

Yellow Flag submission to the Department of Education

Statement of Strategy 2021-2023

November 2020

Goal 1: Improving the learning experience and success of learners

What do you think the key strategic priorities for education (primary and post-primary), over the next 3 years, should be?

The 'DES Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice 2018-2023' document identifies cultural differences as one of the risk factors for well-being in a school setting. In 2019 53% of pupils who took part in pre-entry Yellow Flag research reported they had witnessed racist comments or behaviours towards others in their schools and the National Traveller Survey 2017 found 4 out of 10 Travellers said they were bullied in school.

The NCCA Guidelines on Intercultural Education cites the importance of supporting schools in collaboration with Traveller and Roma organisations to develop education resources on Traveller and Roma culture and history for use in primary, post primary and adult education settings.

The Yellow Flag recognises this risk factor and the potential for ethnic minority children, especially Traveller and Roma students to feel less connected, secure and part of the school community and suggests the following 3 strategic priorities for the next 3 years-

Key Strategic Priorities:

- All primary and post-primary schools create a whole-school approach for advancing equality and accommodating diversity for all children and young people in their school community.

- All primary and post-primary schools create pathways directly involving all students, parents and staff in shaping an environment where identity and culture are recognised as part of everyday life; racism is challenged and diversity is normalised.
- The establishment of intercultural education as a core component of the curriculum for all primary and post-primary schools.

List 3 key strategic actions that should be prioritised for primary and post-primary education over the next 3 years:

- **Compulsory anti-racism and intercultural training for all teachers**, as part of pre-service and in-service teacher training, ensuring teachers can deliver on all aspects related to Traveller history and culture, and curriculum features related to Travellers. Along with intercultural training for teachers, adequate resources are required to support the **appointment of a dedicated Equality and Diversity officer** in all schools.
- Introduction of a **comprehensive, mandatory anti-bullying education programme** that defines and explores identity-based bullying and sets pathways to deal with it effectively in all schools
- Introduction of **mandatory form of 'Intercultural education' as part of the curriculum** that combines learning from multicultural and anti-racist education approaches as per NCCA guidelines, are delivered by teachers with prior training and understanding of Traveller culture.

How do you think we should measure our progress towards this goal - if we are successful in achieving this goal what will have improved/be different?

Develop robust structures to measure outcomes related to each action that is inclusive of recommendations from traveller organisations; include well-being indicator models and models to track outcomes for traveller and ethnic minority learners i.e. ethnic identifiers.

Are there specific metrics you use to measure your organisation's achievement in relation to this goal that could be adopted by the Department?

The Yellow Flag programme's 'Intercultural Review of Students and Parents' can identify the experience of Black and ethnic minority students, especially Travellers by getting insight into:

- experiences of racism in the school
- actions delivered to combat racism
- ideas on (or how to progress) intercultural actions
- barriers to acquiring knowledge and appreciation of cultural diversity in the school

Are there particular priorities under this goal that we should progress in collaboration with your organisation?

Through our **Anti-racism and interculturalism training** for teachers, the Yellow Flag Programme has reported a greater impact on schools' capacity to respond to cultural diversity in the curriculum, and address racism and cultural diversity in school policies.

Our "Diversity Committee", established as a key step of the YFP, creates a safe space for minority ethnic students, especially Travellers to have a voice and to take a leadership role in their school. The diversity committee is a space where Traveller young people and ethnic minority young people can talk about their culture and traditions and deliver actions throughout the school. The result is Traveller and ethnic minority YP feel confident and proud of their identity; have a voice and are heard in in their school; feel recognised and valued for their contribution to school life.

How could greater collaboration/engagement benefit students under this goal?

Improved Learner experience (environment)

- Young people (YP), particularly traveller and ethnic minority YP point to having greater self-confidence in seeking support for identity-based bullying in schools.
- Young people, particularly traveller and ethnic minority YP identify key structures in the school as being effective for them: to feel welcome and recognised in school; to seek support for identity-based bullying and racist incidents in school; to create actions that promote diversity and challenge racism.
- Young people identify improved teacher skills to talk about diversity and promote anti-racism in schools.
- Students and teachers demonstrate an increased knowledge and awareness of traveller history and culture from curriculum-based learning.

