in this report. Although some are potentially challenging and may lie outside the immediate control of the school, their

identification may help schools to target efforts in specific ways in order to improve educational outcomes.

8.   Conclusion and key messages

8.1   The current situation

This study confirms that whilst focused efforts and targeted interventions aimed at improving low educational outcomes for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils are beginning to make an impact, as a group, these pupils remain amongst the most vulnerable (a term used in this report to refer to academic underachievement) in the education system. The national data collected as part of this research is the most comprehensive and illuminating to date, tracking an entire cohort of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils over a five-year period. Whilst there is some evidence that, as a community, there is a growing Gypsy, Roma and Traveller middle class with a number of educationally successful pupils (Ryder and Greenfield, forthcoming), our data reveals that Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils tend to be concentrated in schools with below average results, and that, even when controlling for gender, free school meals, deprivation and special educational needs, they make considerably less progress than their peers. Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils have significantly lower levels of attendance and one in five pupils from these communities fails to make the transition between primary and secondary school. Almost half of those who do transfer leave school before the end of Key Stage 4. Those not in the education system are even more vulnerable to disengagement and/or academic underachievement.

Key messages

- Findings from this study are a further reminder to policy makers and those responsible for providing education that much more needs to be done to achieve equality in educational opportunities for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils. Without a framework of targeted support at both local and national levels, the improvement of outcomes for these pupils is likely to remain unacceptably slow.

- Local authorities need robust strategies to engage with pupils who are not on the rolls of schools, to ensure that their educational entitlement is safeguarded. Policy makers, schools and other agencies also need to consider a variety of ways of increasing the expectations of all stakeholders (including teachers, pupils and parents) and maximising pupils' emotional well-being, both of which are believed to underpin improvements in attainment, attendance and retention.

- The maintenance of scripts can have a positive or a limiting effect on outcomes. Developing relationships of trust through dialogue with families and community groups is important, so that community and parental scripts can be used as a way of opening positive discussion, rather than acting as a barrier to it.

- The concentration of Gypsy Roma and Traveller pupils in schools that achieve below average results needs to be addressed at strategic and policy levels. Future research could usefully examine the characteristics and educational experiences of high attaining pupils from these communities.

8.2   The issue of transfer

This research reveals that an estimated 80 per cent of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils nationally transfer between primary and secondary school[13]. The Literature Review and case studies suggested that support for transition was a high priority for schools and the TESS. In many areas, Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils transfer to secondary school as a matter of course, with the pattern of transfer gradually becoming embedded. This is an encouraging development. However, overall, it remains a serious concern that around one in five pupils from these communities continues to leave the school system at this point in their education. Patterns of resistance are found where parental anxieties and social pressures are manifested through transmissible scripts, for example: 'Our children don't go to secondary school'. Sometimes, scripts are accepted by school staff who feel unable or unwilling to challenge cultural values. They may adopt parallel scripts themselves to explain or justify gaps in attainment or differences in attendance, engagement, transfer and retention. Schools recognised that the TESS played a key role with pupils who were disengaged from education, in the post statutory phase and where they move between local authority areas.

> **Key messages**
>
> - A co-ordinated response between primary schools, secondary schools and local authorities is essential in order to further improve transfer rates and maintain pupil engagement through the secondary phase. Consistent messages and expectations relating to secondary transfer need to be coupled with targeted support for families and pupils, including those with a history of non-transfer in the immediate and/or extended family and those who are highly mobile.
>
> - Attention needs to focus on challenging the negative impacts of the scripts and assumptions accepted by both schools and communities around perceptions and beliefs of the inevitability and appropriateness of attitudes, decisions and actions in relation to non-transfer. Sensitive outreach work and proactive relationship building between secondary schools and communities are fundamental pre-requisites to address non-transfer.
>
> - There may also be greater potential for school staff and other professionals to take the opportunity to work with Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities to increase understandings of the importance of transfer (as well as educational achievement and attainment). Key elements of this should include: increased dialogue; the employment of community members in schools; and the promotion of 'success stories' of young people who have benefited from effective transition and progression through different phases of educational provision.

---

[13] This figure is based on tracing one cohort of 1,389 pupils who were in Year 6 in 2003 and identified themselves as Gypsy, Roma or Traveller at any time between Years 6 and 11. The analysis does not include all possible forms of alternative provision.

