



ETHNIC DIFFERENCES IN EDUCATION AND DIVERGING  
PROSPECTS FOR URBAN YOUTH IN AN ENLARGED EUROPE

background papers

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# Country Report on Education: United Kingdom



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#### ABOUT EDUMIGROM

*Ethnic Differences in Education and Diverging Prospects for Urban Youth in an Enlarged Europe* is a collaborative research project that aims to study how ethnic differences in education contribute to the diverging prospects of minority ethnic youth and their peers in urban settings. Through applying a cross-national comparative perspective, the project explores the overt and covert mechanisms in socio-economic, political, cultural, and gender relations that make ethnicity a substantive component of inequalities in social status and power. The project involves nine countries from old and new member states of the European Union: the Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Germany, Hungary, Romania, Slovakia, Sweden, and the United Kingdom. EDUMIGROM began in March 2008 and will run through February 2011. The project is coordinated by the Center for Policy Studies at Central European University in Budapest, Hungary.

#### ABOUT THE PAPER

The first research phase of EDUMIGROM focused on background studies on education and ethnic relations in the domestic contexts of the project's target countries. During this phase, research teams gathered and processed macro-level data and information with three adjacent goals in mind: to supply the comprehensive country studies on education and ethnic relations; to inform cross-country comparisons on minority ethnic youth in education; to provide ample information for the multi-level selection of samples for surveys, community and school case studies. A total of 16 studies were prepared, and their publication is intended to share valuable knowledge and stimulate discussion on issues related to the education and integration of minority ethnic youth in Europe. These reports made available to the wider public may no longer contain specific information on the sites and schools selected for the EDUMIGROM field research. The relevant chapters have either been excluded or anonymised in order to protect the identity of the researched schools, communities and individuals.

This Paper was prepared by the research team from the University of Leeds, United Kingdom.

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# 1. Overview of the educational system

This chapter presents an overview of the educational system in England. It discusses key issues grouped in four broad categories: the various types of school and their structural organisation; the range of different pathways for children through the educational system; issues relating to teaching and pupil admissions; and finally, some basic statistical data on schools, such as numbers of pupils in attendance at different institutions and how many remain in education after the compulsory schooling period ends.

## 1.1 Types of school and their structural organisation

At a national level, the education system in England is governed by the Department for Children, Schools and Families, which is responsible for policy on education, children and youth issues up to the age of 19 in England. There are two types of schools in England: publicly-funded schools known as maintained schools; and public schools, which are non-grant-aided and are often known as independent schools.

At a local level, the responsibility for organising publicly-funded schools lies with local authorities (LAs), which have an obligation to provide quality assurance and to promote high standards of education. All LAs should have developed an Education Development Plan to provide information and guidance on key goals. Education Development Plans are produced in accordance with guidance from the Secretary of State for Education and Skills, and submitted to the Secretary of State for approval. In terms of the schools they govern, LAs vary in size, ranging from approximately 50 to 500 schools. LAs provide funding for schools according to numbers of student and staff. Schools in danger of falling below the target floor levels for academic achievement are offered Targeted Improvement Grants, and schools in areas of high deprivation are provided with extra funding. This funding does not take into account differences in the financial circumstances of LAs.

Local authorities allow schools to take responsibility for their own management. Nevertheless, LAs retain a number of core functions that cannot be delivered by schools: support for special educational needs, school transport, school improvement and tackling failure, educating excluded pupils, pupil welfare and strategic management. Strategic management refers to the capacity to develop policy, allocate resources and draw up plans for delivery of education.

At an institutional level, all schools have a governing body, which includes representatives from a range of stakeholders – such as lobby/interest groups, public and voluntary sectors bodies, and commercial suppliers – and which is responsible for decision-making related to each institution. Within the context of LAs and their remits, all schools maintain a high level of autonomy.

The legal framework for primary and secondary schools divides them into community, voluntary and foundation schools. The great majority of schools are community schools, established and funded by LAs. Foundation schools are owned by school governing bodies or charitable foundations, though are also funded by LAs. Voluntary schools were originally funded by voluntary bodies (e.g. churches), which retain some control over their management; however, voluntary schools are now generally funded by LAs.

Independent schools are secondary schools that are funded by private sources, predominantly fees generally paid by the parents of their pupils. Some independent schools, particularly the more traditional institutions, also have charitable status. The Independent Schools Council (ISC) represents 1,289 schools that collectively educate over 80 percent of the pupils in the UK independent sector. Schools in England that are members of the ISC are inspected by the Independent Schools Inspectorate under a framework agreed between ISC, the DCSF and Ofsted. Independent schools are free to select their pupils, and the few parents who cannot afford the annual fees are offered means-tested bursaries. Independent schools have a better teacher-to-pupil ratio than mainstream schools (1 to 9 on average) and academic achievement is significantly higher. Quite a number of independent schools have boarding arrangements. Pupils can move between independent and mainstream schools, or indeed between any type of school, but entry would be dependent on normal practice in the relevant school's admissions policy. In general, the level of appeals and disputes over school admissions has been increasing, with

some highly controversial evidence of mainstream and faith schools charging parents for admissions, and of city academies using elitist selection methods. This has led to the Department for Children, School and Families (DCSF) issuing new government codes of practice and procedures for appeals in 2007/08, with additional regulations being introduced for both faith schools and academies. Parental/school conflict and political controversy over school admissions have been increasing and are likely to continue to increase with rising pressure from parents for the school of their choice.

Faith schools are schools that are partly funded by the state and draw the remainder of their finances either from religious organisations or from fees paid by parents of pupils, though some faith schools are now wholly maintained by the state (see Chapter 2 for a more detailed discussion of faith schools). Additionally, there exist a number of city academies which are all-ability, state-funded independent schools established and managed by sponsors from a wide range of backgrounds, including high performing schools and colleges, universities, individual philanthropists, businesses, the voluntary sector, and the faith communities. City academies cater for all age groups; they follow the National Curriculum programmes of study in the core subjects of English, maths, science and ICT, and carry out Key Stage assessments and offer qualifications within the national framework. Academies are backed by LAs and are assessed by Ofsted. Academies were developed to tackle inner-city poverty, and retain a degree of flexibility to modify their curriculum to meet the needs of underperforming pupils as well as other pupils with specific needs. Academies are located in areas of social disadvantage and admit higher numbers of pupils with special educational needs and those eligible for free school meals than mainstream schools. However, since places in academies are oversubscribed, some sponsors have targeted the best pupils in their regions.

There are also special needs schools which cater for pupils with a variety of difficulties that may impact upon their educational performance in mainstream schools. These schools have staff trained to deal with the needs of such pupils and can provide education up to the age of 19 years old. Ratios of pupils in relation to staff at special schools tend to be kept as low 6 to 1. These schools also have specialised equipment suited to the needs of their pupils.

Quality control in schools is the responsibility of a separate, non-ministerial government department called the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted). Following the Education and Inspections Act 2006, and since 2007, Ofsted's remit has included all state-funded learning outside of higher education, as well as independent schools. Ofsted assigns a category to a school after inspection: poorly performing schools are described as 'special measures' or 'notice to improve'; these categories contribute to the schools reputation (Leech and Campos, 2003). Schools labeled 'special measures' receive support from LAs, additional funding and reappraisal from Ofsted until the school is no longer deemed to be failing. Additionally, senior managers and teaching staff can be dismissed and the school governors may be replaced by an executive committee. Schools that are failing but where inspectors consider there is capacity to improve are given a Notice to Improve. All schools are inspected every three years.

There are approximately 24,000 schools in the UK, with just under 10 percent being independent schools. Of the 21,000 state schools, about one-third are faith schools. Of these, the majority are Christian. About 50 are non-Christian: mainly Jewish schools with some Muslim, Sikh and (most recently) Hindu schools.

## **1.2 Pathways through the education system**

There are several different pathways through the education system for children, depending upon the way their LA functions. The ages of transition between schools differ according to the local system. After the nursery level, some children attend an infant school, a junior school and then a secondary school, while others attend a first school, then a middle school and finally an upper school. However, the most common pathway after nursery is to attend a primary school and then a secondary school. (Some schools have developed mechanisms for assisting transitions between schools, such as Buddy Clubs, which allow 'at risk' pupils to meet other pupils from the schools during the summer period before new term.)

By law, all children of compulsory school age (5- to 16-years-old) receive a full-time education suited to their age and ability. As a result of the Education Reform Act 1988, the National Curriculum was developed and fully introduced in 1992 with the purpose to ensure that all pupils received a balanced education. The National Curriculum identified the topics that should be taught and the standards expected to be achieved by pupils at four Key Stages:

- Key Stage 1: Years 1 and 2 (up to age 7)
- Key Stage 2: Years 3, 4, 5 and 6 (age 7 to 11)
- Key Stage 3: Years 7, 8 and 9 (age 11 to 14)
- Key Stage 4: Years 10 and 11 (age 14 to 16)

The core subjects are English, Mathematics, and Science, and its foundation subjects are design and technology, information and communication technology, history, geography, modern foreign languages, music, and art and design. The exams in Key Stage 1 are tests of reading, writing, speaking/listening, maths and science, which are assessed by teachers. At Key Stage 2, national tests are given on English, maths and science, and these are marked by an external marker; teachers are also required to provide an assessment based on these subjects. At Key Stage 3, there are national tests based on English, maths and science, including separate levels for reading and writing; these are marked by an external marker. At Key Stage 4, there are national examinations based on the core subjects and a number of subjects selected by the candidate; these are also marked by an external marker. All marking is coordinated by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority.

Children enter primary school education (or similar – see above) at age five. At this level, all subjects in the National Curriculum are taught, along with other subjects (Religious Education, Physical Education, and Citizenship). Primary school education is divided into Infant (ages 4–7) and Junior (ages 7–11) stages. At the end of the Infant School, pupils sit Key Stage 1 Standard Assessment Tests (SATs). These tests are used primarily as a way of assessing the quality of teaching at a school rather than pupils' ability. Key Stage 2 SATs are taken at the end of Year 6, when pupils are age 11.

