

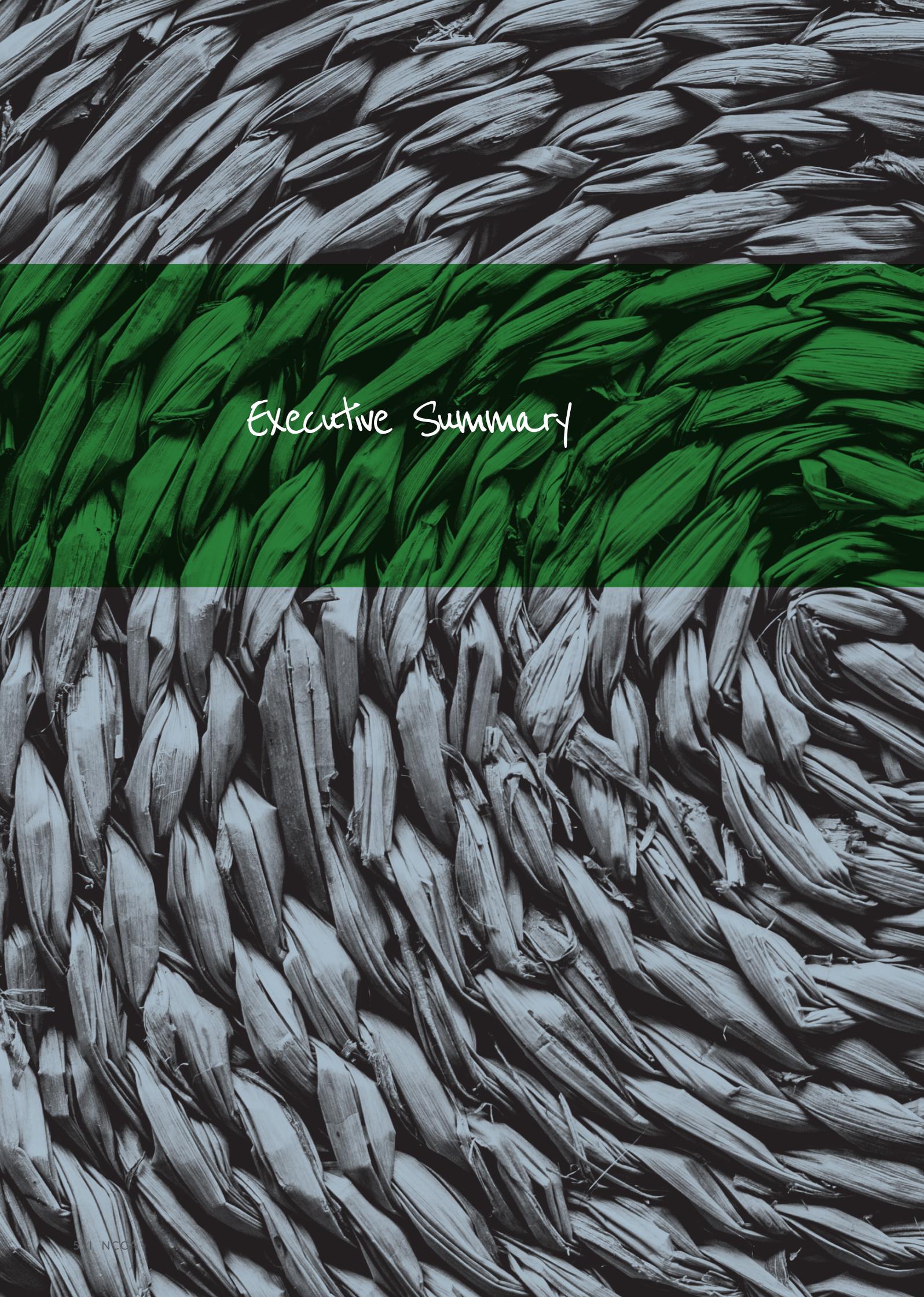
Traveller culture and
history in the curriculum:
a curriculum audit
Executive Summary



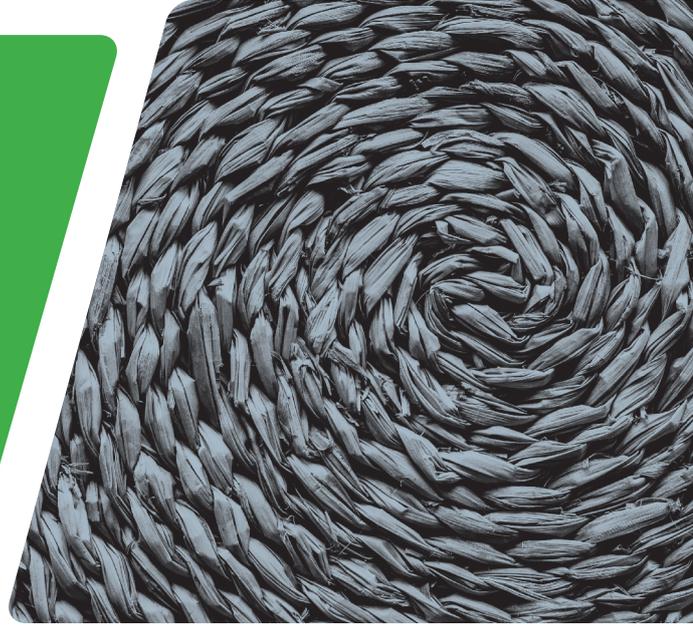


Contents

1.	Introduction	6
2.	Background	7
3.	Traveller culture and history	9
4.	International developments and guidance for Irish schools and early childhood settings	12
5.	National strategies and legislation	13
8.	Conclusions and considerations	16
9.	Next steps	22
10.	References	24

The image shows a close-up of a woven basket, likely made of natural fibers like bamboo or reeds. The weaving pattern is a complex, repeating geometric design. A horizontal band of vibrant green color runs across the center of the basket, contrasting with the natural, muted tones of the fibers. The text 'Executive Summary' is written in a white, cursive font across this green band.

