



Education Roundtable

After the race disparity audit - exploring the educational outcomes for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children

House of Lords, April 30th 2019





Chair and speakers

Lord Young of Norwood Green (chair)

Lord Young kindly chaired and hosted the event, on behalf of the Traveller Movement

Pauline Anderson

Director of learning and skills, Derby City Council

Emily Frith

Head of policy and advocacy, Office of the Children's Commissioner for England

Christina Kerrigan

Community Development and Partnerships officer, The Traveller Movement

Professor Kalwant Bhopal

Professor of Education and Social Justice, University of Birmingham

Dan Rosenberg

Partner, Simpson Millar

Mark Sims

National Lead at Ofsted

This event was made possible with funding from Esmée Fairbairn.





What was explored?

Pauline Anderson discussed her work to improve educational practice in Derby after an Ofsted [report](#) showed Roma children were not receiving an adequate education. Pauline and the city council worked to produce a plan of action and worked with local and regional school leaders. This led to effective CPD being developed for teachers; schools were encouraged to engage with audit service; an EAL champion's programme was developed; and from 2015-2019 this practice was embedded in the East Midlands. Most importantly £100,000 was allocated to further develop community mentors, and provide additional advocacy. As a result of these interventions the schools have seen a significant improvement in Roma pupils attainment. This demonstrates that time, financial and social investment, and a commitment to equality and inclusion is urgently required if attainment is to be improved.

Professor Kalwant Bhopal discussed the shortcomings of the Equality Act, 2010 in dealing with racism in the education system. While all public bodies are bound by the Act, and accountable for equality, there is no longer a legal requirement to report acts of racist bullying. Further it was argued that equality objectives represent only a vague commitment to race equality, schools generally comply only when it suits them, and how a failure to acknowledge racism leads to a failure to act.

Additionally Professor Bhopal discussed her [research](#) with Dr. Martin Myers into elective home education in Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) communities. She suggested that the 2009 [Badmin review](#) should have looked at why GRT parents home educate their children, which the research showed is usually due to bullying, racism and discrimination rather than for philosophical reasons. Further GRT families often felt pigeonholed, schools did not cater to their needs and had pre-conceived ideas about their children's attainment. She ended her presentation by suggesting there needs to be a bigger discussion around class and race when discussing elective home education; white middle class home educators are usually perceived as good and 'the norm', while anyone else is constructed in a discourse of risk.

Emily Frith discussed a new [report](#) into off-rolling by the Children's Commissioner. The Commissioner did a review of off-rolling in 11 local authorities which discovered that within each authority a few schools were responsible for most of the off-rolling – 1/10 accounted for half of home educated pupils. The report found that elective home education is up by 27% since 2017, and has more than doubled since 2014. There are strong indications that families are home educating their children for non-philosophical reasons - schools are not meeting children's needs; school is unsafe for some; and years 10 and 11 are now referred to as the "off-rolling years". The research also found that if children under-performed, or if they missed school, parents would be asked when/if they would off-roll. Outcomes for children home educated show that children feel isolated and lonely, it impacts on their mental health and getting back into school is difficult if there are gaps. The Commissioner will review all local authorities next year.



Christina Kerrigan presented the findings from Traveller Movement's three year education and advocacy project. Christina also presented the [Good Practice Guide](#) and discussed her own experience of racism and discrimination in school and how that led to her leaving school early. She concluded by saying that all children regardless of their ethnicity deserve a fair and inclusive education.

Mark Sims discussed the new Ofsted [inspections framework](#) and how the quality of the curriculum will now be assessed rather than pupil attainment and outcomes. Off-rolling is now recognised as 'the new exclusions' and senior leadership and management will now be held accountable if evidence is uncovered. Ofsted can also examine school registers to see if many students are no longer on roll, or if there are trends or patterns. Unlike the previous framework, there will only be two categories for special consideration - children with special educational needs (SEN), and the most disadvantaged (eligibility for FSM). It was also suggested that if Ofsted are to inspect off-rolling or schools encouraging families to home educate, they do require evidence to that effect.

Dan Rosenberg discussed education cases and how GRT pupils are discriminated against within the education system.

Issues he frequently sees:

- Increased use of isolation;
- SEN kids on part-time timetables;
- Unlawful exclusions (off-rolling);
- Exclusions not meeting threshold;
- High rates of FT and permanent exclusions of GRT pupils;
- Exclusions usually as a result of retaliation, due to unaddressed racist bullying;
- Mental health impact, particularly on girls;
- Most exclusions are unlawful;
- Schools mostly act in their own interests;
- Most cases can be judicially reviewed citing failure of compliance with the public sector equality duty - this approach works on a case by case basis, but does not solve the systemic issues.

Good schools – what are they doing?

Representatives from three of the good practice schools were present.

They go the extra mile with GRT families. They often facilitate transport for kids, they conduct inductions with new children, and they don't tolerate prejudice of any kind at school.

The schools work closely with the families and communities. Some of the schools operate as a training centre for NQTs. They don't pay attention to league tables and they show Ofsted their pupils in-school progress, rather than grades and attainment.



Q&A Session

Issues and comments raised during the Q&A Session

- There is an issue nationally with antigypsyism;
- In regards to Traveller Education Services (TES) research shows that families were more likely to send kids to school where there was a TES; with that bridge gone there is none to replace it;
- Traveller Movement did a legal briefing on elective home education; potentially there is a case to answer for;
- Attendees were urged to contact and make representations to local MPs if there is inequality in their children's education;
- New pilots in Derby city will ask parents why they are choosing elective home education thus establishing a tracking process in Derby schools;
- The new elective home education (EHE) [registration consultation](#) makes no mention of race or ethnicity – this must be captured;
- There is nothing to stop local authorities from including ethnic identifiers in their systems, or from asking parents why they electively home educate their children. This would enable a better understanding of the drivers of elective home education;
- The voice of the child is not included at any point – children must be asked '*what do you want?*';
- The school system is very fragmented and difficult to make sense of; parents don't know who to go to when there is an issue, or how to get legal help;
- Parents don't know where to go to complain about racist bullying - guidance is needed on '*how to complain about racist bullying*';
- Race-related targeted bullying is also happening across digital platforms;
- There is a real issue acknowledging racism as a contributing factor to poor attainment, early school leaving, bullying and exclusions;
- As a result of racism and discrimination GRT people don't disclose their ethnicity;
- There is a lack of data regarding GRT destinations after school – some 200 students ticked GRT ethnicity boxes at higher education institutes in 2018.



Conclusions and recommendations

Good practice can happen at local authority level, as demonstrated in Derby city council. However funding is required.

The [national strategies](#) are still relevant to the current educational landscape; these should be updated, revised and distributed nationally by the Department for Education.

Schools that embed good practice in their systems should be recognised as leaders and celebrated.

Despite the [race disparity audit](#) there are still no clear or specific measures to address systemic racism affecting BME groups in education.

The Government appears unable or unwilling to address the issue of racism and race-related bullying in any of the national statutory frameworks.

National guidance is required on how to complain about racist bullying. No clear guidance on how to do so; currently left at the discretion of the school.

Additionally, there is a need to tackle the behaviour of some academy chains who up to now have been gaming the system. There also remains a need to tackle unlawful exclusions in multi academy trusts.



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