Children move to secondary school education at age 11, but their results do not impact which schools they can choose to attend (in the case of systems that involve moving from middle- to upper schools, this transition is generally at age 13). In addition to National Curriculum subjects (see above), secondary school children may choose to take vocational subjects, such as hairdressing and beauty, construction, woodwork, travel and tourism, business studies and others. Most children between the ages of 14 and 16 take General Certificate of Secondary Education examinations (GCSEs) in at least five subjects (English, Mathematics, Science, Physical Education, Religious Education are compulsory), as well as a number of others they have chosen from an optional pool (it is most common for children to take around 10 GCSEs in total, generally choosing those subjects which will provide a foundation for future academic courses or a career they wish to pursue. Persistent underachievement at this level has been tackled by vocational alternatives to academic subjects; these subjects allow pupils to study towards formal qualifications that are recognised in the workplace as applied credits.

After GCSEs, typically between the ages of 16 and 18, pupils can opt to take Advanced Level (A-Level) examinations either by continuing to study at secondary/upper schools or attending a separate sixth form college (an institution, where pupils age 16 to 19 typically study for advanced school-level qualifications) or a college of further education. Pupils generally choose three or four subjects to study for A-Levels, and usually select subjects they wish to go on and study in higher education provided by universities. Alternatively, pupils at this age can choose to study for National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ) to provide suitable skills for ensuing employment. In most subjects, students are entered into one of two tiers: a lower tier for those expected to achieve grades C to G; and a higher tier for those expected to achieve grades A\* to D. Teachers decide which tier pupils are to be assigned to on the basis of mock exams results and independent assessment. Some subjects, such as Art and Design, History, Music, Physical Education (PE), and Religious Education, are not tiered.

### **1.3 Teaching and pupil admissions**

Classes for five- to seven-year-olds are limited to 30 pupils taught by one teacher, with an average at Key Stage 1 of 25.6, and of 27.2 at Key Stage 2. In secondary schools, the average class size taught by one teacher is approximately 21.5 pupils (based on data for 2006/7 from the Department of Children, Schools and Families). The organisation of teaching groups is a matter for the school to decide. Pupils in primary schools are most commonly taught in mixed-ability classes, though many teachers use some form of grouping according to ability. Pupils in secondary schools are generally grouped according to ability in some subjects, while mixed-ability grouping is common in other subjects. Teachers are expected to ensure that there are sufficient opportunities for pupils of all abilities. All teachers in the state sector have to be registered with the General Teaching Council, and this organisation regulates the teaching profession to ensure that teachers are professionally competent and accountable for their conduct. In primary school education, pupils are generally taught by generalist teachers, while in secondary school education, specialist teachers usually teach pupils according to the subjects in which they are qualified.

Admissions to publicly-funded primary and secondary schools do not incur any charges. Parents may apply to any school for a place for their child. Local authorities are required to operate mandatory admissions schemes to simplify the process, with the aim that each child will receive an offer of a place at one school on the same day as all other children. From September 2008 onwards, admissions procedures must comply with the newly revised Schools Admissions Code, which includes the following content. All publicly-funded schools with enough places must unconditionally offer every child who has applied a place. The LA or school governing body (depending on the legal category of the school – see above) must develop an admissions policy to explain how places will be allocated if there are more applications than places at the school. In the event of oversubscription, priority must be given to children in public care, to children whose siblings are already at the school, and to those children in need of social or medical care. Additionally, distance between the child's home and the school must be factored into place allocation. Faith schools are permitted to give priority to those children who practice the same faith. Schools providing special needs education must give priority to those children with relevant needs. It is not permitted for school representatives to interview children and their families, and children must be selected without consideration of academic ability. In the event of any dispute over selection, parents can apply to an appeals panel monitored by the School Admission Appeals Code of Practice.

Individual schools and their governing bodies are responsible for recruiting and retaining their staff, and hold most of the budgets to enable this. However, LAs provide support with any staffing difficulties – e.g. staff shortage – in the form of advice given by Recruitment Strategy Managers who work with the government body Training and Development Agency for Schools. Teachers generally train by taking a three- or four-year Bachelor of Education degree course, or a Bachelor's degree followed by a one-year Postgraduate Certificate in Education. Both routes are common for primary level teachers, while the latter is more common for secondary level teachers. Additionally, all teaching staff in maintained and non-maintained schools should have achieved Quality Training Status (through successful completion of literacy, numeracy and ICT skill tests) and be registered with the General Teaching Council for England. A Quality Mark has been recently introduced to ensure that agencies recruit supply teachers who meet a minimum standard of ability.

### **1.4 Basic statistics on schools**

Official statistics from the Department of Children, Families and Schools indicate that in 2007, there were 8.1 million children in 25,000 maintained and independent schools in England. The vast majority of children – 91 percent – were taught in maintained primary and secondary schools. Most of the remaining 9 percent were taught in independent schools.

Data indicates that in the year 2005/6, there were 4,043,000 children in maintained nursery and primary schools; this figure was expected to remain stable in 2007/8. In secondary schools (excluding



sixth form colleges), there were 3,309,000 children in education in 2005/6; this figure was expected to remain stable in 2007/8. The ratio of male-to-female children in maintained schools, both primary and secondary, is approximately 50/50.

In independent schools, there were 630,270 pupils in education in 2007, with slightly more male children than female children (approximately 320,000 compared with 310,000). Additionally in 2007, there were 89,410 children in special needs schools; the great majority of these pupils (63,000) were male. (Numbers of pupils attending Faith Schools is presented in Chapter 2.)

In 2006, 89.7 percent of 16-year-old pupils were participating in education or training; among 17-year-olds, this figure was 81.5 percent, and for 18-year-olds, it was 61.1 percent. Just over 30 percent of 16- to 18-year-old pupils remained in maintained schools, while 40.7 percent attended colleges of further education. Additionally, 45.8 percent chose to study for A-Levels; 4.6 percent were taking GCSEs; 26.3 percent were taking NVQ certificates or equivalent, and 1.2 percent were on other courses.

While existing data collection strategies enable the DCSF to monitor the impact of specific schemes to improve pre-16 non-attendance, the lack of nationally available pupil-level attendance data has hampered any detailed understanding of the relative impact of such schemes on groups of pupils, or, indeed, of any comprehensive awareness of the relationship between attendance levels and pupil attainment. Data on 343 Excellence in Cities schools did show lower than average levels of authorised and unauthorised absence for Black, Chinese and South Asian pupils (Morris and Rutt 2004), whereas the opposite appears to be the case for GRT pupils, although data here is very limited. Most recent data shows that across maintained secondary schools, city technology colleges and academies absence rates (authorised, unauthorised and overall) were highest for the Traveller of Irish Heritage (26 percent overall absence); Gypsy/Roma (23 percent overall absence); Mixed (White and Black Caribbean) (almost 10 percent overall absence) and Irish (just over nine percent overall absence). The rate of overall absence for pupils of White and Mixed ethnic origin was above the national average; for pupils of Asian, Black and Chinese ethnic origin it was below the national average. The rate of overall absence for minority ethnic pupils was significantly below the rate for White British pupils. The overall absence rate for all pupils was around 8 per cent. Caution was recommended in interpreting the data used here for Traveller of Irish Heritage children and Gypsy/Roma children due to the small numbers recorded (DfES 2007). Parents, schools and LAs all have legal responsibilities to ensure children attend school. Policy and practice does vary across each LA area. In the city of Leeds, for one, an Attendance Strategy Team (AST) provides support to schools to manage and improve individual pupil and whole school attendance by working in partnership with parents/carers, pupils, schools and other agencies, undertakes the statutory reporting to the DCSF around attendance, and instigates legal proceedings against parents/carers for persistent non-attendance when appropriate. It also manages the process for the identification, tracking and re-engaging of Children Missing Education (CME). The Team works to remove barriers to regular attendance by using a wide range of interventions for example undertaking a Common Assessment, visiting the family, signposting to other support services, and liaising with home and school. Where there is a lack of improvement or engagement following the referral, the AST can consider a range of legal procedures against the parents/carers to secure regular attendance including Penalty Notices, Education Supervision Orders, fines, Parenting Orders, Community Rehabilitation Orders or a custodial sentence.

Drop-out rates of post-16 pupils has been notoriously high in the UK. There is a clear disparity between social groups, with pupils from lower socio-economic backgrounds more likely to leave school earlier. Financial measures such as the government's Education Maintenance Allowance allow pupils from low earning families to draw a small income as an incentive to stay on at school; students must apply for this allowance and are eligible if they are studying for specific courses and their parents have a low income. Data from the Department of Children, Families and Schools shows that staying-on rates improved by almost six percent as a consequence of this scheme. Other schemes designed to improve staying-on rates are services that offer advice to pupils (for example, Connexions), learning mentors who address barriers to learning (bullying, truancy, etc), Education Welfare Officers, and teaching assistants who work with individual pupils.



Exclusion rates were down seven percent in 2008 from the previous year, with 8,900 pupils permanently excluded from school. Fixed-rate exclusions, however, went up four percent to 363,000, with the great majority being for five days or more. The most common reason for exclusion was persistent disruptive behaviour, while boys were more likely than girls to be excluded permanently and on a fixed-rate basis (temporary suspensions from school attendance) by four and three times respectively. There are a number of alternative educational routes for permanently excluded pupils; these include reintegration in other schools and Pupil Referral Units which function as schools and are inspected by Ofsted.

## **2. Schooling of minority ethnic youth**

This chapter presents an overview of how ethnicity plays a role in education. It discusses key issues grouped in four broad categories: the numbers of minority ethnic pupils in schools; law and regulations on schooling of minority ethnic youth; inter-ethnic relations in education; and ethnicity in public education.

### **2.1 Attendance of minority ethnic youth in schools**

In maintained primary schools, the number of compulsory-school-age pupils classified as 'minority ethnic origin' increased from 20.6 percent in 2006 to 21.9 percent in 2007 – an increase of over one percentage point. A similar increase was apparent in secondary schools with 16.8 percent of pupils classified by minority ethnic groups in 2006 increasing to 17.7 percent in 2007. These increases are largely born of demographic changes and increasing population sizes of minority ethnic groups in the UK. (For the numbers of pupils in maintained primary, secondary and all special schools according to different ethnic groups in 2007, see Appendix 1. See section 1.4 for a discussion of ethnicity and attendance data.)

Data for numbers of minority ethnic groups in independent schools have never been provided, though analysis of student composition in higher education evidence suggests that Chinese and Indian groups are more likely to attend them (Tomlinson, 2005).