Executive Summary



Introduction

In September 2018, the Minister for Education and Skills, Richard Bruton, T.D., requested the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) to undertake an audit of Traveller culture and history in the curriculum, which would include consideration of the resource provided by the NCCA's Intercultural Guidelines, which have been in place since 2005/06. The Minister asked that the audit would consider:

- the place of traveller culture and history in the existing curriculum, from early childhood to senior cycle
- the current intercultural education guidelines and other resources for schools in relation to Travellers
- the opportunities for teaching about Traveller culture and history and how it is incorporated into existing curricular subjects (Minister's letter, 2018).

The broader context for this request is the Private Members 'Traveller Culture and History in Education Bill 2018'. The Bill aims to provide for the "inclusion of traveller culture and history in the curriculum taught by recognised schools in the State and for that purpose to amend the Education Act 1998".

In responding to the Minister's request, the initial sections of the audit examine the background and developments in key government legislation, strategies and guidelines of the recent past regarding the place and status of Travellers within the Irish education system and wider society. This includes a brief section on Traveller culture and history in Ireland. It is preceded by an outline of the guidance provided to schools and early years settings on Traveller education within the wider context of intercultural education. What follows next is a detailed exploration of current early childhood, primary and post-primary curricula in terms of opportunities for children and young people to encounter and learn about Traveller history and culture. In light of the earlier sections, the latter sections provide conclusions and considerations along with next steps mapping out the direction for furthering the work initiated in the audit.



Background

The Equal Status Act 2000 defines the term 'Traveller community' as the community of people who are commonly called Travellers and who are identified (both by themselves and by others) as people with a shared history, culture and traditions including, historically, a nomadic way of life on the island of Ireland. (Equal Status Act, 2000. Section 2 (1))

In March 2017 the then-Taoiseach Enda Kenny formally recognised Travellers as a distinct ethnic group within the Irish nation. An ethnic group is made up of people who share certain characteristics such as culture, language, religion and traditions. The Travelling Community is the sole group to have their ethnicity recognised domestically.

In January 2017, the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) issued a research paper entitled 'A Social Portrait of Travellers in Ireland'. The research found that Travellers stand out as a group that experiences extreme levels of disadvantage in every facet of their lives, i.e. education, employment, housing and health (ESRI, 2017).

There is a very large disparity between Travellers and non-Travellers in the level of education completed. Most Travellers (70%) have experienced only primary or lower levels of education. Drawing on the Census of Population 2016, data from the Central Statistics Office (CSO) indicates that:

- the level of education among Travellers remained well below that of the general population. Just 13.3 per cent of Traveller females were educated to upper secondary or above compared with 69.1 per cent of the general population
- nearly 6 in 10 Traveller men (57.2%) were educated to at most primary level in sharp contrast to the general population (13.6%)

- 167 Irish Travellers held a third level qualification in 2016, albeit up from 89 in 2011.

A consequence of poor educational attainment is a high unemployment rate, which was 80.2% among the Traveller community in 2016 (CSO, 2016). The high unemployment rate amongst Travellers is linked to educational disadvantage as well as other factors such as the widespread discrimination Travellers face when trying to access the workplace (All Ireland Traveller Health Study, 2010). As the All Ireland Traveller Health Study (AITHS, 2010) pointed out, there is a lack of motivation to continue in mainstream education as Travellers feel that it is not associated with positive outcomes because of the high level of discrimination faced when seeking employment. Poor levels of education can also negatively affect many other aspects of life and research consistently highlights how poor educational outcomes lead to a lifetime of disadvantage for people from marginalised groups across the globe. Addressing the educational needs of the Traveller community has a central contribution to make to addressing the inequalities experienced by Travellers in society. This perspective resonates strongly with the Travelling with Austerity Report undertaken by Brian Harvey Social Research which refers to Travellers suffering from discrimination, poverty, social exclusion, limited educational opportunities and poor health (p.15, 2013).

Overall, the ESRI's report findings portray a stark picture of inequality and disadvantage in the lives and experiences of Travellers across the various domains that were the subject of the study, including education, work, housing and health. The report also highlights the high levels of prejudice and discrimination encountered by Travellers. In relation to education specifically, the report describes differences in educational attainment between Travellers and non-Travellers as 'dramatic'. The report does stress the importance of tackling educational disadvantage in addressing the challenges facing Travellers more generally - it claims that when Travellers complete higher levels of education, we see a dramatic improvement in their chances of being in employment.



Addressing educational disadvantage is seen as a priority (p.91, 2017).

In terms of policy recommendations, the report points to the tension between the mainstreaming approach and more targeted intervention. It is suggested that the scale of disadvantage and discrimination experienced by Travellers means that mainstreaming approaches might not be sufficient to address the problems; yet tailored policies run the risk of marginalising Travellers and negating their cultural identity. This dilemma is identified as particularly acute in relation to education, where challenges to be addressed include the intergenerational nature of disadvantage; larger family size, often situated in overcrowded accommodation, thus reducing opportunities to study; and wider societal discrimination, which impacts on educational ambition

Among the recommendations made in this report is a call for teachers / early childhood practitioners to be provided with professional learning on Traveller and Roma culture, with approaches to embracing cultural diversity to be made a compulsory feature of both initial teacher education and continuous professional development. The embedding of Traveller and Roma culture in the curriculum is also recommended. This report provides a useful basis for considering the general nature and extent of disadvantage and discrimination experienced by Travellers, while its findings in relation to education are instructive in informing the audit.

Beginning on page 30, the audit provides detailed information on the experiences of Traveller children and students in education.



Traveller culture and history

For Travellers, belonging to a distinct ethnic minority means that they have a common ancestry, share fundamental cultural values and traditions, have a language and cultural heritage of their own and are seen by themselves and others as distinct and different.