8.3   Retention

Just over half the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils in the national cohort were successfully retained in school until Year 11. This finding is more positive than those reported in the past (e.g. by OFSTED and in previous smaller-scale studies) and suggests that progress is being made towards the greater educational engagement of these communities. The study shows that a small majority of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils are now completing statutory schooling rather than leaving early. There was evidence that Gypsy, Roma and Traveller families increasingly recognise that changing economic contexts mean that their young people will need to achieve better educational outcomes in order to be economically viable and successful. This finding goes some way to challenging the general assumption (and script) that children from these communities do not engage in secondary education.

However, the pattern of retention is still far from satisfactory, for almost half of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils and only 38 per cent of Traveller pupils of Irish heritage reach statutory leaving age. Furthermore, the data shows that pupils from all Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities are still more likely to withdraw from the school system at particular points during KS 3 and, to a lesser extent, during Year 10.

Key messages

- There is a need for a continued and consistent emphasis on high expectations and aspirations. This finding could be useful in challenging common scripts used by both families and schools. Alongside challenging the barriers and scripts that prevent or limit continued educational engagement, there remains the need to stress the importance and value of completing education.

- In the future, the message of education's validity and relevance to young people is helped by offering a personalised, vocational and flexible curriculum, as well as opening minds to professional career routes (that can be supportive and useful to their own community).

- The use of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller role models to promote this message of aspiration and achievement in schools and in the community is a particularly important strategy, and one that could be further developed. Above all, given that successful retention was associated with inclusive schools that reached out to parents, working with Gypsy, Roma and Traveller parents in equal partnership remains crucial.

8.4   Ascription

The research also indicated that Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils were significantly more likely to change their ethnic ascription than pupils in other minority groups.

Where pupils change their ascriptions to larger groups such as White British, White Irish and White European, data analysis is unlikely to indicate whether schools and local authorities are being effective in improving outcomes. It was clear that the case study schools did not rely on ethnic ascription to identify pupils from these communities and part of the culture of respect they engendered included the right of pupils to choose how to identify themselves and to whom. In most schools, sensitivity to ethnic identity was seen as a component of personalisation.

Key message

- TESS coordinators who represented LAs in the case-study visits made it clear that they were not dependent on ethnic ascription alone to identify families. Usually they had close links with families, extended family groups, community organisations and other agencies. In any reorganisation of LA services, it is important that these services are able to respond with the same flexibility based in relationships of trust and broad safeguarding objectives.

8.5   Social and emotional well-being

It has been confirmed in this study that Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils exhibit a strong need for social support from their community peers and make efforts to stay together in school. Some pupils, who are unable to rely on social support from their cultural peer group, resort to hiding their ethnic identity. Where Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils were allocated places in different schools to their friends, relatives and other members of their communities, parents threatened to withdraw and home educate unless their children were able to attend the same school. This type of response may indicate emotional insecurity, perhaps rooted in the fear of prejudice and discrimination and, in recognition of this, some schools make targeted efforts to develop greater social cohesion. The study also revealed that, outside of school, there is often little or no social contact between Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils and their peers. The data suggests that this segregation is consciously or unconsciously endorsed by parents and this may be contributing to pupils' feelings of social exclusion in school. Staff perceptions about the successful inclusion of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils tended to be more positive than those expressed by the pupils themselves.

Key messages

- Psycho-social factors are central to the question of raising outcomes. Schools need to fully recognise that, if Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils are unhappy in school, they are unlikely to attend or achieve. Social difficulties may lead pupils to self-exclude or behave in a manner that results in exclusion.

- It is crucial that schools seek and listen to the voices of pupils who are vulnerable to academic underachievement in order to monitor the effectiveness of their inclusion policy. Ensuring appropriate levels of funding to facilitate effective pastoral support for such pupils is likely to be important.

8.6 The principles for improvement

This report has identified common conditions or principles which appear to be instrumental in raising pupil outcomes. Collectively, these conditions can impact positively on all the identified outcomes. The unique context of each school has also been shown to enhance or impede the improvement of educational outcomes for these groups of pupils and although generic guidance is helpful, one size does not fit all. What is clear from all the responses is that change is achieved through a gradual process that responds to identified needs and challenges: there is no simple one-to-one correspondence between inputs and outcomes. The research found that there are complex, inter-related reasons why the outcomes for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils fall significantly below those for other children, and that schools are employing a range of strategies in response. National achievement targets provide little evidence of the efforts being made to improve outcomes and attention needs to be given to establishing a system for monitoring the progress of these communities using indicators and targets relevant to the challenges.