The present study will include school pupils from Gypsy/Roma and Traveller, Black Caribbean, and Bangladeshi minority ethnic groups. As the foregoing table shows, there are over 12,500 Gypsy/Roma and Traveller pupils, over 162,000 Black Caribbean pupils (including White and Black Caribbean pupils), and approximately 82,000 Bangladeshi pupils in mainstream schools. (Throughout this report, we refer to these groups when appropriate. Details of the academic performance of these groups are explored in detail in Chapter 3.) Overall, Caribbean, Pakistani, and Bangladeshi groups have lower average levels of attainment than whites. Indians, African Asians, Chinese and Africans are more likely to have higher qualifications. These trends can be found in both lower and higher education (Modood 2005, Parekh 2000, Gallagher, 2004). Gypsy/Roma and Traveller pupils experience the most severe educational exclusion of any minority ethnic group in the UK with levels of attainment being roughly a quarter of the national average.

### **2.2 Laws and regulations on schooling of minority ethnic youth**

When New Labour came to power in 1997, the party pledged to commit to social justice and education as a means to create a just society. One of the first policies to attempt to pursue this goal was the 2000 Race Relations Amendment Act (RRAA – an extension of the original act implemented in 1976). This act requires LAs to eliminate discrimination and promote equal opportunities, as well as develop race equality policies in a proactive rather than a reactive way, as had previously been the case (Tomlinson, 2005). Schools and teachers have responsibilities as part of the RRAA including having an agreed written statement of policy for promoting race equality and monitoring by reference to ethnic group, the admission and progress of pupils. Data from the annual Level School Census now enable schools and LAs to monitor achievement and to target support where it is most needed. Promoting race equality is

a key part of the policies and practices of all schools and other educational institutions, not only those with black and minority ethnic pupils. Ofsted must ensure that inspection teams look at the progress schools and local education authorities are making in terms of equality issues. The aim is to make such good practices fit effectively into the routine work of the school.

Among the strategies generated as a consequence of the RRAA was a Social Exclusion Unit, created partly to enquire into the high figures for the exclusion of Black pupils. Ofsted was also charged with a new framework for assessment that including issues relating to racial equality. The Excellence in Cities programme (2004) identifies action zones with the intention of combating urban disadvantage in these areas; the programme attempted to bring together local schools, communities and businesses, and offered support to gifted and disruptive children, who were given learning mentors (Tomlinson 2005). Another important intervention has been the Sure Start programme for children under four years of age and their parents in the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods in the UK, many of which are areas with high proportions of minority ethnic groups. Financial support for high quality provision of child care support and significant local control has been very beneficial in some areas, improving collective self-esteem and children's future chances at school. A department called the Ethnic Minority Achievement (EMA) Unit was also set up to provide money for LAs with a significant number of minority ethnic pupils. The government additionally provides an Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant of £155 million annually. The funding and encouragement of separate faith schools is also encouraged. The Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant (EMAG) is allocated on a needs-based formula. The formula is based on the numbers of pupils with a mother tongue other than English and numbers of pupils from nationally underachieving minority ethnic groups. Pupils who are both bilingual and from an underachieving group are only counted once. This number of pupils is then multiplied by the proportion of all pupils receiving free school meals (FSMs) in the authority to calculate what proportion of the national grant an LEA should receive. The EMA Unit provides support to LAs and schools in using funds effectively in this area and monitoring EMAG occurs primarily through financial management. The scheme itself has not caused national controversy unlike school's concerns over coping with increasing numbers of foreign children, particularly from Eastern Europe, a situation described by the National Association of Head Teachers as 'out of control'. The Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant is seen by the government as one useful source of funding to help schools cope with increasing numbers of migrants.

Despite these attempts to tackle problems involved in the education of minority ethnic groups, however, commentators have highlighted a number of difficulties relating to other issues which have impacted upon schooling, especially the marketisation of education. This process entails the shift towards more devolved systems of provision with increased emphasis on parental choice and competition between increasingly diversified types of school sometimes run by a variety of different providers from public, voluntary and private sectors. Here, marketisation means the development of 'quasi-markets'. This involves the separation of purchaser from provider and an element of user choice between providers, and with the government regulating entry by new providers, investment, the quality of service and price (Whitty 2000).

According to Gallagher (2004), educational policies with commitment to social justice were largely driven by economic policies, and since education has become increasingly marketised (that is, the process of school allocation is now competitive, involving schools engaged in marketing strategies to attract pupils), parents are forced to compete with one another for school places, a process which does not ensure integration, justice and equity (Parekh 2000; Tomlinson, 2005). Market policies in education continued to exacerbate the hierarchy of more- and less-desirable schools, with the most desirable the least likely to be attended by minority ethnic groups. League tables have been made available to enable parents to compare the performance levels of different schools. This system where failing schools are placed on special measures has introduced a 'naming and shaming' policy for schools that may often have a large proportion of minority ethnic groups, which leads to further scape-goating and stigmatisation (Parekh 2000). Additionally, the failure to develop a curriculum that would educate people for a multicultural society does not mitigate ignorance and xenophobia (Tomlinson 2005).

Another problem relates to the choice mechanisms that were inaugurated by New Labour and which have been shown to disadvantage minority ethnic groups and to increase segregation (Gallagher 2004). Choice mechanisms involve parents possessing the right to select the school at which they wish their children to study (see Chapter 1). Evidence suggests that school diversity has led to a White 'flight' from schools with large numbers of minority ethnic pupils (Tomlinson 2005). Similarly, attempts to improve standards in school have been at their height during New Labour's term of office, and this involves practices of selection which places minority ethnic students in lower ranking groups (Gillborn 2006). Explicit positive discrimination policies on grounds of ethnicity do not formally operate in UK schools. However, policies aimed at improving ethnic minority inclusion and achievement (as discussed above) operate and constitute positive discrimination in a broad sense.

### **2.3 Inter-ethnic relations in schools**

The Race Relations Act of 1976 made it unlawful to discriminate against someone on racial grounds, and asserted that segregation of a person is to be regarded as treating him or her less favourably. Segregation according to ethnicity in schools is of interest for several reasons. If children's performance at schools depends on peers, then higher levels of segregation will result in greater educational inequality in academic achievement and may even threaten social cohesion. Much research has shown that segregation in schools increased in England between 1994 and 2004 (Allen and Vignoles 2007; Goldstein and Noden 2003). Over the five-year period of 1999 to 2004, there has been rising social segregation between schools in 60 percent of LEAs and falling segregation in 40 percent, school segregation has risen fastest in London. Other research has suggested that apart from in certain parts of Northern England and for certain minority ethnic groups, ethnic segregation is not increasing and has even decreased in some places. Interwoven social and ethnic segregation is evident in LAs that have a large South Asian or Black population such as London (Weekes-Bernard 2007).

More recently, however, some commentators have voiced concern that New Labour's focus on parental choice with regard to their children's place of education has led to social and ethnic segregation. As Tomlinson (2008) suggests, choice policies can result in young people from different ethnic backgrounds being kept apart. Nevertheless, the role of parental choice is not regarded as the only or even a major reason for what segregation does exist, since many parents actually support moves towards more social cohesion (Weekes-Bernard 2007). Jenkins, et al. (2006) drew on data from 2003 and demonstrate that in England, segregation in schools is driven by the uneven spread of children from different social backgrounds. To this can be added the roles of increasing divisions of income and wealth, housing policies, patterns of immigration, levels of poverty and experiences of racism (Weekes-Bernard 2007). Collectively this presents a major problem in terms of education, since evidence suggests that under New Labour the division of wealth is larger than it has ever been, with the potential for social mobility significantly reduced.

The level of ethnic segregation in England's schools is high. There is significant variation across LEAs and across ethnic groups, with segregation higher for pupils of Indian, Pakistani or Bangladeshi origin which coincides with the locations of urban unrest in the summer of 2001. School segregation does not simply follow income or housing segregation but arises from a complex interplay of factors in differing local contexts including geographical location, social class, the history of particular schools, the impact the quasi-markets and the emphasis on parental choice (Burgess and Wilson 2004).

Organisational structures and practices in schools create patterns of social relations which can be viewed as contributing to ethnic divisions. Tracking tends to lead to ethnic pupils being placed in lower sets which have a reputation for behavioural problems. Additionally, it can be argued that there is a White bias in terms of the curriculum with exam questions often reflecting a White cultural perspective (Singh 1987).

Some schools have recognised the multi-cultural nature of their catchments and have responded to it. For example, the variety of languages spoken in school resulted in the creation of the Ethnic Minority Achievement Forum (EMA). Some schools give pupils the possibility to translate their knowledge of

another language into take GCSE qualifications so some schools offer the choice to learn community languages such as Urdu to (Edwards, 2001). There are English as an Additional Language (EAL) Reading Programmes. School may forge close links with study support and mentoring groups which aspired to combat poor achievement. For example, in Sheffield this would include Somali Education Breakthrough, Reach High Two run by the Kashmiri Education Trust, Roshni, and a Yemeni-led group. This is a positive step, since evaluation of the impact of participation in after-school-study support on the academic attainment, attitudes and attendance of secondary school pupils has been shown to be effective with children speaking of feeling more comfortable and secure in their own community groups (Macbeath 2001).

While served with the best intentions, the cumulative effect of these activities highlight the fact that race is 'a signifier of relational identity politics' (Luke and Carrington 2000, 5) that shapes school experiences. While such activities could be seen to thwart the ethnocentrism of the school curriculum through circumventing bounded 'islands' of racial and cultural distinctiveness, the boundedness of the school's organisation of cultural diversity contradicts the open nature of multi-culturalism. Although these activities carried a firm conviction of racial identities, they work by differentiating pupils in terms of racial identities, a mechanism that always has the consequence of creating 'outsiders'. The critical point becomes the racial/cultural boundary that defines the group, not the cultural nexus that it encloses (Barth, 1969). While acknowledgement that different cultures have different values and different ways of life is important, there is a danger that we carry on the tradition of exoticising them. McLeod and Yates (2000) would view some schools' practices as the omnipresence of Whites being positioned at the centre, 'around which a carnival like array of multicultural difference is displayed for their enjoyment and sampling'.

Cultural issues stemming from racial identities may impinge on school practices. For example, arrangements like prayer rooms may be made for Muslim pupils during Ramadan. Pupils who are fasting during this period may be feeling drowsy or headaches due to dehydration, so schools may plan less strenuous activities during PE. Alternatively pupils could have short levels of concentration which would mean avoiding setting exams in this period. Lupton's (2004) research unpicks some of these issues in detail. She notes tensions in value systems between home and school, 'parental restrictions and enforcing these with punishment were viewed by staff as uncomfortably authoritarian accustomed to a more liberal culture.'

The Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 imposes upon schools, education institutions and LAs a duty to promote good relations between pupils of different racial groups. Bullying and harassment in schools is well-documented, and these problems are frequently exacerbated when pupils belong to different minority ethnic groups (for example, the experience of Gypsy/Roma and Traveller groups – Children's Society 2007). A new scheme announced by the government in 2007, Safe to Learn: Embedding Anti-bullying Work in Schools, sought to provide guidance to schools for tackling bullying.

However, in multi-racial schools many teachers are still unprepared to deal with the antagonisms they encounter among pupils of different groups, with White teachers particularly finding it difficult to get involved in issues of race (Pearce 2005). Mac an Ghaill's (1993) ethnographic study looked at the interaction of White teachers and two groups of anti-school male students – the Asian Warriors and the Afro-Caribbean Rasta Heads – at an inner city secondary school in an English city. He found that teachers tended to stereotype on the basis of pupils' ethnic group:

There was a tendency for Asian students to be seen by teachers as technically of high ability and socially as conformist. In contrast Afro-Caribbean students tended to be seen as of low ability and potential discipline problems.

This suggests an educational self-fulfilling prophesy whereby a mutually accepted stratification system arises from the social interactions between pupil and teacher which impacts on expectations of performance. Mac an Ghaill (1993, 152) found that the Rasta Heads perceived the school language as a major instrument of their own de-culturation and in response, they asserted themselves by speaking Creole within the classroom, using language as a 'mechanism of white exclusion'. This is an important

and visible symbol of defiance of what pupils perceive to be the dominant white culture of the school. Focusing on how the Rasta Heads' perceived school, Mac an Ghaill came to see their disaffection as a legitimate mechanism opposed to the school's institutional racist practices.

Awareness of racial difference has become perhaps more profound throughout the world following 11 September 2001. This has filtered into schools. Lemos's (2005) research shows how Muslim, Asian, Afghan and Iraqi pupils in particular have been considered to be potential terrorists by their class mates.

Nevertheless, some minority ethnic groups have developed their own strategies to promote inter-ethnic relations. A project based in Slough involved Sikh, Hindu and Muslim communities and trained teenagers to deal with conflict; later the project was expanded to the Polish community in the town (Salman, 2006).

One issue in which segregation has become a central concern is New Labour's focus on encouraging the role of Faith Schools in education. Faith Schools seek to provide an alternative to the state education system by the creation of communities which provide instruction in one religious faith. Of the 20,704 schools in England in 2007, the majority were of no religious character (13,861 schools). However, there were over half as many Christian Faith Schools, including 6,642 Church of England schools, 2,038 Roman Catholic schools, 26 Methodist schools, and a further 88 other Christian Faith Schools. Non-Christian Faith Schools are represented by 37 Jewish schools, seven Muslim schools, and two Sikhs schools. There are also approximately 700 madrassas in Britain unregulated by the state, and attended by approximately 100,000 Muslim children. Madrassas in the UK exist primarily as after-school clubs run by mosques, to teach children about the Koran and how to speak Arabic. Although they are obliged to follow the laws set down by the Children Act 1989, no single body such as Ofsted monitors their performance and they are accountable to no governmental body. Some madrassas educate up to 500 children. The Muslim Parliament of Great Britain has voiced concern over the risk of physical and sex abuse in these schools and has called for national registration.

The great majority of Faith Schools are partly funded by the state and draw the remainder of their finances from either religious organisations or fees paid by parents of pupils, though some Faith Schools are now wholly maintained by the state. Most of the Christian Faith Schools are primary schools, though of the 37 Jewish schools, 28 are primary and nine are secondary schools; of the seven Muslim schools, four are primary and three secondary schools; and the two Sikh schools includes both a primary and a secondary school. Faith Schools follow the same national curriculum as state schools.

The issue of Faith Schools has led to some controversy. The New Labour government which granted maintained status to a number of minority ethnic Faith Schools (on the basis that since Christian faith schools exist, it would be hypocritical to do otherwise) claimed that schools with a strong individual identity were a sound basis for improvement in standards. Others have claimed that schools which treat all pupils exactly the same, regardless of religious faith, may lead to serious misunderstanding and anger on behalf of Muslim pupils and their parents. However, other commentators – for example, Sir Herman Ouseley, Former Head of the Commission for Racial Equality – argue that Faith Schools can lead to the separation of communities, and significantly some Muslim leaders have criticised Faith Schools for the same reason. Recent attempts to forge legislation which makes it legal for Faith Schools to provide a multicultural agenda in their curriculum has failed to be implemented, and there is no guarantee that Faith Schools will teach universal human rights values as distinct from particular group values (Tomlinson 2008).

## **2.4 Ethnicity in public education**

More recently, a number of policies have been implemented by the government to improve the education of all young people. These include the DCSF's Aiming High scheme, a national strategy for young people and their development; the DCSF's 14-19 Programme, a scheme that offers young people more opportunities in their educational pathway; and monitoring guidelines for schools to assess the profile of their pupil population in terms of educational standards, needs and targets; and improved processes



of monitoring teachers through school self-review processes. A school census is also completed three times a year for all pupils and covers issues such as personal characteristics, achievement records, attendance, exclusions, and special needs. There is additionally a focus on citizenship, conducted via compulsory modules (see Chapter 4 for a full discussion on citizenship).

Major educational changes for 14- to 19-year-olds are being introduced from September 2008 which aim to raise the education and skills levels of students by delivering a curriculum which gives them life and social skills, sets stretching and challenging targets, and better prepares them for a fast-changing world. Curriculum changes will prioritise improving core skills; English, maths and ICT. Three main qualification routes have been established although there is some flexibility. At age 14, pupils can choose the Diploma, GCSEs or a young apprenticeship. At age 16, in school or college, they can take the Diploma, A Levels or an apprenticeship. A further option at 16 is to be in work, with time set aside for training. At age 18, young people should have the qualifications to carry on in education or training, or to go into skilled work. The Government's guarantee of a suitable place at college or school for every 16- and 17-year-old is an important move towards achieving this goal. The impact on minority ethnic groups is yet to be evaluated. Differential steering of these groups into these different pathways is likely to have significant effects on both patterns of educational achievement, future incomes and labour market position. It is likely also that a sustained focus on those young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) is resulting in reductions in their numbers in the majority of local authorities, and this may be of particular significance for GRT young people.

Local authorities and schools under their remit have responded to this legislation in a variety of ways, a selection of which is detailed below. The Aiming High scheme has a component dedicated directly to the schooling of minority ethnic groups which advocates strong leadership, high expectations, effective teaching and learning, and parental involvement in education. There has also been a drive towards recruiting teachers from minority ethnic backgrounds, as well as programmes designed to assist White teachers to effectively teach minority ethnic pupils, particularly with regard to difficulties born of different languages.

Within this policy context, several LAs have developed their own systems for teaching minority ethnic groups within their schools. One London LA uses a group-based mentoring programme aimed at reducing the exclusion of Black Caribbean students. Group-work was aimed at encouraging young people to direct their attention towards what they could get out of school (Warren 2005). This was also directed at developing a different approach to being Black through a critical exploration of Black history. Warren (2005) argues that this provided the minority ethnic youth with a language to construct a cultural politics of race which takes them beyond individual resistance. Some schools in their attempt to overcome prejudice and discrimination take time to talk to both students and parents and are prepared to consider and debate values and strategies to overcome inequity (Gilbert 2004).

With Asylum Seekers, one school devised its own Welcome Packs aimed at helping new families to settle by using pictures of local amenities and school activities, accompanied by key words in English (Whiteman 2005). Bilingual teachers or teaching assistants to help with language barrier have been employed in Birmingham and Bradford; aspects of the curriculum are taught by bilingual teachers who give a priority to the origin of some ethnic minorities (Gokulsing 2006). Asylum seeker pupils are sometimes paired off with another child of the same language. Pupils are encouraged to learn and use their first language as well as English. Other schools also use anti-bullying workshops as a way of communicating about issues surrounding race and ethnicity (Whiteman 2005), and others make use of the recourses provided by the Ethnic Minority and Traveller Achievement Service, which provides support for both schools and pupils in the form of guidance and funding (ibid.). Some schools used the Red Card to Racism scheme as a way of promoting tolerance (ibid.).

Nevertheless, in terms of broad critiques of the system, many commentators point to several unaddressed problems in LA and school strategies to combat racism. More concerted effort towards conducting ethnicity monitoring in schools is also needed (Parekh 2000). There is a severe lack of minority ethnic teachers (Tomlinson 2005; Wilkins 2001), while a change in institutional ethos is required with a



teacher education curriculum based on a critically transformative notion of education (Wilkins, 2001): teachers need to see themselves as agents of social change (ibid.). Citizenship needs to be tackled as a contested notion that confronts issues of social inequality head on, and there needs to be a structured educational framework which discusses racism and other forms of oppression, rather than passing reference made in the curriculum (Singh 2001). Cultural diversity should be valued and reflected in the curriculum (Gokulsing 2006); Gundara (2000) proposes a 'curriculum of recognition'.

### **3. Inequalities in the educational system**

This chapter presents an overview of the structures and mechanisms that maintain or reinforce inequalities in education. It discusses major dimensions of social differences in education and will situate the role of ethnicity among them. It also discusses differences in school performance according to membership of minority ethnic groups.

#### **3.1 Differences in school careers**

Research conducted on the school careers of pupils of different backgrounds has focused predominantly on three broad issues: gender, socio-economic factors/social class, and ethnicity.

It is a well-documented (if rather oversimplified) observation that girls outperform boys in schools. For instance, At GCSE, girls continue to progress more than boys. The difference between boys and girls attainment in GCSE English is as much as 14 percentage points. It has been suggested that the reasons for this difference in educational achievement include an 'anti-achievement culture' among some boys, male peers disrupting schoolwork, the low expectations of boys, teaching styles that prioritise girls, a loss of motivation in boys engendered by a decline of traditional masculine jobs, and the way that pupils are grouped in lessons.

Research on the effects of social class predictably reveal that those who come from disadvantaged backgrounds are more likely to have a lower level of academic ability when starting primary school and make less progress than the national average while there (with particularly poor numeracy and literacy skills); this pattern is likely to be repeated in secondary school, with the result that they are generally ill-prepared for adult employment (see below for examples of performance indicators reflecting differences of social class). The failure to achieve what their socially advantaged peers manage has been ascribed variously to low expectations, poor parenting, involvement in crime, poor provision in schools for children with special educational needs, and poor school attendance records.