The following section offers an insight into key features of Traveller identity as noted by Traveller representatives on the NCCA advisory group considering the audit process.

Common ancestry

A person is born a Traveller. Usually to be described as a Traveller an individual must have direct Traveller heritage, identify themselves as a Traveller and be identified as a Traveller by other Travellers.

Nomadism

One of the strongest influences on Traveller culture is nomadism, which is possibly one of the most distinctive features of Traveller culture that differentiates between Traveller and the wider 'settled' community.

Nomadic lifestyles serve, among others, three strong functions in particular within the community:

- social
- economic
- cultural.

The nomadic way of life of Travellers refers to the practice of some Travellers to travel from place to place, traditionally for commercial and cultural purposes; to buy and sell goods; to go to markets and fairs; and engage in new spaces.

Travellers share common cultural characteristics, traditions and values which are evident in their organisation of family, social and economic life. Nomadism, in a range of forms, has been central to the development and expression of these characteristics, traditions and values (IHRC, p. 9).

While nomadism has been described as a core activity of Traveller culture enactment, this does not necessarily imply that Travellers are defined singularly by Nomadism. Maintaining family ties and linking with the wider extended family is considered a cultural norm within the Traveller way of life, and Travellers' lives are often organised around this.

Family

Extended family is often considered a key element in Traveller culture with people identifying themselves by their family, clan or family name. The family name or connection is often considered important.

Economic activity

Traveller cultural expression traditionally includes enterprise, self-employment, occupational flexibility, and economic adaptation. Traditionally Travellers primarily generate income rather than live on a fixed income. Home is often the base for income generation with the whole family having a role. While hawking, labouring and trading remain common economic pursuits many Travellers work within mainstream industries.

Within a more contemporary context, traditional trades have a far more reduced standing and economic focus. Current barriers, including discrimination, have led to Travellers being included and visible in a small number of mainstream employment aspects.



Central themes to how Travellers live

Irish Travellers live in all types of accommodation including halting sites, camps, group housing schemes, local authority housing, private rented accommodation and privately-owned property.

Aspects of Traveller culture that can affect choices in accommodation include:

- extended family/ community presence in the area
- whether income is generated from the home
- restricted nomadic provisions and options for travel.

Travellers are a people of a strong nomadic history and activity. There are many traditional locations where specific families have resided over generations. Clans, family groupings and direct family connections are often identified as important connective factors within specific areas and locations.

Language

Language is often one of the most universal and diverse forms of expression of human culture, and perhaps even the most essential one. It is at the heart of issues of identity, memory and transmission of knowledge. Irish Travellers, while primarily English speakers, are often speakers of Gammon/Cant, which is a language that is derived from older Irish. While understood as having a much older history, it was first formally recorded in the early 18th century. While sometimes considered a 'secret' language, in light of the extensive reviews, research and recording it is, within a more contemporary context, considered more of a 'private' language than a 'secret' one. Travellers are not a homogenous group and there is great variation and diversity in their proficiency to speak Cant.

Oral traditions

Travellers largely maintain a very strong oral history tradition, with a resilient tradition of an oral transmission of culture and history from generation to generation. There exists in Traveller culture an awareness of how one generation passes encultured framing, concepts and understandings to another through the way the community lives, observes and enacts customs, religious expression, economic activity, craft making and other actions. This makes a sustained and consistent contribution towards community activity and understanding.

History

The historical context of Travellers is largely unwritten and unrecorded within a community inclusive context. There is a view among Travellers that they are among the last remaining peoples from older Gaelic Ireland and the last nomadic tribe. Many aspects of Cant/Gammon predate old Irish.

The context of Traveller history could be considered in terms of:

- state intervention
- where Travellers are recorded in ancient manuscripts
- inclusion in Oireachtas discussions
- economy
- the contribution to Irish heritage in music, storytelling and craft
- laws
- commissions



- war efforts
- struggle for independence
- the development of community activism in a drive towards equality and inclusion
- ethnic recognition.

Religion

While there is a clear diversity of faith within the community, the vast majority of Travellers are of Roman Catholic heritage. For many community members faith and expression of belief is very important. Religion and a wider older Celtic spiritual connection are a celebrated part of Traveller customs, notable in christenings, weddings, funerals, wakes, seasonal observances, pilgrimage, group activities, shrines, and ancestral observations.

Cultural heritage

Cultural heritage was defined by the World Conference on Cultural Policies as 'including the works of its artists, architects, musicians, writers and scientists and the work of anonymous artists, expressions of people's spirituality, and the body of values which give meaning to life'. Traveller cultural heritage is an expression of ways and understandings as developed by the community and passed, intergenerationally, via customs, practices, spaces, objects, artistic expressions and values. The Traveller community's understanding of cultural heritage includes tangible and intangible works through which the creativity of the Traveller people find expression, such as languages, rites, beliefs, historic places and monuments, literature, works of art, archives and libraries. Common cultural heritage among Travellers is viewed as an indispensable resource, as it constitutes a unique source of human creativity, development and renewal.

Music and art

Travellers have a strong tradition of cultural expression through traditional music and have made a distinctly recognised cultural contribution to Irish music heritage. There are many well-known musicians from the Traveller community, such as Margaret Barry, Mikey Dunne and Family, John Doherty, John Doran, Trish Nolan, Pecker Dunne, Finbar Furey and Thomas McCarthy. Many of the early last century musicians are collected in the national archives and folklore collections. There are extensive references in Irish literature to Traveller music, songs and art.

Crafts and clothing

Tin smithing and a wide array of other craft work, including wood work, dyeing, weaving, fabric creation, herbal craft design, wagon making and creation of daily utilised tools such as kamogs (walking sticks), beady pockets (gopas) remain aspects of creation and expression that are intact within the community. These skills were held by older generations and their usage is now in decline within the Traveller Community.

