EVERY SCHOOL A GOOD SCHOOL

Traveller Child in Education Action Framework

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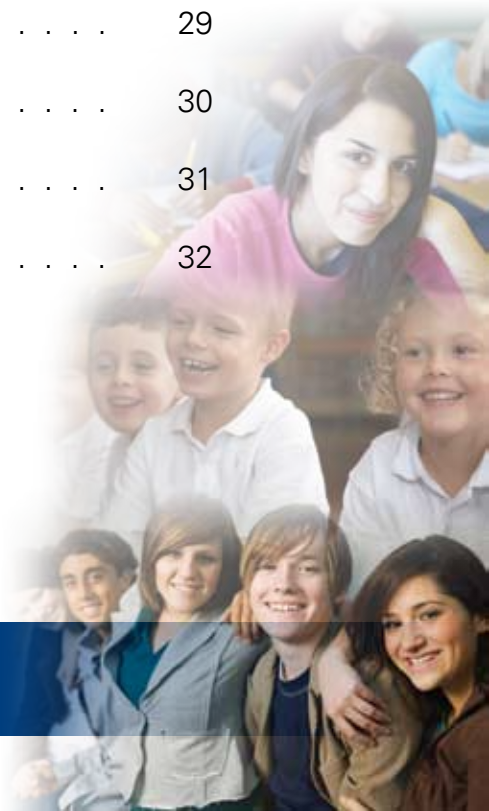


EVERY SCHOOL A GOOD SCHOOL

The Traveller Child in Education
Action Framework

MINISTERIAL FOREWORD

I am pleased to present my Department's final "Traveller Child in Education Action Framework" in response to the recommendations of the Taskforce on Traveller Education.

I and my Department remain grateful to the Taskforce for giving their time, hard work and expertise to provide us with the direction which has guided the development of this Action Framework. I am also grateful to all those who participated in the consultation, especially the Traveller families and pupils. We also thank the Traveller Education Support Service, schools, voluntary and community organisations and other partners for their views and engagement.

We know that Travellers have for generations suffered educational disadvantage and have left school with either low level or no qualifications. This Framework is the start of a journey of inclusion, to ensure that Traveller children have the opportunity to benefit from the educational opportunities on offer, and to give them the best possible start in life. I am confident that progress can be made and I am determined that progress will be made on this journey towards full inclusion and equality.

JOHN O'DOWD MLA
Minister for Education

INTRODUCTION

The Minister for Education's main priority is to raise standards and tackle underachievement and inequality in our education system. "Every School a Good School – a policy for school improvement (ESaGS), the Department's overarching strategy for achieving this priority recognises Travellers as being one of the groups that require a particular focus to close the gap in achievement and equality. The vision we have for the future is that every young person achieves his or her full potential at each stage of his or her development.

This Action framework sits within the overall context of improving educational outcomes and contributes towards the delivery of ESaGS.

It is the policy of the Department to take **additional positive actions** to ensure that every Traveller child and young person is given the opportunity to fulfil their educational potential.

Following the consultation on the draft Framework and the overall support for the majority of the actions, the Department is now formally adopting the range of measures set out in this Framework document.

This document details how the Department arrived at this policy and framework. It sets out the recommendations of the Taskforce, our response, the structures that are currently in place to deliver the recommendations, the work that has commenced and the work to be progressed.

BACKGROUND

Educational Outcomes

The 2001 census revealed that 69% of Travellers of working age had no qualifications. A further 22% had low level qualifications. The poor experience of the previous generation in the education system also impacts on the experiences of today's children.

There are fewer than 1,000 Traveller children enrolled in schools and pre-school provision here and the Department currently invests almost £1.6 million additional funding each year to support their education. This has resulted in some encouraging improvements, for example: the number of children in pre-school education has doubled over the past 10 years; and there has been a steady increase in the number of Traveller pupils enrolled in post-primary education.

However, despite the Department's considerable investment in Traveller education, Traveller pupils continue to have exceptionally poor educational outcomes with only 11 school leavers over the six year period 2003/04 to 2009/10 achieving at least 5 A*-C GCSEs. Data also shows that attendance continues to be poor and many children of Traveller families leave school early. In 2010/11 only 37 Traveller pupils were enrolled in Year 12 compared with 86 in Year 1 and the average attendance of those 37 pupils was less than 51%.

These poor educational outcomes can have lifetime effects. Given the historically high levels of disadvantage suffered by the Traveller community it is important to take additional positive actions to ensure that every Traveller child and young person is given the opportunity to fulfil their educational potential.

Taskforce on Traveller Education

In recognition of this, and the need to ensure that the support provided is targeted more effectively, a Taskforce on Traveller Education was established in September 2008 to assist the Department to develop an action plan on Traveller education.

