

Attendance and Attainment

- **Current state of play**
- **What is working?**
- **Outcomes and shortcomings**

EUROPEAN MONITORING CENTRE ON RACISM AND XENOPHOBIA

“Roma, Sinti, Gypsies and Travellers in public education”

**Research report on ‘Travellers and Public Education in Northern Ireland’
for Commission for Racial Equality**

**What are the views of the public education authorities on segregation and
its affects on the children of the groups in question?**

**Sets the context for our own appraisal of the ‘attainment’ of the state and
statutory agencies with responsibility for Traveller education in the north.**

Brown v. Board of Education, 347 U.S. 483 (1954):

Segregation of white and Negro children in the public schools of a State solely on the basis of race, pursuant to state laws permitting or requiring such segregation, denies to Negro children the equal protection of the laws guaranteed by the Fourteenth Amendment -- even though the physical facilities and other "tangible" factors of white and Negro schools may be equal.

Race Relations (Northern Ireland) Order 1997 specifically identifies Irish Travellers as a 'racial group'. The Order also makes clear the unlawful nature of imposing racial segregation:

- **(2) For the purposes of this Order segregating a person from other persons on racial grounds is treating him less favourably than they are treated.**

A Shared Future

Policy and Strategic Framework for Good Relations in Northern Ireland:

Separate but equal is not an option. Parallel living and the provision of parallel services are unsustainable both morally and economically. (A Shared Future p. 15)

The Government response to the PSI recommendations was that it 'did not accept the PSI Recommendation to close St Paul's' (original emphasis):

The Government ... has no plans at present to phase out the school. It is successful in delivering quality education and the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools is strongly opposed against any steps to force closure of the school.... until the integration of the Traveller community into the general community reaches a stage where the parents of Traveller children choose to send their children to other mainstream schools, leading to the non-viability of St Mary's, the school should remain open. (OFMDFM 2003: 51-52)

The current Department of Education NI position is:

It is incorrect to describe the provision at St Mary's Primary School as racially segregated. It is not a designated "Traveller School" and there are no such schools in Northern Ireland. St Mary's is a Catholic Maintained school which, as is the case with all grant-aided schools in Northern Ireland, is open to all children.... While it is the Department's policy to encourage the integration in school of Traveller children with other children, there are no plans to phase out provision at St Mary's for so long as there is demand for places in the school from the parents of Traveller Children. (research communication 7 October 2004)

The Council for Catholic Maintained Schools' position is:

From an organizational point of view we have one Primary school in Belfast which is specifically for Traveller children (this is a response to parental demand). All our other schools, nursery, primary and post-primary are open to all irrespective of religious, ethnic or cultural background. In view of the nature of the Traveller lifestyle we therefore have schools in certain areas of the country where the proportion of Traveller children would be greater than elsewhere. (research communication 7 October 2004)

The position of the Belfast Education & Library Board (BELB), which buses Traveller children to and from the segregated school, is:

**Transport for Traveller pupils within the BELB is targeted provision for Traveller pupils in all Belfast schools where requested or required.... Transport for pupils from the Travelling community attending Belfast Board schools can be provided if requested or required under targeted provision. This is in line with promoting social inclusion- supporting the community to access the schools of their choice both at primary and secondary level.
((research communication 26 October 2004)**

The ETI (Education and Training Inspectorate) effectively ignores the fact that St Mary's is a *de facto* segregated school – although it does acknowledge that, 'The children come exclusively from the Travelling community'. This appears particularly problematic given the controversy that the segregation has provoked.

Current state of play:

- **Segregation is maintained.**
- **Bussing is maintained.**
- **No effective monitoring of achievement but currently poor.**

What is working?

- **The Legal Context**
- **Policy Context**
- **Resourcing**
- **EOTAS**

Outcomes and shortcomings

There are four core issues which recur in the broad analysis of Travellers and public education in Northern Ireland:

- *integration/segregation*
- *evaluation*
- *resourcing*
- *partnership.*

Conclusions:

- **The philosophy of ‘special circumstances’ and ‘parental choice’ must be repudiated**
- **Traveller educational equality is inseparable from Traveller equality. Justice for Travellers in education is inseparable from broader struggles for justice for Travellers**
- **Equality of outcome is the only metre of success or failure.**

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