Many Travellers have a sustained connection with the animal world through horses, dogs and hunting and this is a distinctive feature of Traveller culture.



International developments and guidance for Irish schools and early childhood settings

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1990)

Ireland's membership of the United Nations has been central to government policy development since joining in 1955. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child was adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1989 and came into force in 1990. It sets out the basic human rights to which children everywhere are entitled. The Convention protects these rights by setting minimum standards that governments must meet in providing healthcare, education and legal and social services to children in their countries. Ireland ratified the Convention in 1992.

UNESCO Guidelines on Intercultural Education (2006)

In a world experiencing rapid change, and where cultural, political, economic and social upheaval challenges traditional ways of life, education has a major role to play in promoting social cohesion and peaceful coexistence. Through programmes that encourage dialogue between students of different cultures, beliefs and religions, education can make an important and meaningful contribution to sustainable and tolerant societies. (UNESCO, 2006: 8)

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) Guidelines on Intercultural Education provide an internationally recognised perspective in terms of examining our national guidance around intercultural education. According to UNESCO, Intercultural Education is a response to the challenge to provide quality education for all. It is framed within a Human Rights perspective as expressed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948).

The major challenge when discussing the issue of education and interculturalism is dealing with some of the inherent tensions that arise in reconciling competing world views with each other.



National strategies and legislation

The development of *The National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy* (2017 – 2021) (NTRIS) is built on existing work in Traveller education and intercultural education both nationally and internationally. This section provides an overview of some of the key government legislation, strategies and guidelines developed for educators and schools in relation to Traveller education and the curriculum.

In its preamble, the Education Act (1998) stresses the need to respect the diversity of values, beliefs, languages and traditions in Irish society. The Act requires each school to establish and maintain an admissions policy that provides for maximum accessibility to the school.

Guidelines on Traveller Education in Primary Schools (2002)¹

In 2002, the Department of Education and Science (DES) published *Guidelines on Traveller Education for Primary Schools* and *Guidelines on Traveller Education in Second Level Schools* as part of its strategies on social inclusion, anti-poverty, promotion of equality and the tackling of educational disadvantage. It is DES policy that Travellers should be fully integrated into mainstream schools. The primary purpose of the guidelines was to provide practical guidance to teachers, schools, parents and management in implementing the DES policy on Traveller education.

Guidelines on Traveller Education in Second Level Schools (2002)

The main aim for Traveller children over the age of twelve is to encourage them to continue in full time education and to promote the continuation of their full inclusive participation in education, while retaining respect and value for their distinctive culture. (DES, 2002b: 19)

Substantial progress was made in the integration of Travellers in primary schools, while at the time of publication it was felt that much remained to be done at second level. In this context it was essential for schools to foster an understanding of and a respect for Traveller culture.

Guidelines on Intercultural Education in the Primary School (2005)

In 2005 NCCA published *Guidelines on Intercultural Education in the Primary School*. The guidelines supported the Primary School Curriculum (1999) and identified the ways in which intercultural education permeated the curriculum (NCCA, 2005: 5). Two specific aims of the guidelines were to

- raise awareness within the educational community of issues that arise from increasing linguistic, cultural and ethnic diversity in Ireland;
- address the curriculum needs of all children, whether from a minority or the majority ethnic group, which arise in the context of growing cultural and ethnic diversity.

Intercultural Education in the Post Primary School (2006)

Following the publication of the primary guidelines on intercultural education in 2005, NCCA published *Intercultural Education in the Post Primary School* in 2006. Both sets of guidelines were based on the same key principles and themes and were to provide a context for young people to develop intercultural competence in an integrated way throughout their primary and post-primary education.



The Yellow Flag Programme

The Yellow Flag Programme is a schools-based programme that aims to support primary and secondary schools to become more inclusive of all cultures and ethnicities, celebrate diversity and challenge racism and discrimination. The Yellow Flag Programme was developed by the Irish Traveller Movement (ITM) in 2008. It works with students, staff, management, parents and the wider community so that issues of diversity and equality can be understood outside the school setting and in everyday life, so that these issues are not seen to be addressed only within the formal curriculum. As part of the programme, participating schools provide teachers with access to the NCCA Intercultural Guidelines to ensure the implementation of the guidelines in Yellow Flag schools.

The report and recommendations for a Traveller Education Strategy (2006)

This report published by the government in 2006 set out to examine existing provision and supports, and existing organisational and management structures, for Traveller education at all levels and made recommendations for change, as appropriate. It identified clear goals for Traveller education and made recommendations in relation to optimising or reallocating existing resources. The report took a holistic approach and sought to address all aspects of Traveller education for lifelong learning, that is, from pre-school to adult and continuing education.

The report was comprehensive and addressed the following issues for Travellers from early childhood to adult education:

- it provided a brief background on Irish Travellers, their education, accommodation, health, and other challenges facing them
- it provided an overview of all aspects of Traveller education up to 2005

- it addressed the important role of Traveller parents in education
- it outlined considerations in early childhood education and the provision made for Traveller pupils within primary and post-primary education. It summarised the measures taken by the Department of Education and Science to promote the education of Traveller pupils, identifying educational issues, making recommendations, and proposing plans of action with timescales
- it highlighted the provision available for Travellers in further and higher education and identified concerns and challenges for the sector.

Intercultural Education Strategy, 2010 - 2015 (2010)

The Intercultural Education Strategy aims to ensure that:

- all students experience an education that “respects the diversity of values, beliefs, languages and traditions in Irish society and is conducted in a spirit of partnership” (Education Act, 1998)
- all education providers are assisted with ensuring that inclusion and integration within an intercultural learning environment become the norm (DES, 2010:1).

Several key themes are continually highlighted for all educational institutions, which should:

- adopt a whole institution approach to creating an intercultural learning environment
- enhance and develop intercultural education skills across the whole education team



- support students to become proficient in the language of instruction
- encourage and promote active partnership and engagement between education providers, students, parents and communities
- promote effective communication
- promote and evaluate data gathering and monitoring so that policy and decision-making is evidence based.