In 2011, the Taskforce submitted its report to the Minister for Education. The Taskforce made a number of high level recommendations which can be downloaded from the Department's website.

http://www.deni.gov.uk/recommendations_from_the_taskforce_on_traveller_educations_report_to_the_department_of_education.pdf

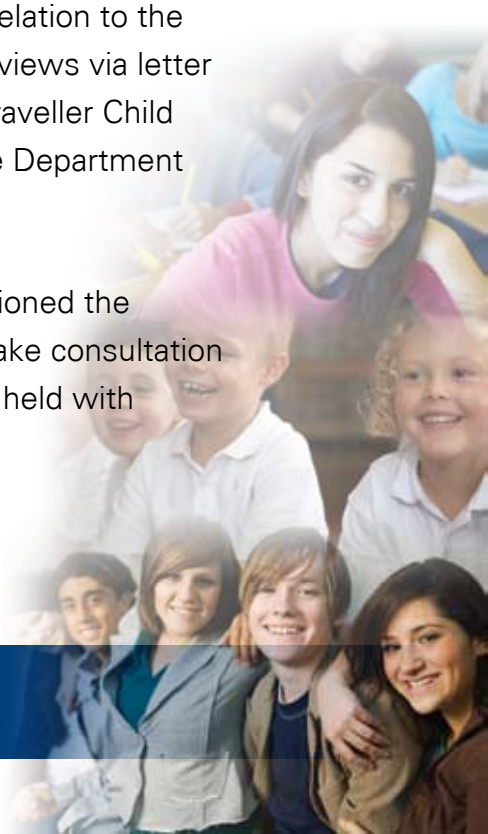
This Traveller Child in Education Action Framework is the Department's response to the Taskforce recommendations.

Consultation

The draft Traveller Child in Education Action Framework issued for consultation from 24th September 2012 to 31st December 2012.

The Department received a total of 91 tick box responses in relation to the draft Framework. A further 12 organisations expressed their views via letter or email. A children and young people's version of the draft Traveller Child in Education Framework consultation was also issued and the Department received 12 responses.

As part of the consultation process the Department commissioned the regional Traveller Education Support Service (TESS) to undertake consultation with Traveller families and pupils. There were 8 public events held with Traveller groups.



A summary of the consultation responses can be found on our website at:

http://www.deni.gov.uk/draft-traveller-child-in-education-action-framework-consultation

Other relevant Departmental Policies

In addition to the Traveller specific actions in this Framework, the Department has progressed policy and guidance to overcome disadvantage; tackle underachievement; improve inclusion; and reduce inequality. These will also help to address the barriers to learning experienced by Traveller children and young people.

The Department's **Extended Schools policy** enables those schools that draw significant numbers of pupils from areas of the highest social disadvantage to provide a range of services and programmes outside the traditional school day to help meet the needs of pupils, their families and wider communities. The Extended Schools programme has a clear focus on improving educational outcomes, reducing barriers to learning and providing additional support to improve the life chances of disadvantaged children and young people. The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) 2010 Evaluation of Extended Schools found that in almost all cases where Extended Schools are serving disadvantaged communities effectively, significant improvements are evident in the educational outcomes and the personal and social well-being of pupils.

Sixty two per cent of the schools with Traveller pupils enrolled qualified for Extended Schools funding in 2012/13 and 2013/14.

In January 2012, the Minister for Education launched **Community Relations, Equality and Diversity (CRED)** guidance and supporting materials. Resources on Traveller culture have been included in the supporting materials on the CRED website. The guidance will enable schools, early years settings and youth work settings to use practical

activities and experiences to explore these issues and help children and young people to understand and respect the many diverse groups across our society.

The regional **Inclusion and Diversity Service (IDS)** has been working with colleagues in the south of Ireland to develop an online Coordination Training Tool for the professional development of teaching professionals. The purpose of the Coordination Training Tool is to further develop best practice in the context of Intercultural Education and to ensure the integration and quality attainment of children from different ethnic backgrounds and those with different home languages.

Priorities for Youth (PfY) is the Department of Education's new policy for youth work in education. It sets a new framework for the delivery of youth work within education which will contribute to the DE vision of every child fulfilling his or her potential. PfY will improve the focus on targeted provision to help meet the needs of specific groups of young people who may be at greater risk of social exclusion, may be marginalised or isolated or because they may experience a combination of barriers to learning, which may include young people from the Traveller community.

In June 2013, the Department updated its attendance guidance to schools. Circular 2013/13 provides schools with good practice, guidance and strategies to manage pupils' attendance.

http://www.deni.gov.uk/circular_2013_13_-__attendance_guidance__english_version__-_effective_from_september_13.pdf

The guidance is supported by "School Attendance Matters – A Parent's Guide" which was issued to all schools for distribution to Year 1 and Year 8 pupils in September 2013.

http://www.deni.gov.uk/a_parents_guide_individual_pages.pdf

PRINCIPLES

The Taskforce agreed that the following fundamental principles should be embodied in its report and should underpin the recommendations and actions:

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

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

Department of Education Response

The Department accepts and endorses these principles which underpin the following actions.

ACTIONS TO IMPROVE THE EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES OF TRAVELLER CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Both the Taskforce on Traveller Education and the Department are clear that Traveller children require support to address poor educational outcomes and that their rights and welfare must be core. The following actions set out the Department's child centred strategic approach to addressing the high level recommendations of the Taskforce and tackling the barriers to Traveller educational achievement. This document however is merely the beginning of a process which will be taken forward by the regional Traveller Education Support Service (TESS) in partnership with key stakeholders.