Key messages
- Each school will need to understand the impact of its context and focus its efforts accordingly. The TARGET model (as described in Chapter 7) may thus be helpful to schools in analysing and determining their next steps.
- Local authorities and central government may need to monitor levels of engagement, exclusion and SEN identification to establish whether progress is being made locally and nationally to ensure pupils from these communities have the opportunities to reach their full potential.

Technical Appendix
by
Simon Rutt

A1   Gypsy, Roma and Traveller and comparative samples

An aim of the project was to carry out analysis on national data sets to understand variations in attainment at Key Stage 2. Many analyses of national outcomes currently have 'Gypsy/Roma' and 'Traveller of Irish Heritage' as independent explanatory variables within their models and this regularly results in large negative coefficients. Compared to similar pupils 'Gypsy/Roma' and 'Traveller of Irish Heritage' pupils, on average, made less progress. As the cohort of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils is relatively small, we were requested to select a comparison group of non Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils that would be similar in number and background characteristics.

The following describes the process carried out on the Year 6 cohort of 2005/06 but a similar process was carried out for the subsequent analyses on the 2006/07 and 2007/08 datasets. After removing pupils that were missing either Key Stage 2 results or Key Stage 1 prior attainment results, we were left with a cohort of 692 Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils, from an original cohort size of 1,119. Therefore, due to missing prior attainment or outcome data, 38 per cent of this cohort was excluded from the analysis. This compares to a national figure of around eight per cent. In 2006/07 there were 1,438 Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils of which 912 remained in the analysis and in 2007/08 there were 1,187 Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils of which only 566 remained in the analysis.

For the 2005/06 dataset a random selection was carried out to obtain a comparison group of 692 non- Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils. The main analysis was to identify any difference in average rates of progression between Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. To obtain a comparison group that was as similar as possible to our cohort of interest, whilst also keeping a degree of randomness in its selection, use was made of two variables. Average Key Stage 1 points score at pupil level was put into quintiles and these identified low and high attaining pupils. The 2003 average key stage 2 points score at school level was also placed into quintiles and these identified low and high performing schools. This allowed us to identify the number of pupils that were low performing and were also in a low performing school, as well as the number of high performing pupils in high performing schools. There were 25 permutations of pupil ability and school performance.

After randomly selecting the 692 pupils needed for the comparison group we obtained the following cohorts of pupils;

Table 1:   2006 Cohorts of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller and non-Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils

	Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Pupils	Non Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Pupils
Gender		
Male	48.0%	57.4%
Female	52.0%	42.6%
Special Educational Needs		
No SEN	42.5%	51.4%
SEN	51.2%	40.6%
Statement of SEN	6.4%	8.0%
Government Office Region (GOR)		
North East	4.0%	4.3%
North West	8.8%	14.8%
Yorkshire	6.5%	9.3%
East Midlands	5.3%	6.8%
West Midlands	9.2%	12.6%
Eastern	17.3%	12.0%
London	17.9%	16.5%
South East	24.1%	15.2%
South West	6.6%	8.4%
KS2 Average Points Score 2003 (School Level quintiles)		
Lowest performing schools	31.7%	31.7%
Second lowest	21.2%	21.2%
Middle	17.4%	17.4%
Second highest	13.9%	13.9%
Highest performing schools	9.7%	9.7%
No data	6.1%	6.1%

The table above clearly shows that our comparison group of pupils have similar characteristics to our Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils and have been drawn from exactly the same types of school, as measured by KS2 results in 2003. It is noticeable that a high proportion of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils attend the lower performing schools. For the 2007 and 2008 data analysis the same methodology was followed in selecting comparative datasets of non- Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils, except, that the sample of non- Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils was created five times in an attempt to reduce any bias introduced during the sampling process. Tables 2 and 3 highlight the distribution of a number of characteristics for the sample of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils and the five samples of comparative pupils.