These common themes highlight the fact that all educational sectors are facing similar challenges and opportunities, due to immigration, migration and increased social and cultural diversity in Ireland today (DES, 2010: 43).

The Diversity, Equality and Inclusion Charter and Guidelines for Early Childhood Care and Education

The *Diversity, Equality and Inclusion Charter and Guidelines for Early Childhood Care and Education* was published by Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA) in 2016. It invites everyone involved in early childhood to embrace, promote and embed principles of inclusion in policies and everyday practice. The document states that doing this involves a continuous process of critically reflective practice with the aim of ensuring that all children and their families feel welcomed, valued and respected. The updated guidelines provide the map to create rich, inclusive environments which will stimulate and nurture Ireland's youngest citizens. The charter and guidelines are also a core element of the Access and Inclusion Model (AIM) for children with disabilities and special educational needs² (DCYA, 2016b).

Initial Teacher Education: Development and InterCultural Education Project (DICE)

The important role of Initial Teacher Education (ITE) at primary level in enabling student teachers to facilitate intercultural education effectively is recognised in the DICE Project. The DICE project promotes the integration of development education and intercultural education in ITE. It aims to build the knowledge and understanding of student teachers so they will be equipped with the pedagogic skills and values to teach effectively in these areas. It was initiated in 2003, supported by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade through Irish Aid and is implemented by Dublin City University Institute of Education; Marino Institute of Education; Mary Immaculate College; and Maynooth University.

- Beginning on page 30 of the audit, there is an overview of how *Aistear*, the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework highlights opportunities for the integration of aspects of Traveller culture and history across the four themes.
- Beginning on page 46 of the audit, there is an overview of how the Primary Curriculum (1999) and The Primary Language Curriculum / Curaclam Teanga Bunscoile (2019) highlight opportunities for the integration of aspects of Traveller culture and history across various subjects.
- Beginning on page 58 of the audit, there is an overview of how the Framework for Junior Cycle (2015) highlights for the exploration of Traveller culture and history across various subjects and other curriculum components.
- Beginning on page 100 of the audit, there is an overview of how senior cycle in post-primary education highlights opportunities for the exploration of Traveller culture and history across various subjects and other curriculum components.



Conclusions and considerations

In July 2018 a Private Members 'Traveller Culture and History in Education Bill 2018' was introduced to the Houses of the Oireachtas. The Bill is under consideration by, and in process in, the Houses of the Oireachtas. The Bill aims 'to provide for the inclusion of Traveller culture and history in the curriculum taught by recognised schools in the State and for that purpose to amend the Education Act 1998.' (Government publications, 2018)

In this broader context, in September 2018, NCCA was requested by the Minister for Education and Skills to undertake an audit of Traveller culture and history in the curriculum.

Both these developments follow the recognition, in March 2017, of the Traveller community as a distinct ethnic group in Ireland and it is the only group with this recognition domestically. In what ways can that recognition be made tangible and meaningful? The National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy (2017) sets out a number of targets related to the educational attainment of Traveller children, students and adults. The realisation of these targets, as listed earlier, would go far to improve overall educational outcomes for members of the Traveller community. At a more specific level, it is widely acknowledged that there is limited understanding among the general population, including among teachers / early childhood practitioners, about Traveller culture and history. As a result, for some students from the Traveller community, the dissonance between the social, linguistic and cultural environments of the home and school can become a source of disaffection and disengagement. A complex additional issue is the unconscious or conscious bias which impacts on children's understanding of Travellers, either through their home, school or community environment. So, focusing on ways in which Traveller culture and history can have greater presence and become more visible in the curriculum is another way of contributing towards meaningful respect, recognition, broad integration, relationship-building, and

promoting inclusion. A celebration of Traveller culture and history in the curriculum would support its presence and visibility in schools / early childhood settings while challenging bias and stereotypes.

The purpose of this curriculum audit is to identify current opportunities across the early childhood, primary and post-primary curricula for children and young people to encounter and learn about aspects of Traveller culture and history. In addition, the audit aims to identify future possibilities in this regard as curricula are reviewed and developed on a broader scale and in a wider context. It is important to note that this curriculum audit is a snapshot at a particular point in time of the opportunities for building on existing curriculum practice and potential future opportunities in this regard.

Curriculum frameworks and developments

As outlined in sections 4 – 7 on pages 30 - 130, the audit has highlighted the many current opportunities to embed Traveller culture and history across the curriculum at early childhood, primary and post-primary levels. However, to exploit future opportunities, the following considerations will need to be taken into account as the NCCA reviews and develops curriculum frameworks and specifications in the coming years:

Respect for the learners' cultural identity, language and values

To contribute to addressing any issues of bias, prejudice, stigmatisation and discrimination experienced by members of the Traveller community the curriculum must be grounded in principles of intercultural education that encourage social acceptance, promote equity, inclusion, fairness and respect for and celebration of cultural identity, language and values.



Early childhood education

At early childhood level a nationally coordinated implementation plan for *Aistear* would be an ideal vehicle for supporting the development of a foundation for Traveller culture and history through the Framework. Since 2016, every child is entitled to two years of pre-school education building on the one, funded year that was made available from 2010 through the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme. While the development of the National *Síolta Aistear* Initiative to support implementation is welcome, more is needed. Settings receiving government funding through the ECCE scheme are required to adhere to the principles underpinning both *Aistear* and *Síolta*, the *National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education* and DES inspections focus on aspects of both frameworks. However, greater investigation is needed to see what experiences Traveller children are having in early childhood settings. Figures for how many Traveller children accessed the two preschool years in 2017-2018 and what percentage of Traveller children did not take up a place they were entitled to would be useful too. Anecdotally, it seems that many Traveller children are not taking up places they are entitled to. But review and further research is needed into how Traveller children's sense of identity and belonging is supported in early years settings and how inclusive settings really are.