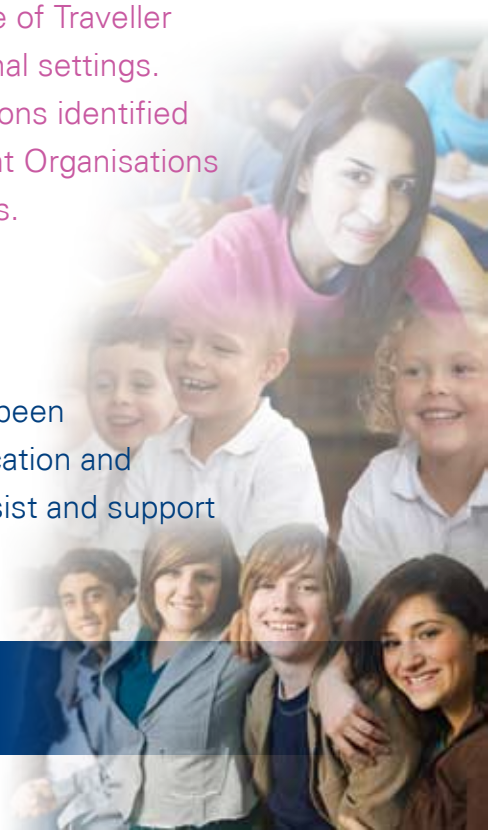
1. STRATEGIC DELIVERY AND PARTNERSHIP

Taskforce Recommendation 1.1

A consistent, co-ordinated approach across all areas should be developed to promote the improved access, participation and attendance of Traveller children and young people in all formal and informal educational settings. This should include after school and youth activities, with actions identified for DE, Education and Library Boards (ELBs), Non Government Organisations (NGOs), Traveller Support Groups (TSGs) and Traveller families.

Department of Education Response

The Regional Traveller Education Support Service (TESS) has been operational from April 2013 and sits within the Southern Education and Library Board (SELB). The Department funds the TESS to assist and support



all grant-aided schools, Traveller children and their families. The Department will also continue to fund schools directly via the Common Funding Formula, on a per capita basis for each Traveller child.

Taskforce Recommendation 1.2

The draft action plan should be developed by the end of 2011. It must grasp the opportunity to deliver real progress for Traveller children. In developing the plan the Department should carefully consider the detailed recommendations of the six thematic sub-groups of the Taskforce and of the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI).

Department of Education Response

This Action Framework is a response to the high level strategic recommendations made by the Traveller Taskforce. The TESS Delivery Plan will address the operational recommendations and build on identified good practice, both locally and in other jurisdictions.

TESS undertook a consultation process with Traveller children, their parents, schools and a wide range of interested parties during the development of its Delivery Plan for 2013/14. The Delivery Plan has been published and is available on **http://www.selb.org/tess/research.htm**. It includes a number of actions and targets within 9 priority areas namely:

1) Rationalisation
2) Attendance
3) Achievement
4) Parental Involvement
5) Partnership

6) Early Years

7) Special Education and Additional Educational Needs

8) Youth

9) Inter-culturalism and Inclusion

Taskforce Recommendation 1.3

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

Department of Education Response

As referred to above, the TESS consulted with Traveller children and their families during the development of its Delivery Plan for 2013/14 which includes actions for ongoing engagement and participation. The monitoring and review arrangements will ensure that this is maintained.

Taskforce Recommendation 1.4

Improving the educational attainment of Travellers is a significant element in reducing existing inequalities and encouraging their full inclusion in society. However, equality and social inclusion requires an integrated, collaborative approach across the statutory sector and with partners outside government.

A strategic group which includes representatives from health, education, employment, housing, the Traveller Support Movement and any other relevant organisations is necessary to facilitate a partnership approach and sharing of good practice in tackling barriers to Traveller equality and inclusion. This could be achieved by reconstituting the Traveller thematic group of the Racial Equality Forum.

OFMDFM Response

OFMDFM has agreed to reinstate The Thematic Group on Travellers' Issues within the Racial Equality Forum. The group will include representatives from health, education, employment, housing, the Traveller Support movement and any other relevant organisations. Meetings are due to be reconvened by December 2013.

Taskforce Recommendation 1.5

There should be a new structure to deliver the action plan and ensure meaningful Traveller involvement in the education sector. This would involve reconstitution of the Forum for the Education of Travellers' Children to include key NGO members.

Department of Education Response

The Forum for the Education of Traveller Children was formed in 1993 to bring together representatives of the five Education and Library Boards, the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS), the ETI and the Department. Its remit was to coordinate issues pertaining to statutory school education for Traveller children and to assist the Department in the delivery of the guidelines contained within DE Circular 1993/37 "Policy and Guidelines for the Education of Traveller Children". In 2001 a sub-group of the Forum was established which included 4 NGO members including representative(s) of the NI Traveller Movement.

Since the Taskforce made this recommendation, the TESS has been established. The establishment of an Education and Skills Authority (ESA), which will replace the five ELBs, and TESS removes the need for the Forum as constituted.

The high level policy and legislative actions within the Action Framework will be taken forward by DE. Key to the successful delivery of the overall Action Framework however will be the TESS Delivery Plan.

Promoting Traveller parental involvement and engagement and assisting Traveller parents to support their children's learning and achievement is a priority area for the TESS. The Department and ELBs recognise the key role which Traveller Support Groups and other NGOs play in engaging with Traveller families to promote their involvement in the education sector and in enabling their voices to be heard. However, there is not currently a regional Traveller Support Movement and Traveller Support Groups work only with Travellers in their own geographic area.

As a very temporary bridging arrangement, pending the development of regional arrangements with Traveller Support and other organisations, the TESS will initially promote parental involvement and engagement through the Traveller Support Groups who are already members of the Southern Area Action with Travellers (SAAT). All available channels for engaging with Traveller parents in other areas will be explored.