Improved Learner success

- A greater retention of young people and ethnic minority YP, particular traveller young people in school.
- Young people (YP), particularly traveller and ethnic minority YP identifying improvements in their self-esteem and well-being at school

Goal 2: Increasing progress of learners at risk of educational disadvantage and learners with special educational needs

What do you think the key strategic priorities for education (primary and post-primary), over the next 3 years, should be?

Over half a million people identified as being non-Irish nationals according to the 2016 Census and over the past 20 years Ireland's diverse population is evident across every county. The Migrant Integration Strategy 2017 while welcomed has limitations on anti-racism objectives and does not include Irish Travellers within its remit.

The Intercultural Education Strategy 2010-2015¹ and more recently the Department of Education and Skills Action Plan on Bullying 2013² recognised that some children, particularly children of non-Irish nationals and Traveller children are more vulnerable to racist bullying because of their identity and recommended that preventative strategies needed to be put in place by schools to address this.

Long term evidence shows distinct gaps between Traveller and Non-Traveller pupils, based on outcomes of education, lack of progression to employment and disadvantage across other social determinants.

Key Strategic Priorities:

- Eradicate discriminatory practices towards Travellers in enrolment processes, in teaching practice and in school practice such as the Reduced Timetable. Take account of findings of the Traveller education pilot, implement actions to improve educational outcomes based on the evidence and extend the pilot to other areas, with adequate resources.
- Promote affirmative action to support ethnic minority students, especially Travellers to become teachers. This is essential in promoting positive role models as well as influencing the culture and ethos of schools.

List 3 key strategic actions that should be prioritised for primary and post-primary education over the next 3 years:

- Deliver a mandatory, **comprehensive anti-bullying education programme** that explores and defines identity-based bullying; stereotyping and has clear policy outcomes, not just guidelines, for all schools

¹ Intercultural Education Strategy, 2010- 2015 (2010) Department of Education and Skills and the Office of the Minister for Integration

² Action Plan On Bullying Report of the Anti-Bullying Working Group to the Minister for Education and Skills January 2013

- Implement **interculturalism and anti-racism training**, including an explicit focus on Travellers, for all teaching staff, to ensure that teachers can deliver on all curriculum aspects related to traveller culture effectively
- Deliver mandatory 'Intercultural Education' in all primary and post-primary schools, embed Traveller history and culture across curriculum learning so it holds equal value to other aspects of Irish history and culture. As a support to 'Intercultural Education' delivery, provide adequate resources to appoint a **dedicated Equality and Diversity officer** in each school.

How do you think we should measure our progress towards this goal - if we are successful in achieving this goal what will have improved/be different?

- **Develop a Strategy specific to oversee the work of the Equality and Diversity Officers**; routinely followed up with a survey to capture experiences of black and ethnic minority, especially Traveller students.
- Ensure Community and national Traveller representative organisations are in consultation to oversee the implementation of the strategy.

Are there specific metrics you use to measure your organisation's achievement in relation to this goal that could be adopted by the Department?

By way of an Intercultural review of students and parents, the Yellow Flag Programme is able to identify the experience of Black and ethnic minority students, especially Travellers by getting insight into:

- experiences of racism in the school
- action on combating racism
- ideas (or how to progress) intercultural action
- issues in relation to knowledge and appreciation of cultural diversity in the school

Are there particular priorities under this goal that we should progress in collaboration with your organisation?

The **Diversity Committee**, established as a key step of the YFP, plays a central role in providing an important space for minority ethnic students, especially Travellers to have a voice and to take a leadership role in their school. It allows them to share more about their culture and traditions throughout the school and become more confident and feel proud of their identity thereby, directly improving retention and attainment within schools.

Anti-racism and interculturalism training for teachers: The Yellow Flag Programme (YFP) provides a mandatory anti-racism and intercultural training to all staff in participating schools that provides educators an opportunity to explore issues of bias and cultural

knowledge, in turn, helping improve the experience of minority ethnic students in Yellow Flag schools.