Primary education

At primary level the NCCA is tasked with redeveloping the primary curriculum at a time when modern Irish society comprises more diverse cultural, ethnic, religious and linguistic groups than at any other time in history. This is reflected in the primary school population to a far greater extent than when the current Primary School Curriculum (1999) was devised. The introduction of *Aistear* (2009) and the Framework for Junior Cycle (2015) give rise to a need for greater curriculum alignment and continuity across all phases of education. These changes collectively present an opportunity to develop a vision for a primary curriculum which

will provide high-quality experiences and outcomes for all children's learning, development and wellbeing. To support this process, the NCCA is working closely with schools and settings, accessing curriculum research and holding curriculum seminars to support dialogue around curriculum change. The findings from this curriculum audit will also inform this curriculum development process. More specifically, in late 2019, public consultation will commence on a draft framework for a redeveloped primary curriculum. This will give an opportunity to evaluate whether a proposed future primary curriculum provides an improved vehicle for Traveller education more generally but Traveller culture and history in the curriculum in particular.

Junior cycle education

At junior cycle level the recent implementation of the *Framework for Junior Cycle 2015* has facilitated the integration of aspects of Traveller culture and history across many subject specifications and short courses and potential exists for further progress in this regard. In particular, some key developments at junior cycle have facilitated this integration and should be noted as aspects of the curriculum developments at junior cycle also extend into senior cycle:

- moving from a prescribed syllabus to outcomes-based specifications of learning. Learning outcomes provide schools and teachers with greater clarity and more flexibility in terms of how knowledge, skills and competences are imparted to children and young people
- the inclusion of key skills. Key skills are the main driver for pedagogy that is collaborative and engaging and they serve to create opportunities for teachers to employ active methodologies which respond to students' needs and abilities



- more diverse approaches to assessment, which facilitate young people to demonstrate their learning in different formats and provide a more rounded description of a student's educational achievement
- flexibility to design school programmes that include a mixture of subjects and short courses and have the achievements in both recognised. Short courses can be developed by teachers, other agencies or groups to suit the specific needs and interests of their student cohort in junior cycle. Short courses may be aligned either with the indicators for Level 3 on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) or with those for Level 2
- more detailed approaches to reporting student achievement, which gives a more rounded and comprehensive profile of a student's achievement across different measures and standards
- the integration of wellbeing. Wellbeing is included as a theme in early childhood but is more broadly defined and integrated at junior cycle level where it exists as a principle, can be linked to several statements of learning and key skills, and is closely linked to the curriculum areas of Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE), Physical Education (PE) and Civic, Social and Political Education (CSPE).

Senior cycle education

At senior cycle level, as outlined in section 7, the review of senior cycle offers an opportunity to generate a shared vision for senior cycle and a strong base from which to shape a curriculum that genuinely meets the needs of all learners for years to come. Research, learnings and developments from early childhood, primary, and particularly junior cycle will inform this review. Emerging findings from senior cycle students, teachers, parents, the public and other stakeholders, and research from other jurisdictions will contribute significantly to this review.

The findings from this curriculum audit will further inform curriculum developments in this stage of education through the review of senior cycle. Specifically, later in 2019, NCCA will publish a report for public consultation outlining ways in which, and phases through which, the senior cycle should be developed for the future. Again, this will provide an opportunity an opportunity to evaluate whether what is being proposed at senior cycle provides a good fit with what is needed for Traveller education more generally but Traveller culture and history in the curriculum in particular.

Across different levels of education, early childhood, primary and post-primary, ensuring alignment between what is said in broader curriculum framework documents and what is presented in particular subject or curriculum area specifications is essential. Currently, this is particularly relevant in the context of planned developments at primary and senior cycle levels.



Curriculum themes, areas and subjects across all levels

As outlined in sections 4 – 7 of the audit, when developing curriculum specifications for curriculum areas and subjects, the following approaches by the NCCA would contribute to facilitate a situation where all children and students, and specifically those from the Traveller community, would encounter content directly related to themselves, to their experience and their own culture and identity:

- in developing the brief for new subject specifications/areas of learning / themes, ensure that reference is made to the inclusion as appropriate of aspects of Traveller culture and history and/or other minority cultures
- in developing specifications, articulate rich learning outcomes that balance knowledge, skills, dispositions and values leading to different approaches to assessment that align with the learner's needs, capacity and experience
- the development of curriculum specifications with learning outcomes which support teaching, learning and assessment about personal, local and cultural issues (e.g. as in Junior Cycle Music, History, Geography, Visual Art; Senior Cycle Politics and Society, Home Economics: Social and Scientific)
- the development of curriculum specifications which *facilitate* learning, teaching and assessment about personal, local and cultural issues (e.g. the new Primary Language Curriculum / Curaclam Teanga Bunscoile, Junior Cycle Business Studies). This creates a situation where students have multiple opportunities to encounter aspects of their own or another's history and culture across different subject areas
- the inclusion of different approaches to assessment, for example, the Classroom-Based Assessments (CBAs) at Junior Cycle level. CBAs allow students to identify an area of interest to them and to have the skills they demonstrate assessed. CBAs mean that teachers can support those students who have an interest in appropriate content, research and actions related to Traveller history and culture. This approach to assessment, where flexibility is provided to students to study in more detail topics that are personally selected will also be considered at other levels of education
- carry out a cyclical review of curriculum specifications, especially when a new specification has gone through an initial cycle of implementation or when a subject / curriculum area specification has been in the system over a long period of time to ensure that the knowledge, skills and competences developed in that subject / curriculum area remain relevant and meaningful
- provide content related to Traveller culture and history or other cultures in assessment support materials, for example, in sample questions or in the online annotated examples of student work for relevant specifications
- implement more targeted approaches to involving Traveller voices and stakeholders in reviews and consultations.