SAAT is a multi-agency, multi-sectoral alliance committed to improving the health, education and wellbeing of Travellers in the Southern area where 48% of the Traveller population live.

Taskforce Recommendation 1.6

This new structure should connect with evolving structures focussed on multiculturalism and appropriate education support for minority ethnic children so that in the longer term policy and practice should focus more on Traveller children as a specific constituency within all minority ethnic children.

Department of Education Response

The TESS will undertake a process of joint planning with the regional Inclusion and Diversity Service (IDS), which is responsible for providing support to newcomer children and their parents through schools, and the Community Relations, Equality and Diversity in Education (CRED) Working Group with the aim of aligning and integrating practice by 2015.

The TESS will work alongside IDS and the CRED Working Group in the implementation of its Delivery Plan.

2. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Taskforce Recommendation 2.1

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

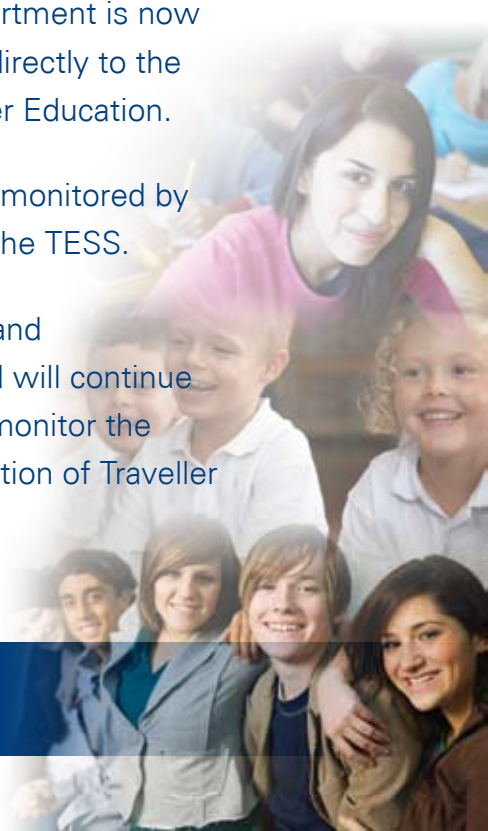
Department of Education Response

The Department is already making a very considerable investment of almost £1.6 million per year, over and above mainstream allocation funding, in Traveller education and the challenge will be to make innovative and effective use of these resources.

This Action Framework will be monitored and reviewed biannually by a small Monitoring and Review Group. Membership will include the Department of Education and Skills (DES), ETI, NGO/TSG representation and ELB/ESA representation at a senior level. The process for nominating the NGO/TSG representation on this Group will be agreed by the Thematic Group on Travellers' Issues within the Racial Equality Forum. The Department is now of the view that the group should report progress biannually directly to the Minister for Education rather than to the Taskforce on Traveller Education.

The actions and targets within the TESS Delivery Plan will be monitored by the Department through quarterly monitoring meetings with the TESS.

Data on Traveller access, enrolment, attainment, attendance and advancement will be used to establish a baseline position and will continue to be collected and analysed to measure improvements and monitor the success of actions. The TESS will assist schools in the collection of Traveller specific data for the DE Census through the C2K system.



3. ACCESS TO EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

Taskforce Recommendation 3.1

Information should be provided to Traveller families on educational provision, opportunities and services, their rights in relation to education and how to access appropriate funding to enable young people to go on to further education.

Department of Education Response

The TESS has included a range of actions in its Delivery Plan to improve Traveller understanding of, and access to, educational provision and opportunities. For example, the development of a literacy support programme for Traveller parents and pupils, a review of current communication strategies including the use of electronic media, the promotion of parental engagement and the dissemination of new resources to parents.

Taskforce Recommendation 3.2

Best practice to support Traveller children and young people's transitions from pre-school to primary school, primary to post-primary school and post-primary to further education should be identified and disseminated.

Department of Education Response

The Department and ELBs recognise that the transition between educational stages is a difficult time for many pupils including Travellers.

The TESS Delivery Plan includes the development of an agreed regional strategy to improve Traveller attendance in partnership with the ELBs

Education Welfare Service (EWS). The strategy will identify the protocols and procedures to be used by the TESS in relation to Traveller attendance issues. Work will also be undertaken to identify good practice and design specific transition support programmes for Key Stage 3, Key Stage 4 and post 16. The range of actions outlined in the Delivery Plan intended to improve parental engagement and communication will also assist in improving the transition process.

4. IMPROVED SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

Taskforce Recommendation 4.1

Reasons for school absence should be analysed, monitored and addressed. ETI has found that when Traveller children attend on a regular basis they achieve commensurate with their peers.

Department of Education Response

The ETI 2008 evaluation of Traveller Education in the five Education and Library Boards found that almost all Traveller children, as they progress through the school system, attend school less often than their peers and fail to benefit from full-time education. This is still the case. Over 90% of Traveller children have attendance rates below the overall attendance rate for non-Traveller children.

The Department recognises that improved attendance alone will not transform Traveller education; but without significantly improved attendance, Traveller pupils will always struggle to achieve.

In 2011/12 the level of unauthorised absence of Traveller children from primary schools was 17.0% (**nearly 13 times greater than the general school population**). In post-primary schools, the level of unauthorised absence of Travellers of statutory school age was 29.0% (**just over 11 times greater than the post-primary average for all pupils**).