This problem is compounded when such socially disadvantaged pupils also belong to ethnic groups with similarly poor educational achievement records, particularly those who are not fluent speakers of English and have problems with engaging in everyday school life. Indeed, members of the poorest ethnic groups – such as Black-Caribbean, Pakistani and Bangladeshi pupils – unsurprisingly have low educational achievement records, as will be discussed.

The interplay of these three broad pupil characteristics in terms of how they impact upon school careers is complex. Recent research conducted by the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) suggests that social class is the biggest factor affecting attainment in education. It is argued that understanding its relationship with gender and ethnicity is central to reducing the gap between success and failure in schools.

As mentioned above, girls on the whole perform better than boys in education. However, research factoring in social class and ethnicity reveals a more nuanced picture. For example, the analysis of England's 2006 Key Stage 2 results (for 11-year-olds) reveals that while girls are significantly outperforming boys in English, disadvantaged girls trail behind their wealthier male peers. While ethnicity and gender remain major factors in the achievement gap, social class appears to be the biggest factor determining success, a conclusion endorsed by Gillborn and Mirza (2000), who show that social class is the largest determinant of variations in educational achievement, followed by ethnicity and then by gender.

Drawing on analyses of the percentage of children who achieve Level 4 or above in English (this is

the national attainment level at ages 14–16, which is Key Stage 4 and this encompasses Levels 4–8), the EOC research reveals that:

- Social class is twice as important as gender in English, with an achievement gap of 22 percentage points in children receiving free school meals compared to those not doing so. Boys' achievement levels are particularly affected by social disadvantage: those who receive free school meals trail 24 percentage points behind their wealthier male peers;
- Girls outperform boys across the board in English by 10 percentage points. In mathematics and science, however, there is no a gender gap, with boys and girls performing similarly;
- Taking into account social class and ethnic background (among broad ethnic groups), White boys receiving free school meals had the lowest level of performance compared to boys from other ethnic groups. Similarly, White girls receiving free school meals had a worse level of performance than girls from other ethnic groups. Researchers ascribe this to a correlation between eligibility for free school meals and socio-economic deprivation;
- Social class can reverse the gender gap, however: girls receiving free school meals are falling behind boys of the same ethnicity who do not receive them;
- Overall, the group with the lowest percentage in achievement of Level 4 English was White boys receiving free school meals. Researchers ascribe this to socio-economic deprivation and 'anti-achievement' culture among White boys; and
- There is also a large difference in performance across black and minority ethnic groups, with a 16 percentage points' gap between the highest and lowest achieving ethnic groups in English results (see below).

In order to tackle these complex gaps in gender, socio-economic status and ethnicity, the EOC report recommends a school-wide approach to achievement involving strong leadership from the head teacher, high expectations for all pupils, and effective partnerships with parents and in the community (Skelton, Francis and Valkanova 2007). To some degree, moves towards this end have already begun. When analysing all three dimensions simultaneously, Gillborn and Mirza (2000) show that between the years of 1988 and 1995, all groups improved exponentially in terms of achievement at GCSE level, and that this largely due to improvements in strategies of providing education. However, some groups continue to struggle, and White boys from a low socio-economic background are currently a major concern for policymakers. Regarding minority ethnic groups, further analysis of the role of social class and gender is complicated by differences between groups. We turn to this issue now.

### **3.2 Differences in pupil performance of minority ethnic groups**

Pupil performance in schools is assessed in several ways: by academic progress made between the four Key Stages, by class banding in terms of ability, by achievement at GCSEs and A-level, as well as by attendance and exclusion rates. Another indicator of achievement is entry to higher or further education.

Recent research on the performance of minority ethnic groups has revealed a complex picture in terms of educational achievement. These are summarised below (a discussion of these issues can be found below):

- Caribbean, Pakistani, and Bangladeshi groups have lower average levels of attainment than whites. Indians, African Asians, Chinese and Africans are more likely to have higher qualifications. These trends can be found in both lower and higher education (Modood 2005, Parekh 2000, Gallagher 2004);
- Some ethnic groups such as Pakistanis and Bangladeshis are very internally polarized, with both highly qualified and unqualified individuals. In 40 percent of LAs, Pakistanis are more likely than White people to attain 5 grade A–C GCSEs (Modood 2005). Bangladeshi pupils made considerable advances in the 1990s and in some areas outperform White pupils (DES, 2006);

- Research with Black Caribbean pupils tends to show that the relative performance of high, starts to decline in Key Stage 2, tails off badly in Key Stage 3 and is below that of most other ethnic groups at Key Stage 4. While Black Caribbean children begin school as the same standard as the national average, by the age of 16, the number of students who have five GCSE passes is less than half the national average (DES 2006);
- Black Caribbean women were much more likely than their male counterparts to have higher qualifications (Modood 2005);
- In second and third generations, most ethnic groups have made significant academic progress, as have their White peers. The exception is young Black Caribbean males who do no better than their elders (Modood 2005);
- All ethnic groups, with the possible exception of Black Caribbeans have increased their share of higher education admissions since 1990 (Modood 2005);
- All minorities, with the exception of Black Caribbean males, are escalating in terms of their representation in further education and some groups now exceed the government's target of 50 percent participation (Modood 2005);
- Around 70 percent of Black Caribbean and 60 percent of Pakistani and Bangladeshi students pursue their degrees in new universities which were formerly polytechnics. Only 35 percent of White pupils do so (Modood 2005);
- Black Caribbean pupils are considerably more likely to face disciplinary action and exclusion from school; there has also been a recent increase in exclusions of Bangladeshi, Pakistani, and Somali pupils (DES 2006);
- Permanent exclusion rates are higher than average for Travellers of Irish Heritage, Gypsy/Roma, Black Caribbean, Black Other and White/Black Caribbean pupils (DES 2006). Black Caribbean pupils are more likely to be excluded for physical assault than for persistent disruptive behaviour (DES 2006);
- Black Caribbean pupils are one and a half times more likely than White pupils to be identified as having behavioural, emotional and social needs (DES 2006);
- Gypsy/Roma and Traveller pupils experience the most severe educational exclusion of any minority ethnic group in the UK with levels of attainment being roughly a quarter of the national average: 13-15 percent of GRT pupils obtaining five A\*-C GCSE passes compared to a 60 percent national average. In addition, patterns of attainment at this level are declining, which is markedly different from other minority ethnic groups where there is evidence of some improvement (Children's Society 2007); and
- Asylum seekers are making new demands on LAs and schools. Asylum-seeking children suffer significant racial harassment born of a 'rabid discourse' which construes them as proto-terrorists and 'benefits-scrungers' (Gillborn 2006). Refugee children suffer three times the national average for psychological disturbance (Whiteman 2005), and LAs do not provide sufficient information for schools with regard to these children (ibid.).

The government has highlighted the improvements that have been made and ascribes these to the success of policies designed to promote the educational needs of minority ethnic groups (DCLG 2006). However, as we can see above, certain minority groups are still failing in school, despite existing schemes intended to help them. Indeed, research conducted on the reasons why other minority ethnic groups are succeeding points towards other factors than school initiatives.

Explanations for these trends have tended to focus on Black Caribbean males. It has been shown that Black Caribbean males have the most confrontational relations with teachers, and that teachers feel threatened by them. This leads to low expectations, as well as teachers interpreting certain behaviour more negatively than in the case of similar behaviour exhibited by White or Asian pupils (Connolly 1995). Additionally, it has been claimed that Black Caribbean males bring to school an anti-school attitude born of street culture, which allows them to resist racism but which also results in underachievement (ibid.). Another factor may be that Black Caribbean, Bangladeshi, Pakistani and refugee pupils are

disproportionately educated in schools with lower levels of resources, which are less able to attract the best quality staff. Furthermore, the implication of looking at levels of attainment is that racial categories are seen as relatively uniform and stable although the concept of race as a collective phenomenon does not adequately capture the range of identities within racial groups. Blakey, Pearce and Chesters (2006) sought to capture the voices of 'minorities within minorities'. They found cultural and social tensions in Bradford's South Asian community, reflecting caste, gender and generational hierarchies deriving from place of origin. These hierarchies were often severely limiting in terms of social mobility since judgements on the basis of caste were still being made by some young people born in the UK.

These explanations are undoubtedly important reasons why certain minority ethnic groups underachieve in education, but they are not without their shortcomings. For instance, if racism leads to victims being turned off school, why do Asian males and females have high staying-on rates? Modood (2003) suggests that too much research has focused on why Black Caribbean males underachieve, and not enough on why Asian groups do make progress.

One explanation for progress in education is that some minority ethnic groups manifest a strong drive for qualifications. Modood (2005) points to the self-concept of a minority ethnic group which involves striving to achieve higher status and prosperity, aware of the fact that the 'dice are stacked against them'. This issue is exemplified when issues of gender and social class are considered in relation to minority ethnic groups. Research suggests that cultures which are portrayed as opposed to educating women seem to be producing growing cohorts of highly motivated young women (Ahmad et al, 2003), while Pakistani and Bangladeshi families – generally among the poorest minority ethnic groups, with large households, more dependents and less money – are nonetheless making significant progress in terms of academic performance.

It has been argued that parental social class is a major factor in determining university entrants. Modood (2003) provides evidence showing that offspring of parents with non-manual jobs exceed those with manual jobs by a large margin. This is certainly the case with Black Caribbean ethnic groups, but in the case of Indian and Chinese groups, university entrants are as likely to come from manual working parental backgrounds as non-manual. However, Modood also suggests that in the case of Indian and Chinese migrants, employment may not reflect their social class and capital; members of these groups may have suffered downward mobility upon migration, and may actually value education more than White workmates. They may also foster high expectations, give encouragement, maintain discipline, etc. Therefore, it can be claimed that certain ethnicities compound class disadvantage, while others counteract it when it comes to academic achievement.

Indeed, racial discrimination has meant that minority ethnic groups have been particularly dependent on qualifications for jobs and educational progression. Surveys of employers show that they would much rather recruit from the older universities (Parekh 2000). There is strong evidence that, when applying to old universities, minority candidates face an ethnic penalty (Modood 2003). Qualifications can therefore be argued to have more value to certain minority ethnic groups in that they serve as a way of progressing economically. In short, the government's claims that many minority ethnic groups have more recently made significant improvements in terms of academic achievement can be seen to mask a situation complicated by which ethnic minority group is being referred to, as well as gender, socio-economic status, and structural problems relating to entrenched racism in society (Tomlinson 2008).

