



# Improving educational outcomes for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils – *what works*

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Current research into improving educational outcomes for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils is exploring some of the strategies and approaches being used to give these youngsters a better chance in life. It demonstrates the complex interplay between what happens in the classroom and factors in the outside world – and the importance of trust, high expectations, respect and flexibility.

The research shows that various factors

are involved in improving outcomes, based on case studies with primary and secondary schools as well as alternative education provisions. The researchers developed a model to illustrate this (see Figure 1), consisting of three circles with:

- **educational outcomes** at the centre of the model
- a set of six **constructive conditions**, which can all impact positively on the identified educational outcomes
- **contextual influences** that may lie outside the immediate influence of the school and can either support or obstruct raising outcomes for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils in the outer circle (the word ‘scripts’ refers to common responses or phrases used consistently to justify actions).

The analysis showed that the improved educational outcomes for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils that the case-study schools

are working hard to achieve are essentially interdependent. It is important for schools to consider pupil progress holistically across all eight outcomes in order to identify needs and target support effectively.

However, each school operates within its own unique setting and context. This may support the school in raising outcomes if, for example, there is a long and established history of admitting pupils from these communities. Or it may present particular barriers, with inter-racial tensions within the local community, for example. Because of this diversity, specific interventions and approaches may lead to quicker results in some schools than in others operating under very different circumstances.

Six constructive conditions have been identified as impacting positively on educational outcomes. Taken together, these characterise the inclusive ethos of a school, and their effects are interwoven. So, partnership between a school, its parents and Traveller Education Support Services, based on mutual respect, was linked to high expectations. Where safety and trust are firmly established in the school, this can facilitate access and inclusion. However, if a school has high expectations of its Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils but shows little evidence of flex-

ibility in its curriculum approach or in supporting pupil access, the conditions can be said to be out of balance, so educational outcomes are less likely to be improved.

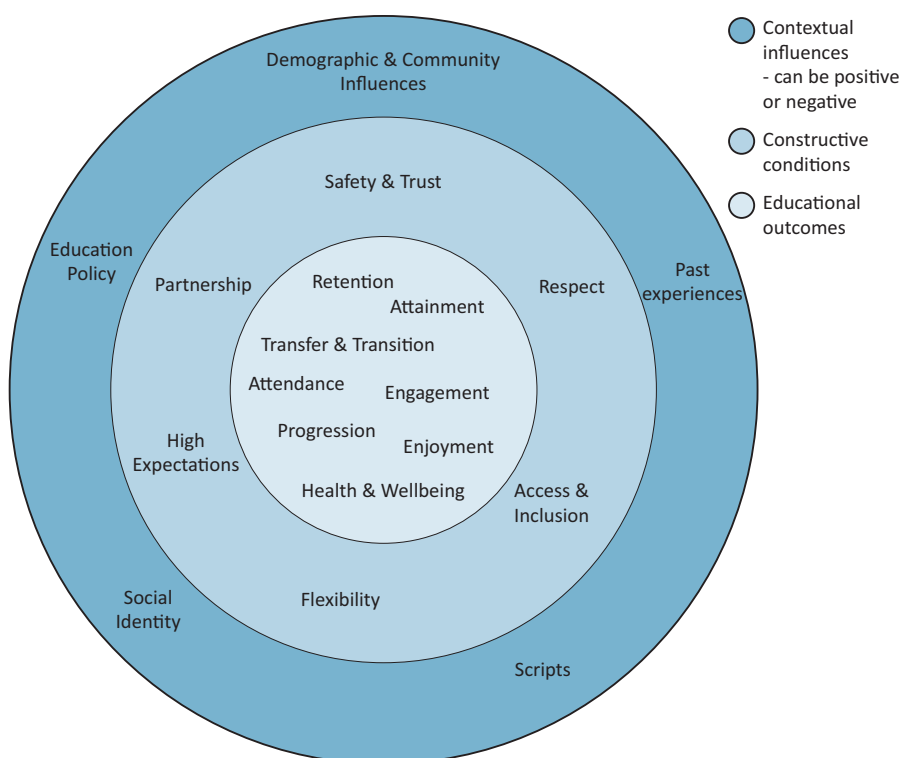
The research suggests that each of the conditions is important and their cumulative effect is necessary to improve educational outcomes for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils. The key to success lies in strengthening each of the constructive conditions and achieving an appropriate balance between them.

NFER is conducting a three-year study on behalf of the DCSF to investigate the improvement of educational outcomes for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils. The research, which is focused predominantly on key stages 2–4, involves four main components: a longitudinal analysis of national data, progress mapping in 200 schools, a review of the literature and 20 case-study visits. The final report will be published in 2010, together with details of the analytical techniques used.

**Further information**

[www.nfer.ac.uk/nfer/research/projects/improving-outcomes-grt-pupils/](http://www.nfer.ac.uk/nfer/research/projects/improving-outcomes-grt-pupils/)

Figure 1 Factors involved in improving outcomes for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils



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