Table 2 - 2007 Samples

	Gypsy, Roma, Traveller Pupils	Non Gypsy, Roma, Traveller Pupils (sample 1)	Non Gypsy, Roma, Traveller Pupils (sample 2)	Non Gypsy, Roma, Traveller Pupils (sample 3)	Non Gypsy, Roma, Traveller Pupils (sample 4)	Non Gypsy, Roma, Traveller Pupils (sample 5)	Non Gypsy, Roma, Traveller Pupils average
Gender							
Male	49.5	49.7	49.0	50.3	46.9	52	49.6
Female	50.5	50.3	51.0	49.7	53.1	48	50.4
Special Educational Needs							
No Sen	41.3	78.2	78.5	77.4	77.1	78.7	78
SEN	52.3	18.8	18.8	20	20.5	17.8	19.2
Statement of SEN	6.4	3	2.7	2.6	2.4	3.5	2.8
GOR							
North East	4.6	6.4	4.3	4.6	5.3	3.7	4.8
North West	7.9	14.2	12.8	16.2	13	12.9	13.8
Yorkshire	6.9	10.7	13.1	11.3	11.7	11.9	11.7
East Midlands	5.9	9.8	10.1	8.8	10.2	8.4	9.5
West Midlands	7.5	11.3	10.8	9.4	10.1	11.8	10.7
Eastern	16.9	10.0	10.5	10.4	9.9	12.5	10.7
London	20.6	12.2	14.2	15.2	13.2	13.7	13.7
South East	21.4	16.0	13.9	14.5	16.1	15.6	15.2
South West	8.3	9.4	10.3	9.6	10.6	9.6	9.9
KS2 Average Points Score 2006 (School Level quintiles)							
Lowest performing schools	32.5	32.5	32.5	32.5	32.5	32.5	32.5
Second lowest	20.9	20.9	20.9	20.9	20.9	20.9	20.9
Middle	19.4	19.4	19.4	19.4	19.4	19.4	19.4
Second highest	11.6	11.6	11.6	11.6	11.6	11.6	11.6
Highest performing schools	8.1	8.1	8.1	8.1	8.1	8.1	8.1
No data	7.5	7.5	7.5	7.5	7.5	7.5	7.5

(figures are percentages)

Table 3 - 2008 Samples

	Gypsy, Roma, Traveller Pupils	Non Gypsy, Roma, Traveller Pupils (sample 1)	Non Gypsy, Roma, Traveller Pupils (sample 2)	Non Gypsy, Roma, Traveller Pupils (sample 3)	Non Gypsy, Roma, Traveller Pupils (sample 4)	Non Gypsy, Roma, Traveller Pupils (sample 5)	Non Gypsy, Roma, Traveller Pupils average
Gender							
Male	54.1	59.0	60.2	57.6	59.0	54.2	58.0
Female	45.9	41.0	39.8	42.4	41.0	45.8	42.0
Special Educational Needs							
No Sen	43.5	47.3	44.6	46.6	45.6	46.8	46.2
SEN	51.4	45.1	45.2	44.9	45.4	45.2	45.2
Statement of SEN	5.1	7.6	10.2	8.5	9.0	8.0	8.6
GOR							
North East	3.4	5.6	4.8	5.2	6.5	5.2	5.5
North West	11.6	18.5	15.7	15.7	14.4	18.2	16.5
Yorkshire	8.4	11.1	10.2	8.7	8.6	11.0	9.9
East Midlands	5.2	8.7	6.1	7.9	9.2	9.4	8.3
West Midlands	10.2	8.5	12.1	10.5	12.1	9.5	10.5
Eastern	13.6	8.5	10.0	8.1	10.5	8.5	9.1
London	15.9	15.8	17.3	17.1	14.8	16.8	16.4
South East	24.0	14.9	15.9	15.2	12.1	13.5	14.3
South West	7.5	8.3	8.0	11.6	11.9	7.9	9.5
KS2 Average Points Score 2007 (School Level quintiles)							
Lowest performing schools	29.2	29.2	29.2	29.2	29.2	29.2	29.2
Second lowest	21.6	21.6	21.6	21.6	21.6	21.6	21.6
Middle	19.1	19.1	19.1	19.1	19.1	19.1	19.1
Second highest	13.4	13.4	13.4	13.4	13.4	13.4	13.4
Highest performing schools	8.7	8.7	8.7	8.7	8.7	8.7	8.7
No data	8.1	8.1	8.1	8.1	8.1	8.1	8.1

(figures are percentages)

As previously identified there were a large number of cases excluded from the analysis due to missing Key Stage data. As this was much larger than the level of missing data found in the rest of the year 6 population it was important to determine whether the missing data resulted in particular pupil types being excluded from the

analysis. For the 2006/07 and 2007/08 analyses further work was undertaken to explore this issue. Tables 4 and 5 illustrate small differences in the characteristics of those included and excluded from the GRT cohort of pupils.

