



House of Lords

From Lord Avebury
President, ACERT

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Dear Nick,

Two of the education commitments in the progress report by the ministerial working group on tackling inequalities experienced by Gypsies and Travellers have been implemented, both involving OFSTED.

Commitment 1 reads: "Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils are specifically highlighted as a vulnerable group in the revised Ofsted framework, ensuring that school inspections will pay particular attention to their progress, attainment and attendance".

As far as I can see, the 2012 Framework makes no reference to Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children, or indeed to any other group of vulnerable children! The associated handbook for school inspection from September 2012 refers to Gypsies, Roma and Travellers in a footnote (15, p23) as those with protected characteristics, as defined by the Equality Act 2010. The previous version of the same paragraph in the evaluation schedule for the inspection of maintained schools and academies on p.5 explicitly included Gypsies, Roma and Travellers so the new version seems weaker than its predecessor.

Commitment 5 (p10) reads: "In line with its Schools White Paper commitment, Ofsted is conducting a survey on prejudiced-based bullying, which is now under way. This will involve inspectors talking to pupils about their experiences of bullying and the way in which it is handled in their schools. Bullying of minority groups will be picked up in this survey, and the results will be published in 2012."

"No place for bullying" includes one specific reference to Gypsies, Roma and Travellers: *"A third primary school that had an annual influx [sic] of Traveller children for a short period of time prepared all pupils for their arrival, exploring the Travellers' culture and aiming to ensure smooth integration and a lack of bullying."*

The more neutral term "visit" would have worked just as well as the value laden "influx", and its use suggests that the Lead Inspector may have been unaware of the Commitment or did not take it seriously. The Case Studies deal only with homophobia and disability-focused bullying. Again, the opportunity was missed to

highlight the concerns of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller parents and school responses to them.

I would respectfully ask that you discuss with the Chief Inspector how the response to these commitments could be strengthened so as to have the impact on Gypsy, Roma and Traveller inequalities intended by the Ministerial Working Group. I hope you and other Ministers will be considering the remaining commitments also to ensure they make a real difference.

Yours sincerely
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