#### **4. Education of minority ethnic youth in the light of public debates and policy-making**

This chapter presents an overview of how education of minority ethnic youth is framed in the public discourse, how contested issues are put on the agenda of policy-making, and what kinds of policies are applied to respond to the claims. Particular emphasis will be put on initiatives, policies and measures to combat 'minoritisation' in schools.

## 4.1 Public discourse and representation

More recently, in the wake of New Labour's attempts to tackle racism via the education of children, there have been a number of issues debated in the public arena. At the heart of these issues is the notion of what it means to be British. Although these debates have been prevalent in British public debate in previous generations, more recently many no longer regarded Britain as a cohesive society, rather a fragmented one in which the problems engendered by multi-culturalism were perceived to be something that needed to be immediately addressed (Tomlinson 2008); this fracture was ostensibly a consequence of the presence of minority ethnic groups and the arrival of more migrants and refugees.

In 2004, the editor of *Prospect* magazine sparked a debate by attacking progressive liberals for supporting diversity. He suggested that ethnic groups must adopt the 'history of their new country' (Goodhart 2004, cited in Tomlinson 2008) in order to avoid diverse groups leading to tensions. This view was supported by the Chair of the Commission for Racial Equality, Trevor Philips, and then endorsed by Ministers of Parliament (MPs), journalists and other leading spokespeople. Indeed, these concerns were escalated after the suicidal bombings in London in 2005: the men responsible had been born and educated in Britain, and consequently some schools came to be regarded as potential training houses for terrorists. Riots among minority ethnic groups in major cities occurred in 2005, together with a continuing trend of racially motivated stabbings and killings. Other commentators have claimed that maintaining diversity can lead to ethnic integration. In the context of education, research has discovered that White children in all-White classes had no appreciation of the difficulties ethnic minority children can face. They were also less likely to make friends across ethnic divides (Weller 2008).

As a consequence of all this unrest, New Labour claimed that terrorism and immigration were the public's main concern, and MPs targeted the Muslim community's unwillingness to respond to pleas for integration. A nationwide discourse of 'Islamophobia' quickly developed. An emphasis was placed on extremist members of minority ethnic groups, particularly Muslims, and a plea was made to moderate member of such groups to defend British values. Tony Blair, the Prime Minister at the time, claimed that 'the right to be in a multi-cultural society was always implicitly balanced by the duty to integrate and accept British values' (Blair 2006 – cited in Tomlinson, 2008). Other commentators, however, have claimed that multi-culturalism remains a workable concept. A representative of the Runnymede Trust claimed, 'we need also to ensure people are treated fairly and their identities are not denigrated or subsumed into some sort of non-identity because that gets rid of all the benefits of diversity' (John 2005).

One case related to education that was debated keenly in the public arena concerned the hijab – a traditional headscarf worn by many Muslim women. In 2005, Muslim women protested in London against the proposed law banning the wearing of religious symbols in French schools. However, in Britain the school teacher Shabina Begum successfully overturned a court ruling, allowing her to wear the hijab in school. This debate was set within the wider context of the tensions between liberal and multicultural political visions (Ward 2006). This case was representative of broader tensions regarding minority ethnic relations with British mores.

The New Labour government responded to these tensions by commissioning a review related to diversity and citizenship. The *Ajegbo Report* (2007) made a number of recommendations with the aim of promoting community cohesion among different groups, including several aimed at schools: school twinning, extended school activities to include parents from different communities, 'buddy' schemes to help second language speakers, citizenship education, a review of the religious education curriculum, and involving local employers and voluntary groups in the 14–19 curriculum (Ajegbo 2007).

Nevertheless, despite the rhetoric of concern, tensions remained. One example was in 2006 when a university lecturer argued on the basis of IQ tests that Black people were intellectually inferior to Whites, and this view was endorsed by a paper published by another academic that claimed that poverty and ill-health in Africa could be ascribed to lower intelligence. Researchers from voluntary organisations and university student unions have protested against these conclusions, claiming that low IQ levels are born of a lack of education and that this kind of thinking could retrigger debates about eugenics. Soon after,



another attempted bombing was made in Glasgow airport by educated (medical and technical) minority ethnic men who had originally entered Britain as refugees; these acts were associated with whole Muslim communities, and the public fear remained that schools and universities in which segregation was manifest could be 'breeding ground' for terrorists. The role of education was again at the heart of publicly debated concerns with regard to multi-culturalism. Muslims are particularly targeted as potentially dangerous ('Islamophobia'), though this discourse maps on to existing patterns of racism with many other minority ethnic groups suspected of anti-Western rhetoric.

Inequality and poverty were overlooked in the debates (arguably the most plausible source of unrest – see above), as was genuine academic progress on the part of many minority ethnic youth (see above); Tony Blair angered community activists by claiming that violence involving minority ethnic groups (including killings) were caused by Black culture which involved absent fathers and a lack of positive role models – certainly a problematic conclusion that does not reflect existing data on minority ethnic achievement in schools (see above). With regard to the persistent academic failure of Black Caribbean youth, activists located the problem within government indifference and institutional racism, while the government continued to suggest that the problem was in fact born of a lack of community cohesion. The onus has been repeatedly shifted on to Black communities, individuals, parents and schools to deal with what are almost certainly structural issues relating to house, educational and employment (Tomlinson 2008).

#### **4.2 Policy- making**

As mentioned above, when New Labour came to power in 1997, the party set out to tackle the challenges presented by an increasingly multi-ethnic society by focusing on education as a way of inculcating anti-racist attitudes among a new generation of children. However, we have also seen that New Labour's strategies are regarded by many commentators as problematic.

At the heart of New Labour's policies concerning the education of children with regard to issues of race is the notion of citizenship. Citizenship education as advocated by The Crick Report (1998) covers social and moral responsibility, community involvement and political literacy; citizenship studies were made compulsory to all children in 2002. Some interpret the introduction of citizenship studies in schools as the government's (deeply inadequate) response to the McPherson Report (1999), which, following the failure of the police to charge anyone for the death of a Black teenager, Stephen Lawrence, said all public institutions must deal with their 'institutional racism' (Gillborn 2006). The report's inadequacy is seen to be an attempt to promote universal values but without an understanding of difference; it is also seen to contribute to a trend in educational policy of 'deracialisation' – that is, of reducing racism to individual ignorance and prejudice. Other problems with this approach include an absence from The Crick Report of any direct mention of racism – personal, institutional or structural. The targets set for citizenship education do not include ethnic equality, international and global issues, conflict resolution and anti-racism. When The Crick Report does talk about ethnicity and diversity, it makes no mention of inequality or power imbalances, nor of anti-racism; it also regards ethnic minorities as a homogenous mass. The report states that minorities must 'learn and respect the codes and conventions as much as the majority', implying that minority communities are outside current conventions in a way that white people are not; this also reflects the move by the former Home Secretary to create a 'citizenship test' for all those acquiring British nationality. Finally, when racism is mentioned in citizenship educational literature, it reduces it to a matter of personal prejudice.

Some of the applications in schools of other New Labour policies have led to further problems. The Education Act 2005 obligated local authorities to set targets for schools to meet with regard to promoting 'community cohesion'. This resulted in additional pressure on schools, which were regarded as accountable and blameworthy if their application of these measures failed. Community cohesion is also promoted by the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit, a government strategy for facilitating conflict resolution, though owing to New Labour's focus on education as the principle way of addressing multi-cultural tensions, schools still bear a great responsibility for this. Additionally, schools were given more



powers to exclude pupils and make their parents responsible for them; this latter measure impacted particularly on Black parents (Tomlinson 2008).

New Labour's focus on parental choice with regard to the schools that children attend served only to exacerbate these difficulties. Headmasters became reluctant to promote race issues in case the school became branded as 'radical' and puts off potential pupils (Tomlinson 2008). White parents attempted to segregate their children from schools in which there were a large number of minority ethnic children. As detailed above, Faith Schools were not obligated either to accept a considerable group of children not raised in that faith or to teach human rights common to all groups as opposed to faith-based values; this remained a problem despite Ofsted inspection (Tomlinson 2008). A study carried out by the University of Lancaster revealed that segregated White pupils held more stereotypical attitudes about minority ethnic groups than those who attend mixed schools (Tomlinson 2008). The relationship between ethnic segregation and racism is not clear, closer contact may bring increased conflict not necessarily understanding and lower hostility. Lack of contact may bring less conflict and not necessarily greater hostility.

In short, it can be claimed that schools are expected to compensate for deeper, structural problems in society (Tomlinson 2008). At the heart of New Labour education policies there is an assumption that the problems engendered by multi-culturalism are the central concern and that schools are the place where these can be best addressed. However, many commentators suggest that it is actually wealth and social class issues which are more important in terms of explaining the differences in academic achievement among children (see above), and that ethnic status merely exacerbates this problem in some cases: for example, the poorest households are often Muslim and Indian (Tomlinson 2008). Additionally, New Labour's move away from institutional racism – that is, a collective failure on the part of social organizations to tackle racism – and towards racism as a personal failing of individual people is regarded as a refusal to affect the changes needed at a local, national and international level (Arora 2005).

This problem is in fact encapsulated in schools. A study by Warren (2005) draws on post-colonial theory to look at racism in schools, arguing that it is less a case of institutional racism than deeply embedded cultural assumptions that have emerged out of an historical context of empire and colonialism (Warren 2005, 244). The 'normal' pedagogical processes or circuits of power in schooling are self-consciously colour-blind and produce consistently racist effects. He and others conceptualise these as instituting practices of racial formations and particular racial imaginaries. In this sense, schools represent institutional forms of struggle attempting to construct a racial settlement in a post-colonial context.

## **5. The state of the art in research on minority ethnic youth in education**

This chapter aims to provide a summary of the most significant research findings concerning the role of ethnicity in education with regard to the schooling of the three minority groups selected to participate in the present study. It gives an insight into the issues investigated and discussed by the scholarly community more recently. It also presents research on recent educational policies and initiatives designed to improve the education achievement of the selected minority ethnic groups.