Table 4 – 2006/07 Data

Variable	Label	Neither KS1 or KS2 results	Only KS2	Both KS1 & KS2 results
Free school meal eligibility	No	65.8	46.6	46.8
	Yes	34.2	53.4	53.2
Ethnicity	Gypsy/Roma	58.1	58.3	70.8
	Irish traveller	41.9	41.7	29.2
Gender	Female	49.4	51.0	50.5
	Male	50.6	49.0	49.5
Region	North East	5.0	3.1	4.6
	North West/Merseyside	13.1	12.3	7.9
	Yorkshire & The Humber	13.7	14.8	6.9
	East Midlands	9.0	7.4	5.9
	West Midlands	7.5	8.0	7.5
	Eastern	19.6	15.8	16.9
	London	12.2	17.7	20.6
	South East	14.6	12.0	21.4
	South West	5.3	8.9	8.3
SEN with Statement	No	95.3	95.1	93.6
	Yes	4.7	4.9	6.4
SEN with no statement	No	55.9	43.6	47.7
	Yes	44.1	56.4	52.3
KS206 school achievement band	Missing	7.1	7.4	7.5
	Lowest quintile	39.4	39.7	32.5
	2nd lowest	18.9	14.7	20.9
	Mid point	17.4	23.5	19.4
	2nd highest	12.7	10.3	11.6
	Highest quintile	4.3	4.4	8.1
Urban/rural	Rural	10.6	9.8	13.2
	Non rural	89.1	89.2	84.9

(figures are percentages)

Table 5 – 2007/08 Data

Variable	Label	Neither KS1 or KS2 results	Only KS2	Both KS1 & KS2 results
Free school meal eligibility	No	66.7	51.6	41.5
	Yes	33.3	48.4	58.5
Ethnicity	Gypsy/Roma	54.8	69.9	70.1
	Traveller of Irish heritage	45.2	30.1	29.9
Gender	Female	50.0	49.0	54.1
	Male	50.0	51.0	45.9
Region	North East	2.4	3.6	3.4
	North West/Merseyside	2.4	8.5	11.6
	Yorkshire & The Humber	9.5	10.6	8.4
	East Midlands	4.8	4.9	5.2
	West Midlands	4.8	9.1	10.2
	Eastern	28.6	15.9	13.6
	London	4.8	15.7	15.9
	South East	21.4	24.4	24.0
	South West	21.4	7.2	7.5
SEN with Statement	No	85.7	94.1	94.9
	Yes	14.3	5.9	5.1
SEN with no statement	No	33.3	47.5	48.6
	Yes	66.7	52.5	51.4
KS207 school achievement band	Missing	11.9	9.9	8.1
	Lowest quintile	26.2	40.6	29.2
	2nd lowest	19.0	18.6	21.6
	Mid point	11.9	12.9	19.1
	2nd highest	26.2	12.3	13.4
	Highest quintile	4.8	5.7	8.7
Urban/rural	Rural	26.2	18.7	12.2
	Non rural	73.8	81.3	87.8

(figures are percentages)

A2   Results

The 2008 analysis combines the three datasets to provide analysis that looks at changes over time. The selection of a comparison group of similar pupils from similar schools remained the same as described above. A number of regression models were run looking at pupil performance in English, mathematics and for an overall performance measure. Pupil-level characteristics in the model included gender, eligibility for a free school meal, English as an additional language, pupil mobility, age, ethnicity, special educational needs and prior attainment, as measured by a pupils' points score at Key Stage 1. School-level factors included average school performance at Key Stage 2, the percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals and the schools government office region (GOR). Year variables were also included as well as the interactions between the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller variables and year. The purpose of the model was to identify the relationship between all these variables and the outcome in question. Once this relationship had been identified, additional analysis identified whether there was any variation in performance that could be further explained by a pupil's ethnicity.

To provide robustness to the analysis and confidence in any effects that may appear in the models, four other comparison groups were selected and the analyses run a further four times. Only independent variables that were significant in a number of models were reported. Effects that only appeared once may be a result of the cohort rather than any true difference and are therefore not reported.

The main report contains details of the 2008 analysis but the main highlights are that the most significant variable for all pupils was prior attainment at Key Stage 1. Other significant effects were:

- all pupils with a statement of special educational needs made, on average, less progress than all other pupils, as did pupils with special educational needs but with no statement;

- girls made, on average, less progress than boys;

- pupils on free school meals made, on average, less progress;

- pupils with similar characteristics in schools with higher levels of free school meal eligibility made slightly more progress, on average, than similar pupils in schools with lower levels of free school meal eligibility;

- the better the school performed in previous Key Stage 2 assessments the more progress, on average, a pupil made between KS1 and KS2. (It is worth remembering that a high proportion of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils go to schools that had lower levels of performance);

- pupils in 2008 made, on average, more progress than similar pupils in other years;
- pupils in London, on average, made more progress than other similar pupils.