To assist in addressing this issue, the TESS will be developing an agreed regional strategy to improve Traveller attendance in partnership with the ELBs' Education Welfare Service (EWS). The strategy will identify the protocols and procedures to be used by the TESS in relation to Traveller attendance issues.

Following on from the report of a research study into improving attendance in schools serving deprived areas, the Department updated its attendance guidance to schools in June 2013 to provide schools with good practice, guidance and strategies to manage pupils' attendance. The guidance is available on the Department's website at **http://www.deni.gov.uk/circular_2013_13_-__attendance_guidance__english_version__-_effective_from_september_13.pdf**. The Department also developed a leaflet, "School Attendance Matters – A Parent's Guide" which issued to all schools for distribution to Year 1 and Year 8 pupils, including Traveller pupils, in September 2013.

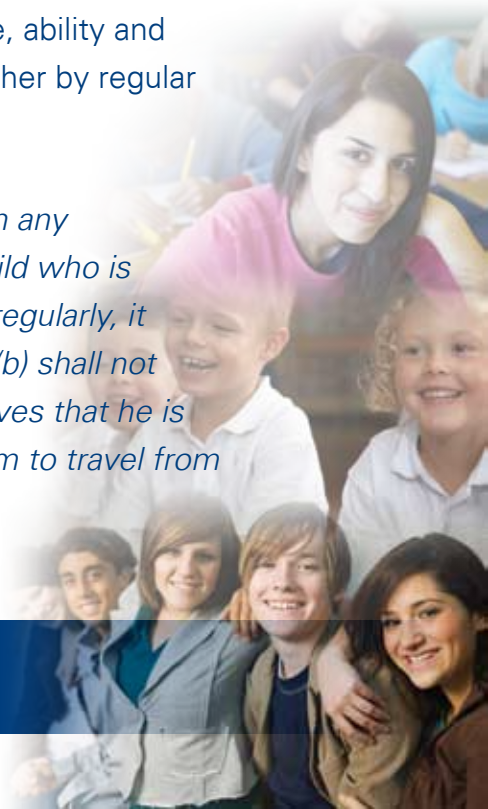
Taskforce Recommendation 4.2

Para 3 (3) of Schedule 13 of the Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1986 which relates to the school attendance requirement for a child who has no fixed abode and whose parent's trade or business requires him to travel from place to place should be reviewed.

Department of Education Response

Article 45 of the Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1986 places a duty on the parent of every child of compulsory school age to cause the child to receive efficient full-time education suitable to his age, ability and aptitude and to any special educational need he may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

Paragraph 3 (3) of Schedule 13 to the Order states "*Where, in any proceedings brought against a parent on the ground that a child who is a registered pupil at a school has failed to attend that school regularly, it is proved that the child has no fixed abode, sub-paragraph (2)(b) shall not apply but the parent shall be entitled to be acquitted if he proves that he is engaged in any trade or business of such nature to require him to travel from*



place to place and the child has attended (at the school at which he was a registered pupil) as regularly as the trade or business of the parent permitted provided that, in the case of a child who has attained the age of six years, he has so attended on at least one hundred days during the period of twelve months ending on the date on which the proceedings were instituted."

Schools are required to be in operation for 200 days less 5 optional closure days leaving a total of at least 195 operational days. A pupil who only attends for 100 days per year is therefore missing almost half of their schooling.

Based on the views expressed in the consultation, the Department will commence a review of the exception contained in Paragraph 3(3) in consultation with Traveller groups by April 2014.

5. AMBITIONS AND EXPECTATIONS

Taskforce Recommendation 5.1

Careers advice, education and guidance to Traveller young people should take account of Travellers' 'world of work' but also encourage them to widen their horizons and ambitions.

Department of Education Response

Key to the joint Department of Education/Department for Employment and Learning Careers Strategy 'Preparing for Success' is the aspiration that young people will develop the skills and confidence to make informed decisions about their education, training and employment options. This will enable them to make the most of their life choices and follow the careers path which suits them best.

Post-primary schools work in partnership with the Department of Employment and Learning's Careers Service who provide an impartial careers information, advice and guidance service in support of schools' careers education programmes. This partnership allows schools, in conjunction with careers advisers, the opportunity to select from a suite of careers services, appropriate to the needs, hopes and aspirations of all pupils including those young people from the Traveller community.

This is delivered through a network of careers advisers who are based in Careers Resource Centres, JobCentres and Jobs and Benefits Offices throughout the north of Ireland. Local arrangements are in place with schools and Education Welfare Officers for the referral of young people from the Traveller Community to the Careers Service.

In addition, the TESS is in the process of identifying a number of post-primary schools which will be supported to develop a Traveller specific approach to careers advice. A Working Group, representative of ELBs and schools, will be established to develop online resources to assist careers teachers. This will be followed by the delivery of Traveller specific workshops for careers teachers during the 2013/14 school year.

Taskforce Recommendation 5.2

Schools must have an expectation that Traveller children and young people will achieve their potential and parents should be encouraged to have high expectations of their children's achievement and that their education should continue while they are travelling.

Department of Education Response

The Department's over-arching strategy for raising standards and tackling underachievement is "Every School a Good School – a policy for school improvement" (ESaGS). Supporting pupils, such as Travellers, who face greater barriers to learning and progressing than their peers is an integral part of the school improvement agenda and at the heart of a school's work to raise standards is school development planning.