Policy and practice

More generally, as outlined in section 3 of the audit, much has been done to develop strategies and school guidelines to support Traveller children and students' achievement in education. However, the implementation of these strategies and guidelines has been challenging and expected improvements in the educational attainment of Traveller children and students has not been fully realised in all cases. A significant challenge in preparing the audit was the identification of schools / early childhood settings within the education system that currently provide learning and teaching opportunities to develop children's and students' knowledge and understanding of Traveller culture and history in the wider context of intercultural education. While the relevant education policy documents were readily identified and audited, the instances of developed approaches and practices in schools and early childhood settings proved difficult to source. This dichotomy is similarly identified in the Travelling with Austerity Report (2013) which includes a pen portrait by Thomas McCann, member of the Traveller Community. McCann refers to his disappointment with policies and structures unrealised and how the gap between policy and practice and its realisation can prove very difficult to bridge. With this salutary message in mind, to implement the strategies and guidelines and take full advantage of the opportunities set out in this audit, in the process contributing to improving educational outcomes for Traveller children and students, the following points related to connecting policy and practice should be considered:

Teacher/Early Childhood Practitioner professional development

Provision of Early Childhood Education and Care/Initial Teacher Education (ITE) / and Continuing Professional Development (CPD) opportunities play a valuable role. Early childhood practitioners and teachers need opportunities to improve their knowledge and understanding of Traveller culture and history; to develop pedagogical approaches to intercultural education in the classroom; and, more generally, develop a disposition towards intercultural learning. CPD provision would benefit from the inclusion of opportunities for teachers / early childhood practitioners to consider and reflect on their own personal and professional attitudes, values and beliefs about Traveller culture and history within the wider context of intercultural education. CPD related to changes in curriculum needs to reflect Traveller culture and history with opportunities for an emphasis on hearing directly from under-represented voices in society. Currently voices from minority groups are often absent as part of CPD opportunities on cultural diversity in education. Provision of ITE/ECCE and CPD could be planned in the context of an Intercultural Framework which articulates and supports the big ideas for developing learners' awareness of culture, pluralism in society, specific cultures and histories, and how to address prejudice.

A range of relevant bodies will need to be involved in this context, including the Teaching Council, support services such as the Professional Development Support Team (PDST), Better Start, City and County Child Care Committees and Junior Cycle for Teachers (JCT), and teacher/practitioner professional networks, for example, the various post-primary subject associations. Some of these bodies are already involved in professional support related to intercultural education and Traveller education.



Supports for school/early childhood setting leaders

The leaders of schools and educational settings are an important target group too. Provision of professional development courses and/or supports and resources for school/setting leaders to implement a whole-school / setting approach to intercultural education generally and specifically to support the integration of Traveller children and students is essential. An awareness of the importance of the school/setting's ethos and culture, hidden curriculum and policies, the way in which it provides for and organises the formal curriculum and extracurricular activities is critical to the aim of supporting Traveller children and students. The audit has identified many current opportunities within areas of learning and subjects to address aspects of Traveller history and culture. However, within schools/settings it requires a coordinated approach to teaching and learning for the inherent potential in these opportunities to be fully realised. Leadership is key in this context.

Inspectorate

The Inspectorate can also play an important role in advancing and advocating for a whole-school or whole-setting approach to intercultural education generally through the processes of School Self Evaluation (SSE), the Whole School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning (WSE MLL), subject inspections and Early childhood setting inspections. The outcomes of inspection processes and evaluations could provide a very important source of data through which to further review Traveller education along with knowledge and understanding Traveller culture and history in the curriculum.

Education agencies

A range of other education agencies can also advance the profile of Traveller culture and history and aspects of intercultural education in their work. For example, the State Examinations Commission (SEC) can ensure that the diversity in Irish society is well reflected in the assessment items, materials and examples it uses. It can integrate aspects of Traveller culture and history or other minority cultures into assessment items and materials where appropriate.

Support services such as the Professional Development Support Service (PDST), Better Start, Childcare Committees, JCT and professional bodies such as the Teaching Council can actively promote the principles of intercultural education and, where feasible, the integration of aspects of Traveller culture and history through teacher/practitioner professional development programmes and initiatives.



Education resources to support teaching and learning about Traveller history and culture

There are many resources and sources of knowledge and information related to intercultural education and Traveller culture and history already available or in existence. What schools and other settings often find useful is for an audit of available resources to take place and for a one-stop-shop or portal to be developed where teachers / early childhood practitioners know they're likely to find accessible and curated material that they can use in their educational setting. The undertaking of an audit and/or the establishment of a portal is one of the next steps that could be taken in the context of promoting Traveller culture and history in the curriculum. This might also assist in identifying where new support material and resources may need to be developed, a task in which the Traveller community will need to be directly involved.

Examples of current good practice from schools, education settings and other educational institutions are an essential source of ideas and support material. These can demonstrate in real terms what effective learning and teaching about Traveller culture and history can look like and how it can be managed in real settings and real time. This can validate and make visible the meaningful presence of aspects of Traveller culture and history in the formal and informal curriculum. The audit reported on here took place over a short time period with very limited time to explore current practice in schools and other settings. An important next step would be to investigate practice in schools and other educational settings much more extensively and gather a range of examples of good practice so that they can be made available through the kind of portal mentioned earlier.



Next steps

The audit will be published online and disseminated to all interested parties towards the end of 2019. Then in response to the preceding section of the audit, the following areas of enquiry provide potential routes for the Council going forward. The suggestions are interconnected, complementary of each other and provide a cohesive approach to further advancing the teaching and learning of aspects of Traveller culture and history in the wider context of intercultural and inclusive education goals.