The above effects are for all pupils and are irrespective of whether a pupil is categorised as a Gypsy, Roma and Traveller or non-Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupil. Apart from a couple of very minor ethnicity/regional interactions there were no significant differences for the Gypsy/Roma or Irish Traveller pupils over other similar pupils. This was consistent for the three year period analysed and for individual years within it.

Although we have found no significant difference between the average progress made by Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils when compared to the average progress of non- Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils it is worth remembering that this is a particular sub group of the year 6 population. We have specifically selected a low attaining cohort of non- Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils from low attaining schools to directly compare their performance with that of the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller cohort of pupils. The average performance of these pupils is fairly low when compared to national outcomes.

Exclusions Data

Data was provided by the then Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) relevant for all fixed term and permanent exclusions for the academic year 2006/07. Pupils came from primary, secondary and special schools and covered all year groups. Analysis was split into the school types and was to look at the amount of time pupils were excluded for and the reasons for those exclusions and whether there was any difference between Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils and non- Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils. Pupils were categorised as Gypsy, Roma and Traveller if they were identified as either Gypsy/Roma or Irish Traveller on the exclusions dataset. Of the data available for analysis, 11 per cent of exclusions were in primary schools, 85 per cent were from secondary schools and 4 per cent were from special schools.

Table 6   Exclusions by ethnicity

	Primary schools	**Secondary schools**	**Special schools**
Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Pupil	1.0%	0.5%	0.8%
White UK	75.8%	79.5%	81.3%
Other ethnicity	20.7%	17.2%	14.4%
Unknown	2.5%	2.8%	3.5%
N	*47,420*	*363,766*	*16,718*

The following tables look at the length of exclusion by ethnicity. These tables identify, for each school type, the national breakdowns compared to those for Traveller of Irish heritage pupils, Roma pupils with English as a first language and Roma pupils with English as an additional language. Additional tables break these results down by gender.

Table 7a   Length of exclusion: Primary school pupils

Length of exclusion	Traveller of Irish heritage	Gypsy/Roma Not EAL	Roma EAL	National
0 to 3 days	37.8%	41.3%	33.3%	46.7%
4 to 5 days	25.9%	24.0%	16.7%	21.7%
6 to 7 days	14.6%	12.8%	16.7%	12.6%
8 to 10 days	11.4%	11.2%	16.7%	11.0%
11 to 20 days	5.4%	6.2%	8.3%	5.1%
20+ days	4.9%	4.5%	8.3%	2.8%

Table 7b   Length of exclusion: Primary school pupils by gender

Length of exclusion	Traveller of Irish heritage		Gypsy/Roma Not EAL		Roma EAL		National	
	m	*f*	*m*	*f*	*m*	*f*	*m*	*f*
0 to 3 days	37.3%	50.0%	41.4%	40.9%	33.3%	0	46.1%	52.4%
4 to 5 days	26.0%	25.0%	23.7%	25.0%	16.7%	0	21.8%	20.0%
6 to 7 days	14.1%	25.0%	11.6%	18.2%	16.7%	0	12.7%	11.3%
8 to 10 days	11.9%	0	11.1%	11.4%	16.7%	0	11.2%	10.4%
11 to 20 days	5.6%	0	7.1%	2.3%	8.3%	0	5.2%	3.8%
20+ days	5.1%	0	5.1%	2.3%	8.3%	0	2.9%	2.1%
Number of cases	**177**	**8**	**198**	**44**	**12**	**0**	**42314**	**4243**

Table 8a   Length of exclusion: Secondary school pupils

Length of exclusion	Traveller of Irish heritage	Gypsy/Roma Not EAL	Roma EAL	National
0 to 3 days	24.6%	27.0%	21.7%	30.8%
4 to 5 days	26.1%	23.8%	21.7%	23.5%
6 to 7 days	18.2%	18.6%	13.3%	18.5%
8 to 10 days	16.2%	18.8%	22.9%	16.6%
11 to 20 days	9.2%	8.2%	14.5%	7.2%
20+ days	5.7%	3.7%	6.0%	3.4%