Schools are required by legislation to prepare School Development Plans setting targets for improvement following a process of self-evaluation. A School Development Plan must include information on the school's strategies for providing for the special, additional, or other individual needs of pupils. One of the ESaGS indicators of effective school performance used is '*A school culture of achievement, improvement and ambition exists – with clear expectations that* ***all*** *pupils can and will achieve to the very best of their ability*'.

The ETI, in the course of school inspections, evaluates and reports on the quality of school development planning including a school's processes for setting challenging targets and improving outcomes for all pupils. For schools with Traveller pupils, the plan should include actions and targets aimed at supporting Traveller pupils to achieve their potential.

There are a number of areas within the TESS Delivery Plan which contribute to the overall aim of assessing and improving current Traveller pupil performance. These range from in-school learning to out of school hours learning and they all require the collection, collation and dissemination of knowledge around the current educational experiences of Traveller children.

In September 2013, the TESS will commence a survey of the 167 schools with Traveller pupils in attendance; this survey will include the current baselines held for these pupils and what level of knowledge the school has of any learning or participation in activities outside school hours.

The Department will review progress at the end of June 2014 and consider whether the introduction of Personal Education Plans for Traveller children, with clear targets, actions and responsibilities to respond to each child's needs, would be beneficial.

All parents, including Traveller parents, have a statutory duty to ensure that their children receive efficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude and any special educational needs they may have. Promoting parental involvement and engagement and assisting parents to support their children's learning is a priority area for the TESS. Traveller Support Groups, who work with and have a relationship with Traveller parents, also have a responsibility to consider the contribution they can make to promote a positive attitude towards education.

Nomadism is an integral part of Traveller culture and should not be seen as an obstacle to education. The TESS will work through schools and

Traveller Support Groups to encourage nomadic Traveller families to enrol their children in other schools when they are away from their base school and (where appropriate) encourage schools to facilitate the transfer of school records. The TESS Delivery Plan includes the development of an E-Learning project with a strand focusing on nomadic Travellers. Preliminary pilot work undertaken with the home teaching service is due for completion in December 2013 and it is anticipated that a Traveller specific module will be available by March 2014.

6. INCLUSION, INTEGRATION AND INTERCULTURALISM

Taskforce Recommendation 6.1

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

Department of Education Response

The Department agrees that the role of Principals and teachers in the education of all children is key. ELBs have piloted various forms of training and development for teachers on how to develop an inclusive ethos.

The ELBs' Community Relations Equality and Diversity Inter-Board Panel continues to take forward work to ensure teachers are equipped to deal with inclusive classrooms. In addition, the Department is developing a strategy and implementation plan for the way forward for teacher professional development. This will seek to address issues such as greater social and cultural diversity in schools, the increased number of children who face barriers to learning in mainstream schools and the need to develop an inclusive perspective.

Taskforce Recommendation 6.2

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

Department of Education Response

The aim of Initial Teacher Education (ITE) is to develop key competences to enable beginning teachers to deliver the Revised Curriculum. The time available for training students is, however, limited, particularly on the one-year Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) course. There is therefore a limit to the range of issues that can be covered during ITE. Whilst issues such as diversity and inclusion are covered to some extent during ITE, it is considered that these areas can be addressed in more depth during a teacher's in-service training.

The ELBs' Community Relations Equality and Diversity Inter-Board Panel continue to take forward work to ensure teachers are equipped to deal with inclusive classrooms. In addition the Department is developing a strategy and implementation plan for the way forward for teacher professional development. This will seek to address issues such as greater social and cultural diversity in schools, the increased number of children who face barriers to learning in mainstream schools and the need to develop an inclusive perspective.

Taskforce Recommendation 6.3

Where it exists, the practice of providing Traveller specific school transport should be reviewed.

Department of Education Response

Traveller specific school transport has been provided for many years mainly to schools in the Belfast Education and Library Board (BELB) from within and beyond the BELB area. This practice was put in place in response to the case that had been made over the years that the provision of transport to Traveller children ensured attendance at school and reduced the risk of bullying on the journey to and from school.

However despite the provision of specific transport, Traveller attendance at primary schools in the BELB area was only 58.1% in 2011/12 and the average Traveller attendance at Belfast post-primary schools was 48.5% in 2010/11 and 51.7% in 2011/12.

The Taskforce was of the view that the practice of providing Traveller specific school transport was a barrier to social and educational inclusion and should be reviewed.

The draft Framework indicated that the Department and ELBs would carry out a review of this practice, a full impact assessment would form part of the review and views would be sought from CCMS, ELBs, schools, Traveller Support Groups and Traveller families.

Consultation on the draft Framework produced mixed results concerning this issue. 73% of other respondents agreed that the practice of providing specific transport should be reviewed where as 100% of parents disagreed with any review. Qualitative responses in support of specific transport expressed concerns that parents have no other form of transport and it helps improve attendance. Other viewpoints were that Travellers should be treated the same as all other children and that specific transport leads to segregation.

As the consultation responses showed very mixed results on this issue, it is the Department's intention that Traveller specific school transport will be fully assessed as part of the Department's planned Review of Home to School Transport Policy.