Identifying existing initiatives and supports

Across the three education sectors (early childhood, primary and post-primary), there are national and local voluntary initiatives positively impacting on and supporting minority ethnic groups including the Traveller community to access and engage with education. This extends to educational institutions who are conducting anthropological research and documentation of Traveller culture and history and the Traveller community itself where there is an oral repository of information. By linking in with organisations and individuals involved in delivering these projects and research, the NCCA will firstly identify the various supports and initiatives and then explore how they can be further enhanced, supported and possibly replicated. One example is the Yellow Flag Programme that aims to support schools to become more inclusive of all cultures and ethnicities, celebrate diversity and challenge racism and discrimination. It would be beneficial if the Yellow Flag Programme was extended to include Early Childhood Settings.

Identifying existing resources and materials

The NCCA can identify suitable resources and materials which enable intercultural education and understanding to permeate across the curriculum in settings and schools. This search will also encompass suitable and age-appropriate materials to support learning about Traveller history and culture. When identified the resources can be made available as a suite to a wider audience of teachers, early childhood practitioners, parents and school leaders. This gathering of existing materials will assist in identifying the kinds of new support material and resources that need developing.

Working directly with early childhood settings and schools

Beginning in 2020, the NCCA intends to work with a number of early childhood settings and schools which cater for children and students from diverse linguistic, cultural and ethnic backgrounds. This will provide opportunities to identify good practice underpinned by principles of inclusion, the Intercultural Education Guidelines (NCCA), and learning about traveller history and culture. The settings and schools will be invited to share their stories of integrating a diverse cohort of learners from different ethnic groups including those from the Traveller community. The key themes which emerge through this engagement will provide a greater understanding of the enhanced learning experiences, opportunities and outcomes of all learners in these settings / schools.

A central component of this work will be planned opportunities to listen to and hear directly from children and students about their experiences of learning about their own culture and history as well as those of others. This will include an exploration of both the positive and negative impact of role models and stereotypes on children's and students' learning and development and how appropriate action can promote a conceptualisation of positive role models. Children and students will be invited to share their thoughts and ideas in an age appropriate way. In this way, we can learn about their challenges and opportunities experienced through the



education system and better understand the gap between policy and practice. This will also involve engaging with parents to hear about the processes of involvement in their children's learning. It will be an opportunity to explore how parents view and understand their involvement and the links that exist between the setting / school and home environment.

This school / setting-based work could lead to NCCA working with the settings / schools to develop a small number of additional support materials that illustrate practical ways to develop and enhance children's sense of identity and belonging while promoting inclusion and understanding of different cultures and ethnic backgrounds. In addition to this and more generally, this targeted approach with settings and schools will directly inform and support the NCCA's check-in with *Aistear*, the review of the primary curriculum and the review of senior cycle.



References

All Ireland Traveller Health Study Team (2010). *All Ireland Traveller Health Study. Our Geels. Summary of Findings*, Dublin: UCD School of Public Health and Population Science, available at https://www.ucd.ie/t4cms/AITHS_SUMMARY.pdf

Brian Harvey Social Research (2013). *Travelling with Austerity: Impacts of Cuts on Travellers, Traveller Projects and Services*. Dublin: Pavee Point Publications.

Department of Children and Youth Affairs (2016). *Diversity, Equality and Inclusion Charter and Guidelines for Early Childhood Care and Education*. Dublin: Government Publications. Available from: <https://aim.gov.ie/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Diversity-Equality-and-Inclusion-Charter-and-Guidelines-for-Early-Childhood-Care-Education.pdf>

Department of Education and Science (DES) (2002a). *Guidelines on Traveller Education in Primary Schools*. Dublin: Government of Ireland. Retrieved from www.educatetogether.ie/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2010/02/traveller_education_-_guidelines.pdf

Department of Education and Science (DES) (2002b). *Guidelines on Traveller Education in Second Level Schools*. Dublin: Government of Ireland. Available at: <https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Education-Reports/Guidelines-on-Traveller-Education-in-Second-Level-Schools.pdf>

Department of Education and Skills and the Office of the Minister for Integration (2010). *Intercultural Education Strategy, 2010 - 2015*. Dublin: Government Publications. Available at: https://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Information/Intercultural-Education-Strategy/mig_intercultural_education_strategy.pdf

Department of Justice and Equality (2017). *National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy 2017 - 2021*. Available at: www.justice.ie/en/JELR/National%20Traveller%20and%20Roma%20Inclusion%20Strategy,%202017-2021.pdf/Files/National%20Traveller%20and%20Roma%20Inclusion%20Strategy,%202017-2021.pdf

DICE Project at www.dice.ie

Government Publications (2018). *TRAVELLER CULTURE AND HISTORY IN EDUCATION BILL 2018*. Traveller Culture and History in Education Bill 2018 (Bill 71 of 2018). Available at: <https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/bills/bill/2018/71/>

Government Publications (2000). *EQUAL STATUS ACT*. Available at: www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2000/act/8/enacted/en/print

National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) (2005). *Guidelines on Intercultural Education in the Primary School*. Dublin: NCCA. Available at: <https://www.into.ie/ROI/InfoforTeachers/SocialInclusion/InterculturalEducation/NCCAInterculturalGuidelines.pdf>

National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) (2006). *Intercultural Education in the Post Primary School*. Dublin: NCCA. Available at: https://www.ncca.ie/en/resources/interc_guide_pp_eng

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (2006) *UNESCO Guidelines on Intercultural Education*. UNESCO: Paris Available at: www.ugr.es/~javera/pdf/DB2.pdf

United Nations General Assembly (1989). *Convention on the rights of the child*. United Nations, Treaty Series, Vol. 1577. Available at: <https://assets.gov.ie/23814/5339ee8c9c564b37969703db9781bc0d.pdf>



Watson, D., Kenny, O. and McGinnity, F. (2017). *A Social Portrait of Travellers in Ireland*. Research Series Number 56. Dublin: The Economic and Social Research Institute. Available at: <https://www.esri.ie/system/files?file=media/file-uploads/2017-01/RS56.pdf>