### **5.1 The schooling of Gypsy/Roma and Traveller pupils**

As detailed above, Gypsy/Roma and Traveller groups experience the most severe educational exclusion of any minority ethnic group in the UK with levels of attainment being roughly a quarter of the national average. Additionally, patterns of attainment at this level are declining, which is markedly different from other minority ethnic groups where there is evidence of some improvement. The consequences of missing out on an education include an inability to find employment and exclusion from society at large (Bhopal 2004). This is a particular problem for Gypsy/Roma and Traveller girls (Children's Society 2007).

Research conducted to discover the basis of underachievement in Gypsy/Roma and Traveller groups has shown that their regular mobility is only one factor which contributes to difficulties in attending school. Other factors may be the perception of school as being unsupportive of Gypsy/Roma and

Travellers' lifestyles; parents being fearful of what their children will experience at school, despite otherwise valuing education; a less than positive first experience in schools which leads to a cycle of non-attendance (Kendall and Derrington 2003).

Much government policy fails to take sufficient account of Gypsy/Roma and Travellers' educational needs (Bhopal 2004), and as a result there has been a decline in attendance of Gypsy/Roma and Traveller pupils at secondary schools, with only one third of such children now in mainstream education and an average drop-out age at 11.49 years (Children's Society 2007). Nevertheless, traditional hostility to schooling among Gypsy/Roma and Traveller parents has shifted more recently, and with new distance learning programmes and the use of technology, many pupils can combine a nomadic lifestyle with effective education (Bhopal 2004).

With regard to the Gypsy/Roma and Traveller children who do attend schools, there remains the problem of bullying and being alienated (Children's Society 2007). Gypsy/Roma and Traveller children have no problem in identifying themselves as such, but do object to disparaging and offensive ways in which other label them (ibid.). A major issue is the degree to which it is possible for such children to achieve integration in mainstream schools while also preserving their cultural identity. Okley (1997) claims that entry into mainstream education can lead only to assimilation and that participation should be resisted by Gypsy/Roma and Traveller communities, with learning, rather than formal education, taking place within community and family groups. Indeed, this may be one of the main reasons why Gypsy/Roma and Traveller parents are reluctant to send their children to school. Research has also shown that parents worry additionally about racism, the moral welfare of teenage girls, sex education, drugs, and potential damage to the family network (Save The Children 2001). Indeed, family is regarded as important among Gypsy/Roma and Traveller children and any policies directed at helping them enter mainstream education must take into account familial networks involved in these communities (Children's Society 2007).

Education among Gypsy/Roma and Traveller children has recently generated a good deal of public attention, with major reports published by the Commission for Racial Equality in 2006 and the Department for Schools, Children and Families in 2007. Nevertheless, much work needs to be done in order to reverse some of the declining trends among Gypsy/Roma and Traveller children, both in terms of their attendance at mainstream schools and their educational achievement record. Here, appropriate research would be concerned with identifying key barriers and constraints to inclusion and evaluating the impact of interventions that have been established to address these problems so far. Different barriers are likely to operate in different local contexts and with varying impact across different GRT groups, so the identification of specific contexts, key intervention mechanisms and outcomes is required in evaluation research.

## **5.2 The schooling of Bangladeshi pupils**

As shown above, although Bangladeshi pupils show on average a lower educational achievement rate than the national average, there is in fact an internal polarization within the Bangladeshi community, with both highly qualified and unqualified individuals. Recent research has focused on this central issue, along with the growing cohort of highly motivated Bangladeshi young females in education.

Abbas (2007) conducted an empirical study with Bangladeshi, Indian and Pakistani pupils from independent and secondary schools; he focused on issues of social class, ethnicity and culture. Qualitative interviews with pupils and parents revealed that certain working class South Asian parents possess strong middle class attitudes towards education and that this is unrelated to their ability to facilitate them in terms of financial or social capital. Many middle class parents were also motivated to focus on education as a crucial part of their children's development, yet they did possess the relevant financial and social capital. In conclusion, Abbas claims that social class was the most important factor in pupils gaining entry to their selective schools.

Nevertheless, Crozier and Davis (2006) warn against an individualized approach which focuses only on pupils' parents. They claim that the division between highly motivated parents and those who are

ostensibly indifferent is more subtle than it initially appears. They argue that in South Asian communities, it is also important to take into account the extended family's attitudes towards education. Parents who are ostensibly indifferent to their children's education may be compensated to some degree by a broader family focus on the importance of schooling.

In another paper, Crozier and Davis (2007) argue that South Asian parents who claim not to care about their children's education are regarded by teachers as 'hard to reach'. Although research (with Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities) shows that some South Asian parents know little about the education system and do not get involved their children's schooling, it is not the case that these parents are 'difficult' or 'indifferent' – terms, the authors argue, that the phrase 'hard to reach' implies. This research suggests that schools often inhibit accessibility for certain parents, and that their inference about these parents being 'hard to reach' merely pathologises them.

Another significant phenomenon emerging from South Asian communities is the growing cohort of highly motivated young women. Shain (2000) studied and theorized the experiences and strategies of young women of Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Indian descent and identified the following issues:

- With many of the young women she interviewed, there was the perception that they were unequally treated by White staff.
- Pupils were responded to particularly negatively when they deviated from their race/gender stereotype (of the timid and passive Asian female).
- When pupils disassociated themselves from solely Asian groups and adopted western attitudes and modes of dress, this was met with a positive response from both White students and teachers.
- Many pupils appeared to have internalised racist ideologies, which became apparent when talking about other Asian pupils.
- Religion was identified as an important mediating factor in their experience of racism. It often provided a vehicle for resistance against teachers.
- It is not simply that colonial relations are reproduced, but that its ideologies are being reworked in the shifting relations of late modernity.
- Rather than being passive recipients of oppressed cultural practices, Asian women were actively involved in interpreting these practices, choosing which ones to reject and which ones to accept. Young Asian women are involved in creating new identities and meanings that involve conscious strategies of survival.

A study by Dale et al (2002) shows that young Pakistani and Bangladeshi woman face an even more complex situation than South Asian young men with regard to education. Although their parents may have the same aspirations with regard to their children's schooling, there is additionally a risk of young Asian woman jeopardising the family's honour by their academic achievements. Nevertheless, Dale (2002) shows that these young Asian woman see academic qualifications as a way of gaining paid work, and that paid work results in independence and self-esteem. The growing numbers of South Asian young women in full-time undergraduate education reveals a desire to combine employment with family life.

### **5.3 The schooling of Black Caribbean pupils**

As revealed above, Black Caribbean pupils are less likely to achieve acceptable standards in education, and this is particularly true for Black Caribbean boys. Much academic research has been carried out on this community with regard to schooling, and what follows are the central issues.

Haynes et al (2006) indicate that the common sense explanation for why Black Caribbean pupils fail in education is to do with identity problems, low self-esteem, impoverished socio-economic backgrounds and low teacher expectations. These reasons map on to the fact (discussed above) that social class tends to be the most powerful predictor of academic success, particularly among minority ethnic groups. However, there is no conclusive reason why underachievement should persist in Black Caribbeans while it has improved in other minority ethnic groups.

It is argued by many anti-racist commentators that schools display differential treatment in the case of Black Caribbean pupils, while apolitical commentators argue that such pupils only receive such treatment because they are more likely to misbehave (Pilkington 1999). Research by Warren (2005) found that Black Caribbean young men engage in performances of opposition but do not in fact resist what school offers: they do not reject school but rather the inequality of respect they experience. Teachers have strong preconceptions about pupils, and teaching practices are problematically racialized. In her research on Black Caribbean pupils, Youdell (2003) looked at the discursive constitution of identity within schools, and particularly how identity traps are produced. The moment when Black Caribbean students constitute themselves in terms of student subculture may be the same moment the school constitutes them as a challenge to authority: the very success of their street cultural identities entraps them.

There are clearly subtle factors at work with regard to the schooling of Black Caribbean pupils. However, the central issue is whether schools should readdress their institutional policies with regard to Black Caribbean pupils or whether this is not necessary because the problems exist elsewhere. Nevertheless, the debate continues and remains contentious.

One possible route out of this impasse is to look at how some schools are succeeding in improving the educational performance of Black Caribbean pupils. Demie (2005) reports on good practice at 13 schools in Lambeth. Findings from the study show that Black Caribbean pupils have improved achievement records in Key Stage 2 and GCSE results. Among the features that contribute to this success are strong leadership which aims at improving standards for all pupils; the use of performance data for school self-evaluation and tracking pupils' performance; a commitment to creating a culture which allows teachers to use creative intuition to maximise their pupils' learning; a highly inclusive curriculum that meets the needs of Black Caribbean pupils; a strong link to the community and the involvement of parents in school issues; well-coordinated support for Black Caribbean pupils via learning mentors and role models; a commitment to equal opportunities and a strong focus on racism. In the case of schools discussed in this research, academic achievement among Black Caribbean pupils was far superior to the national averages.

It would therefore appear that under-achievement among Black Caribbean pupils has a number of complex causes, but that sensitive and appropriate practices at schools can be effective in terms of improving their performance in education.

#### **5.4 Recent policies and initiatives relating to the selected minority groups**

More recently, the government has developed a number of policies and initiatives in order to support schools in their tuition of minority ethnic groups. Aiming High: Raising the Achievement of Minority Ethnic Pupils (2003) is a key scheme designed to help young learners (particularly those who do not have English as their first language) get the best from their education. Other schemes include courses for teachers to achieve accredited training in English as an additional language, while the Making the Grade: Key Stage 4 Project aims to help teachers understand the needs of bi-lingual pupils. There has also been a drive towards recruiting more teachers who belong to minority ethnic groups.

Three initiatives designed specifically to help children belonging to each of the minority ethnic groups selected for the present study are as follows:

- The Aiming High programme seeks to provide good quality materials about Gypsy/Roma and Traveller history and heritage, to employ regional advisors at both primary and secondary school levels, and to provide a website about bullying with a dedicated section for Gypsy/Roma and Travellers.
- Part of the Aiming High programme is a Minority Ethnic Achievement Project (2004) designed to support pupils of Bangladeshi, Pakistani, Somali and Turkish heritage at Key Stage 3. The project was developed in consultation with Muslim organisations and is concerned with improvements in teaching and learning.

- In 2003, the African-Caribbean Achievement Project was launched in both primary and secondary schools. The aim has been to emphasise in schools strong leadership, high expectation of success, mutual respect and intolerance of racism, recognition of cultural diversity, active participation of parents and the wider community. The Black Pupils Achievement Programme has been especially effective in tackling issues relating to Black Caribbean pupils, helping teachers understand their needs and promoting race equality issues, as well as providing support for such children and their parents.