7. ATTAINMENT AND ACHIEVEMENT

Taskforce Recommendation 7.1

Schools, ELBs, NGOs and TSGs should improve engagement with Traveller parents to build trust, improve Travellers' sense of belonging and inclusion within the school community and encourage a positive attitude towards education and children's participation in all levels of education, including pre-school. Evidence indicates that 70% of a child's outcomes are dependent on parents/carers who need to be supported.

Department of Education Response

Promoting Traveller parental involvement and engagement and assisting Traveller parents to support their children's learning and achievement is a priority area for the TESS and is reflected in its Delivery Plan. Traveller Support Groups who work with, and have a relationship with, Traveller parents also have a responsibility to consider the contribution they can make to promoting a positive attitude towards education and improving the educational chances of Traveller children.

The Department's Circular 2010/15, which was issued to all schools and ELBs in August 2010, highlighted the importance of home-school liaison with Traveller parents. The Department will update this Circular to reflect this Framework, the establishment of the TESS and its Delivery Plan.

Taskforce Recommendation 7.2

The educational attainment of all Traveller children and young people, including those with special educational needs, should be developed, promoted and supported through flexible learning opportunities that meet their needs and abilities. Traveller young people should be made aware of

the wide range of courses available under the Entitlement Framework from September 2013.

Department of Education Response

Supporting pupils who face greater barriers to learning and progressing than their peers is an integral part of the school improvement agenda. One of the ESaGs indicators of effective school performance is *'A commitment exists to ensuring that all children follow an educational pathway which is appropriate to them in a school or through a collaborative arrangement with another school, FE College or other provider'*.

Within the current Special Educational Needs (SEN) framework, a comprehensive SEN capacity building programme has been rolled out to schools since the 2010/11 school year. A detailed SEN resource file has also been produced and has been made available to every school. This aims to ensure that all schools are equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills to manage the needs of every pupil with SEN and/or disability.

Meeting the needs of all young people from Key Stage 4 is the core objective of the entitlement framework policy. The Entitlement Framework (EF) will guarantee all learners, regardless of where they live or the type of school they attend, access to a broad and better balanced range of courses that are relevant to their needs, aptitudes, interests and future job prospects, starting with a minimum number of courses from 2013. The EF seeks to provide greater equality of access to young people facing barriers to learning or disadvantage.

The Department is currently revising the Regulations that set out the information which Boards of Governors of schools must make available to schools each year to parents and the public. It is proposed that the revised Regulations will require a school to publish details in their annual prospectus of a list of the courses provided for pupils in Key Stage 4 and

for pupils over compulsory school age. It is also proposed that the information will have to be made available on the school's website and copies made available at the school.

TESS has included a range of actions in its Delivery Plan to improve Traveller understanding of, and access to educational provision and opportunities. In addition, TESS is in the process of identifying a number of post-primary schools which will be supported to develop a Traveller specific approach to careers advice. A Working Group, representative of ELBs and schools, will be established to develop online resources to assist careers teachers which will take into account the Traveller "world of work" and maximise on potential within the Entitlement Framework. This will be followed by the delivery of Traveller specific workshops for careers teachers during the course of the 2013/14 school year.

CONCLUSION

The Department's expectations for the educational achievement of Traveller children are no less than for any other child. The Taskforce on Traveller Education provided valuable direction and identified that the Department, ELBs, schools, Traveller Support Groups and Traveller parents all have a role to play to ensure that Traveller children achieve their full potential. With the right attitude, determination and renewed thinking we can revitalise and inspire enthusiasm for education, tackle the barriers to learning that some young people face and deliver the commitments outlined in this Framework. The programme of work is outlined in the attached Annex.

EQUALITY CONSIDERATIONS

Section 75 of the NI Act 1998 requires all public authorities in carrying out their functions relating to the north of Ireland to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between:

- persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation;
- men and women generally;
- persons with a disability and persons without; and
- persons with dependants and persons without.

In addition, without prejudice to the above obligation, public authorities must also, in carrying out their functions, relating to the north of Ireland, have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or religious group.

We have carried out an Equality and Human Rights Screening on the Traveller Child in Education Action Framework and concluded that it is not necessary to conduct an equality impact assessment because no equality issues have been identified.

The Equality and Human Rights Screening form has been published on the Department's website for information. **www.deni.gov.uk/index/about-the-department/equality-and-human-rights/85-about-the-department-equality-policies-being-screened-pg.htm**

GLOSSARY

BELB	Belfast Education and Library Board
CRED	Community Relations, Equality and Diversity in Education
DE	Department of Education
DEL	Department for Employment and Learning
DES	Department of Education and Skills
EF	Entitlement Framework
ELB	Education and Library Board
ESA	Education and Skills Authority
ESaGS	Every School a Good School
ETI	Education and Training Inspectorate
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education
IDS	Inclusion and Diversity Service
NGO	Non governmental organisation
PfY	Priorities for Youth
SAAT	Southern Area Action with Travellers
SELB	Southern Education and Library Board
SEN	Special Educational Needs
TESS	Traveller Education Support Service
TSG	Traveller Support Group