Table 8b   Length of exclusion: Secondary school pupils by gender

Length of exclusion	Traveller of Irish heritage		Gypsy/Roma Not EAL		Roma EAL		National	
	m	*f*	*m*	*f*	*m*	*f*	*m*	*f*
0 to 3 days	25.9%	21.1%	23.7%	32.6%	19.7%	29.4%	30.0%	32.9%
4 to 5 days	26.6%	24.8%	23.8%	23.7%	22.7%	17.6%	23.5%	23.7%
6 to 7 days	18.8%	16.5%	18.0%	19.5%	13.6%	11.8%	18.6%	18.2%
8 to 10 days	15.7%	17.4%	21.9%	13.4%	24.2%	17.6%	16.9%	15.8%
11 to 20 days	7.5%	13.8%	8.5%	7.7%	16.75	5.9%	7.4%	6.4%
20+ days	5.5%	6.4%	4.0%	3.1%	3.0%	17.6%	3.5%	3.0%
Number of cases	**293**	**109**	**667**	**389**	**66**	**17**	**258885**	**97956**

Table 9a   Length of exclusion: Special school pupils

Length of exclusion	Traveller of Irish heritage	Gypsy/Roma Not EAL	Roma EAL	National
0 to 3 days	26.5%	42.7%	75.0%	49.8%
4 to 5 days	35.3%	29.2%	25.0%	19.3%
6 to 7 days	20.6%	14.6%	0	12.0%
8 to 10 days	17.6%	10.1%	0	10.9%
11 to 20 days	0	2.2%	0	5.0%
20+ days	0	1.1%	0	2.9%

Table 9b   Length of exclusion: Special school pupils by gender

Length of exclusion	Traveller of Irish heritage		Gypsy/Roma Not EAL		Roma EAL		National	
	m	*f*	*m*	*f*	*m*	*f*	*m*	*f*
0 to 3 days	27.3%	0	43.9%	28.6%	100%	0	49.7%	51.2%
4 to 5 days	36.4%	0	28.0%	42.9%	0	100	19.3%	19.5%
6 to 7 days	21.2%	0	13.4%	28.6%	0	0	12.3%	8.1%
8 to 10 days	15.2%	100%	11.0%	0	0	0	10.8%	12.7%
11 to 20 days	0	0	2.4%	0	0	0	5.0%	4.3%
20+ days	0	0	1.2%	0	0	0	2.8%	4.1%
Number of cases	**33**	**1**	**82**	**7**	**3**	**1**	**15349**	**1203**

References

Advisory Centre for Education (2007). 'Supporting children with mobile lifestyles', *Ask ACE*, **1**, 1, 18-19.

Department for Children, School and Families (2008a). *The Inclusion of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Children and Young People*. London: DCSF [online]. Available: http://publications.teachernet.gov.uk/eOrderingDownload/Inclusion%20of%20Gypsy%20Roma.pdf [29 August, 2008].

Department for Children, Schools and Families (2009a). *Permanent and Fixed Period Exclusions from Schools and Exclusion Appeals In England, 2007/08* (Statistical First Release 18/2009). London: DCSF [online]. Available: http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000860/SFR18_2009_FINAL.pdf [8 June, 2010].

Department for Children, Schools and Families (2009b) *Moving Forward Together: Raising Gypsy, Roma and Traveller achievement. Booklet 1: Introduction*. London: DCSF.

Department for Education and Skills (2005). *Ethnicity and Education: The Evidence on Minority Ethnic Pupils* (Research Topic Paper RTP01-05). Nottingham: DfES [online]. Available: http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/research/programmeofresearch/projectinformation.cfm?projectid=14488&resultspage=1 [27 August, 2008].

Department for Education and Skills (DfES). (2006a). *Ethnicity and Education: The Evidence on Minority Ethnic Pupils aged 5-16.* [Online]. Available: http://www.dfes.gov.uk/research/data/uploadfiles/0208-2006DOM-EN.pdf   [28 March, 2008.]

Department for Education and Skills (2006b). *Absence and Attendance Codes: Guidance for Schools and Local Authorities*. London: DfES.

Derrington, C. (2005). 'Perceptions of behaviour and patterns of exclusion: Gypsy Traveller students in English secondary schools', *Journal of Research in Special Educational Needs*, **5**, 2 [online]. Available: http://www.blackwell-synergy.com/toc/jrse/5/2 [13 July, 2005].