These initiatives are targeted on schools in urban areas with high numbers of pupils from the relevant minority ethnic groups and are voluntaristic rather than compulsory, relying on local awareness, uptake and commitment to specific programmes. Coverage in schools is therefore patchy and uneven across the country, with relatively little impact of these programmes in non-urban areas.

Nevertheless, despite policies and initiatives designed to improve the educational achievement of all minority ethnic groups, it is admitted by the government that much work needs to be done to achieve parity and progress among all groups. The children of Gypsy/Roma and Travellers, Bangladeshi pupils from poorer backgrounds, and Black Caribbean children (particularly boys) are among those most in need of help (DES 2006).

### **5.5 Under-investigated issues**

National evaluation of the impact of programmes concerned with raising minority ethnic achievement would be helpful, much work tends to focus on specific case-studies and their local impact rather than providing national evidence.

National data on school attendance and dropout by ethnicity is not available and further work is required to examine these trends, particularly the attendance and dropout of GRT pupils between Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 4.

Ethnic monitoring and analysis of the operation of the new 14-19 pathways is essential to assess the extent to which this may be or may be not contributing to improvements in educational and occupational achievement and the reduction of ethnic inequalities in these sectors.

The relationship between ethnic segregation in education, housing and community contexts is complex and deserves further study, as highlighted above.

Explanation of the reasons why there are differences in the proportion of pupils identified as having special educational needs is at present unclear and this topic has been of longstanding concern in the UK.

The changing nature and extent of racist and inter-ethnic hostility amongst children is not adequately known, and there is some concern that this is increasing, and the construction of adequate explanations for these patterns is still needed, further the relationship between racist hostility and patterns of racial and ethnic segregation in educational contexts is unclear.

The process of becoming a minority, minoritisation, has been examined extensively in the British sociologies of race relations, racism, migration and ethnicity (see WP3 Ethnicity in the UK). Aspects of the role of schools in the minoritisation of different ethnic groups in the UK have been identified, but a coherent synthesis of the ways in which schools may increase or decrease the rate at which this process takes place in the UK would be valuable. Also, the extent to which educational contexts over-determine or under-determine ethnicity in comparison to other social contexts, such as home, would help to clarify the role that education plays in the social construction of ethnicity.



## 6. Considerations driving the selections for empirical research: Groups, schools, sites

This chapter presents the considerations that have led to the selection of the minority ethnic groups. It introduces the arguments in support of concentrating on given types of schools and on certain age-groups. Additionally, foreseeable methodological and practical difficulties with potential impact on the empirical research are also outlined.

The pupils who will be selected to participate in the present study will be mainstream secondary school pupils between the ages of 14 and 16 years of age. The reason for the choice of this age group can be ascribed to the fact that it is a period in a child's life when education can be argued to be most important: as we saw in Chapter 1, pupils at this age are studying towards examinations for GCSEs, a key step towards further development. It is also the age at which children are likely to be engaging more purposefully with society at large – making choices about their future education/employment, and forming friendship and social networks among other children. It is, in short, a critical period in the school life of pupils, and one which encapsulates many of the issues this paper has already discussed.

A ethnically and socio-economically diverse, mid-sized city in Yorkshire, England has been chosen as the site for both the Student Survey, involving self-reporting questionnaires, and the Community Study of the school and community environment of everyday inter-ethnic relations of urban youth, involving discussions with students, teachers, parents and local agencies. In this city, as indicated in Chapter 5, the three minority ethnic groups that have been selected for the present study are Gypsy/Roma and Traveller, Bangladeshi, and Black Caribbean. The reasons for the choice of these groups are several. As shown earlier in this paper, Gypsy/Roma and Traveller pupils attract the kind of discourse which characterises them as being outside mainstream society, as being 'other'; indeed, their irregular attendance at schools and subsequent poor educational achievement are significant factors in terms of highlighting the problems inherent in the present educational system. Bangladeshi pupils may be subject to Islamophobia that has preoccupied much public discourse more recently (nearly 90 percent of Bangladeshis are Muslims); coupled with an internal polarisation in terms of educational achievement, this group may also reflect current debates about schooling in the UK (for example, the degree to which the variation in achievement can be ascribed to policy failure or personal factors such as pupils' familial circumstances, etc). Finally, Black Caribbean pupils are the one minority group that appears to be struggling in all aspects of education – formal qualifications; exclusion rates; behavioural, emotional and social needs; and entry to further and higher education – and therefore seem particularly appropriate for inclusion in the present study, as well as potentially illuminating.

Our focus will be on several innercity wards in the selected city, where Black Caribbean and Bangladeshi populations are concentrated. On average GCSE attainment in the selected wards is about 33 percent. The vast majority of Roma/Travellers live to the south of the city centre. We will focus on two secondary schools in southern areas and two secondary schools in north eastern areas of the city for this study. Together with the GRT survey in non-school contexts, this selection should produce the sample of 400 pupils. The final choice of school will depend on negotiation and consultation with those schools and with the umbrella organisation. The age range we will be targeting is 14–15 for the first two groups, avoiding the last year of compulsory schooling and related GCSE exams, but we will broaden both the age range to 14–16 for Roma/Travellers to ensure a large a sample as possible. The school survey will cover Key Stage 4.

What follows is further information about these three groups in the context of the study's proposed site.

The Gypsy/Roma and Traveller population in the UK includes a variety of groups including Roma, Irish Travellers and English Gypsies (the GRT population). This group experiences the most severe educational exclusion of any minority ethnic group in the UK with levels of attainment being roughly a quarter of the national average (13–15 percent of GRT pupils obtaining five A\*–C GCSE passes compared to a 60 percent national average (DCSF, 2008; Children's Society, 2007). In addition, patterns of attainment at



this level are declining, which is markedly different from other minority ethnic groups where there is evidence of some improvement. The selected city's Gypsy, Roma, Traveller Achievement Service identified several hundred Gypsy/Roma and Traveller children aged 5-16 years in their census in 2004, and it has worked with over 1,000 children from these groups recently. This service has a well-established reputation for identifying and facilitating educational inclusion for children from these groups and provides both an interesting case study in itself as well as an accessible research context. It may be possible therefore to identify up to 100 GRT children aged 14-16 for the purposes of the Student Survey, although this data collection may have to be implemented through community networks rather than in class. It is also be feasible to access the required group of respondents for the Community Study.

The Black Caribbean population of the UK has for many decades had significantly lower levels of educational attainment than the national average, and despite some indication of improving levels of attainment this educational inequality persists. Black Caribbean boys are particularly struggling to perform well in schools, and the abnormally high level of school exclusions for this group also persists. This national pattern is replicated in the selected city.

The Bangladeshi population of the UK is experiencing improving levels of educational attainment much closer to the national average than the other two groups considered here (2001 Census). There is an internal polarisation among Bangladeshi pupils in terms of educational performance, with some pupils from higher socio-economic backgrounds outperforming White pupils. Nevertheless, a large number of Bangladeshi households are among the poorest in the country, and their children continue to struggle in schools as a consequence. This group is characterised by significantly high levels of poverty and unemployment, particularly in relation to other South Asian groups such as Pakistanis and Indians. Students aged 14-15 years from these two groups will be surveyed and there are well established communities for intensive local study, together with a track record of related research evidence.

All these groups have been targeted for educational interventions to improve access and outcomes both nationally and in the selected city, and comparison of the experiences of these three ethnic groups in one context may yield valuable knowledge and evidence applicable elsewhere.

Gaining access to suitable pupils and their parents from the three selected minority ethnic groups will present some challenges to the team, though it is believed that these can be overcome. Securing schools' permission to approach their pupils for the purposes of the study will require close liaison with Headmasters and/or senior members of staff. The school will need to be visited by the researcher and provision made for appropriate research conditions (for example, a room in which interviews can be tape-recorded in order to guarantee privacy). There are obvious ethical sensitivities to adhere to, including the anonymity and security of data. Another difficulty might involve ensuring that both children and their parents commit to the project's endurance. There might also be difficulties if any of the participants' first language is not English – provisions will have to be in place for translation.

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## Appendix

Numbers of pupils in maintained primary, secondary and all special schools according to different ethnic groups, 2007

Ethnic group	Primary school	Secondary school	All special schools (see Note below)
<b>White</b>	<b>2,666,330</b>	<b>2,724,100</b>	<b>69,980</b>
White British	2,545,340	2,626,650	67,540
Irish	11,760	12,060	310
Traveller of Irish heritage	2,840	1,040	100
Gypsy/Roma	5,370	2,610	160
Any other White background	101,000	81,740	1,870
<b>Mixed</b>	<b>122,450</b>	<b>89,880</b>	<b>2,780</b>
White and Black Caribbean	40,770	31,960	1,060
White and Black African	13,330	8,650	260
White and Asian	25,500	18,360	510
Any other Mixed background	42,860	30,920	950
<b>Asian</b>	<b>276,540</b>	<b>227,270</b>	<b>5,720</b>
Indian	78,720	78,600	1,300
Pakistani	114,780	85,150	2,990
Bangladeshi	48,170	33,370	700
Any other Asian background	34,870	30,150	730
<b>Black</b>	<b>151,990</b>	<b>119,210</b>	<b>3,760</b>
Black Caribbean	47,230	41,400	1,270
Black African	88,210	64,050	1,930
Any other Black background	16,550	13,760	560
Chinese	11,040	13,110	240
Any other ethnic group	40,110	31,250	690
<b>Classified</b>	<b>3,268,470</b>	<b>3,204,820</b>	<b>83,160</b>
<b>Unclassified</b>	<b>35,910</b>	<b>63,330</b>	<b>1,520</b>
<b>Minority ethnic pupils</b>	<b>723,130</b>	<b>578,170</b>	<b>15,620</b>
<b>All pupils</b>	<b>3,304,370</b>	<b>3,268,160</b>	<b>84,680</b>

Source: Schools' Census; data published by the Department of Children, Schools and Families, 2007.

Note. Special schools are part of a spectrum of provision for children with special educational needs. There are three types of special school: those maintained by the local authority, non-maintained special schools and independent special schools. Most are maintained schools. In January 2004, there were more than 1,000 maintained special schools (with an average of 80 pupils per school), 70 non-maintained special schools, as well as more than 200 independent schools designated as catering wholly or mainly for children with SEN.

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