Annex

Key Area	Action	Timescale	Output	Action By
Strategic Delivery and Partnership	A regional Traveller Education Support Service (TESS) will be established.	By April 2013	A consistent, co-ordinated approach to promoting improved school access, participation and attendance of Traveller children.	ELBs/ESA
	The TESS will implement a delivery plan, building on identified good practice, to address the detailed recommendations of the Taskforce and the ETI. The delivery plan will include detailed targets and performance measures.	Commencing April 2013	Improved partnership approach between key stakeholders including families. Improved capacity of schools to support the learning outcomes of Traveller pupils.	TESS
	A process of consultation with the Traveller community will take place, with the assistance of a range of partners including schools, voluntary and community sector organisations.	Ongoing	Improved engagement with Traveller children and young people and their families.	DE and TESS
	The Thematic Group on Travellers Issues within the Racial Equality Forum will be reconstituted.	By December 2013	An integrated, collaborative approach on Travellers' issues.	OFMDFM
	The TESS will develop arrangements for engaging with Travellers across the region in taking forward the Action Framework and Delivery Plan.	Commencing April 2013	Meaningful Traveller engagement in education.	TESS
	The TESS will undertake a process of joint planning with IDS and CRED to align and integrate practice on inclusion.	By 2015	Policy and practice on the education and inclusion of Traveller children integrated into wider multiculturalism policy and practice.	TESS IDS CRED ESA

Key Area	Action	Timescale	Output	Action By
Monitoring and Evaluation	A Monitoring and Review Group will be established to monitor the Action Framework.	By December 2013	Assurance on delivery and outputs of the Action Framework.	DE
	The actions and targets within the TESS Delivery Plan will be monitored by the Department through quarterly monitoring meetings with TESS.	Ongoing	Assurance on the delivery and outputs of the TESS Delivery Plan.	TESS DE
Access to Educational Opportunities	TESS will work with stakeholders to identify a range of communication methods to improve information to Traveller children, young people and families.	By March 2014	Improved Traveller understanding of an access to educational provision, and opportunities.	DE TESS
Improved School Attendance	The TESS will develop of a regional strategy to improve Traveller attendance in partnership with the ELBs Education Welfare Service (EWS). The strategy will identify the protocols and procedures to be used by the TESS in relation to Traveller attendance issues and include specific transition support programmes.	By December 2013	Improved attendance at school by Traveller pupils and improved support.	DE ELBs
	DE will commence the review of the legislation which allows the children of a parent travelling on business to attend school only 100 days per year.	By April 2014	Clarity on the school attendance requirements for Traveller pupils.	DE

Key Area	Action	Timescale	Output	Action By
Ambitions and Expectations	The TESS, schools, careers advisers and TSGs will work together to encourage Traveller pupils to access well informed careers services to help them make effective careers decisions appropriate to their needs, hopes and aspirations.	Commencing October 2013	Traveller pupils having wider ambitions and making informed decisions relevant to their needs, aptitudes interests and future job prospects.	TESS Careers Advisers Schools TSGs
	In the course of school inspections, ETI will continue to evaluate and report on the quality of school development planning, including a school's processes for setting challenging targets and improving outcomes for all pupils.	Ongoing	Schools expect Traveller pupils to achieve their potential.	Schools ETI
	DE will assess data to consider whether a Personal Education Plan for each Traveller pupil would be beneficial.	By June 2014	Actions identified to respond to each Traveller pupil's educational needs.	DE
	A priority area in the TESS delivery plan is the promotion of parental involvement and engagement and assisting parents to support their children's learning.	Ongoing	Improved Traveller parental commitment to and support for their children's learning.	TESS Traveller parents
	Traveller Support Groups and other NGOs who work with, and have a relationship with Traveller parents have a responsibility to consider how they can help to promote a positive attitude towards education and encourage Traveller pupils to make use of the careers services available to them.	Ongoing	Improved Traveller parental commitment to their children's learning. Traveller pupils have wider ambitions and horizons.	TSGs NGOs

Key Area	Action	Timescale	Output	Action By
Inclusion Integration and Interculturalism	The Education and Library Boards Community Relations Equality and Diversity (CRED) Inter-Board Panel will take forward work to ensure teachers are equipped to deal with inclusive classrooms.	Ongoing	Improved consistency and quality of training, capacity building and resources and reduction of duplication.	ELBs
	DE will develop a strategy and implementation plan for the way forward for teacher professional development.	Ongoing	To address issues such as greater social and cultural diversity in schools, the increased number of children who face barriers to learning in mainstream schools and the need to develop an inclusive perspective.	DE
	The practice of providing Traveller specific school transport will be reviewed as part of the planned overarching review of Home to School Transport policy. A full impact assessment will be carried out as part of the review.	TBC	To make an appropriate recommendation, on the basis of the review, with regard to Traveller children and home to school transport.	DE ELBs/ESA
Attainment and Achievement	Learning from a pilot project in the SELB area promoting the engagement of Traveller parents in their children's learning will be disseminated to all schools.	Commencing 2013	Improved Traveller parental commitment to and support for improving their children's educational achievements.	TESS Schools Traveller parents
	Revised Regulations will require schools to publish in their Prospectus a list of the courses provided for pupils in key stage 4 and beyond.	Commencing 2013	Traveller young people will be aware of the wide range of courses available.	DE
	The TESS will work with schools, families and other stakeholders to identify a range of communication methods to improve the provision of information on education provision, opportunities and services to Traveller children and young people and their families.	By March 2014	Improved Traveller knowledge and understanding of the opportunities and support available.	TESS Schools Families Other Stakeholders

EVERY SCHOOL A GOOD SCHOOL

The Traveller Child in Education

Action Framework