Derrington, C. (2007). 'Fight, flight and playing white: an examination of coping strategies adopted by Gypsy Traveller adolescents in English secondary schools', *International Journal of Educational Research*, **46**, 6, 357-367.

Derrington, C. and Kendall, S. (2003). 'The experiences and perceptions of Gypsy Traveller pupils in English secondary schools.' In: Shelvin, M. and Rose, R. (Eds) *Encouraging Voices*. Dublin: National Disability Authority.

Derrington, C. and Kendall, S. (2004). *Gypsy Traveller Students in Secondary Schools: Culture, Identity and Achievement*. Stoke on Trent: Trentham Books.

Derrington, C. and Kendall, S. (2007a). 'Still in school at 16? Conclusions from a longitudinal study of Gypsy Traveller students in English secondary schools.' In: Bhatti, G., Gaine, C., Gobbo, F. and Leeman, Y. (Eds) *Social Justice and Intercultural Education: an Open Ended Dialogue.* Stoke-on-Trent: Trentham Books.

Kiddle, C. (1999). *Traveller Children: a voice for themselves*. London: Jessica Kingsley.

Levinson, M.P. and Sparkes, A.C. (2006). 'Conflicting value systems: gypsy females and the home-school interface', *Research Papers in Education*, **21**, 1, 79-97.

Lloyd, G. and McCluskey, G. (2008). 'Education and Gypsies/Travellers: 'contradictions and significant silences'', *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, **12**, 4, 331-345.

Lloyd, G. and Norris, C. (1998). 'From difference to deviance: the exclusion of Gypsy Traveller children from school in Scotland', *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, **2**, 4, 359-369.

Lloyd, G., Stead, J., Jordan, E. and Norris, C. (1999). 'Teachers and Gypsy Travellers', *Scottish Educational Review*, **31**, 1, 48-65.

Marks, K. (2006). 'Responding to Traveller mobility', *Race Equality Teaching*, **24**, 1, 43-46.

Myers, M. And Bhopal, K. (2009) Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children in schools: Understandings of community and safety. *British Journal of Educational Studies.* **57**, 4. 417-434

Padfield, P. (2005). 'Inclusive educational approaches for Gypsy/Traveller pupils and their families: an 'urgent need for progress'?', *Scottish Educational Review*, **37**, 2, 127-144.

Office for Standards in Education (1996). *The Education of Travelling Children*. London: Ofsted.

Office for Standards in Education (1999). Raising the Attainment of Minority Ethnic Pupils: School and LEA Responses. London: Ofsted.

Office for Standards in Education (2001). *Managing Support for the Attainment of Pupils from Minority Ethnic Groups* (HMI 326). London: Ofsted [online]. Available: http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/portal/site/Internet/menuitem.eace3f09a603f6d9c3172a8a08c08a0c/?vgnextoid=fcf71e7a681eb010VgnVCM2000003607640aRCRD [13 August, 2008].

Office for Standards in Education (2003). *Provision and Support for Traveller Pupils*. London: Ofsted [online]. Available: http://www/ofsted.gov.uk/publications/index.cfm?fuseaction=pubs.summary&id=3440 [14 August, 2008].

Parker-Jenkins, M. and Hartas, D. (2002). 'Social inclusion: the case of Travellers' children', *Education 3-13*, **30**, 2, 39-42.

Reynolds, M., McCarten, D. and Knipe, D. (2003). 'Traveller culture and lifestyle as factors influencing children's integration into mainstream secondary schools in West Belfast', *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, **7**, 4, 403-414.

Ryder, A. and Greenfield, M. (Forthcoming). *Roads to Success: Economic and Social Inclusion for Gypsies and Travellers*. Irish Traveller Movement in Britain.

Save the Children (2001). *Denied a Future? The Right to Education of Roma/Gypsy Traveller Children. Volume 2 - Western and Central Europe*. London: Save the Children [online]. Available: http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/en/54_2317.htm [29 August, 2008].

Wilkin, A., Derrington, C. and Foster, B. (2009). *Improving the Outcomes for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Pupils: Literature Review.* [online]. Available: http://publications.dcsf.gov.uk/eOrderingDownload/DCSF-RR077.pdf.

Wilkin, A., Derrington, C., Foster, B., White, R. and Martin, K. (2009). *Improving Educational Outcomes for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Pupils. What Works? Contextual influences and constructive conditions that may influence pupil achievement.* [online]. Available: http://publications.dcsf.gov.uk/eOrderingDownload/DCSF-RR170.pdf.

October 2010