How could greater collaboration/engagement benefit students under this goal?

The Yellow Flag Programme recognises the risk factors and potential for Black and minority ethnic students, including Traveller and Roma, to be vulnerable to experiences such as early school leaving, the psycho social impacts and potential for reduced education and employment outcomes because of insecure connection within the school environment and attached to negative experiences based on ethnicity.

Many ethnic minority students, especially Traveller pupils hide their identity /change their accent, for fear of being treated less favourably by teaching staff and their fellow students and or fear of bullying, racism and discrimination.

A regular review of their experiences in school and Equality and Diversity Officers' appointment to ensure that would directly contribute to better educational outcomes and retention for ethnic minority students.

Goal 3 – Helping those delivering education to continuously improve

What do you think the key strategic priorities for education (primary and post-primary), over the next 3 years, should be?

Issues such as conscious and unconscious bias, exclusion based on identity, historical prejudice, **absence in teacher bodies and school management**, institutional racism and poor awareness or knowledge of their culture have a highly detrimental effect on Roma and ethnic minority, especially Traveller students' education and learning but also on their sense of identity and self-belief. Mandatory anti-racist/intercultural training or continuous professional development for teaching staff has been proposed in several statutory policies but is not available in practice.

The Yellow Flag and the Irish Traveller Movement accord with findings and recommendations made by the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission to the UN CERD where the issue of racist bullying in schools was highlighted. *"While the crucial role of teachers in challenging such bullying was referenced, there were also calls for the issue of racism within the teaching profession to be addressed. Traveller and Roma children are significantly more likely to have negative experiences in school, including experiences of bullying, racism, and discrimination, and this can result in them hiding their identity or leaving school early".* Over 99% of entrants to primary teacher education identified as

'White Irish Settled' and only 2% of secondary school teachers come from minority ethnic backgrounds³.

Key Strategic Priorities:

- Compulsory anti-racism and intercultural training should be required for all teachers as part of pre-service and in-service teacher training along with visibility of Traveller culture in the curriculum.
- Promote affirmative action to support ethnic minority students, especially Travellers to become teachers. This is essential in promoting positive role models as well as influencing the culture and ethos of schools. This should be accompanied by actions to encourage members of ethnic minority communities to get involved in the teaching profession.

List 3 key strategic actions that should be prioritised for primary and post-primary education over the next 3 years:

- **Compulsory anti-racism and intercultural training for all teachers** as part of pre-service and in-service teacher training along with visibility of Traveller culture in the curriculum. Ensure that **Traveller history and culture**, and related curriculum features related to Travellers, are delivered by teachers with prior training and understanding of Traveller culture.
- Adequate resources to appoint a dedicated **Equality and Diversity Officer** as part of the teacher body.
- Strategy put in place to **encourage more members of ethnic minority communities to become teachers.**

How do you think we should measure our progress towards this goal - if we are successful in achieving this goal what will have improved/be different?

There should be regular evaluation to see if:

- Matters of unconscious bias are being addressed and anti-racist/intercultural training or continuous professional development for teaching staff is underway, to benefit all pupils.
- **Develop a Strategy specific to oversee the work of the Equality and Diversity Officers;** routinely followed up with a survey to capture experiences of black and ethnic minority, especially Traveller students.

³ IHREC (2019) Ireland and the Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination https://www.ihrec.ie/app/uploads/2019/11/IHREC_CERD_UN_Submission_Oct_19.pdf

Are there specific metrics you use to measure your organisation's achievement in relation to this goal that could be adopted by the Department?

Compulsory anti-racism and intercultural training - A significant high impact and cost benefit component of the Yellow Flag Programme is the anti-racism and intercultural awareness training provided to teachers (and the whole school staff team) which has been delivered **to approximately 2563 school staff to date. It currently has metrics based on those participating schools.**

Are there particular priorities under this goal that we should progress in collaboration with your organisation?

Yellow Flag has the expertise and ability to scale and grow this component of the Programme, in the short and medium term, and with the long-term view of adoption under DES policy.

How could greater collaboration/engagement benefit students under this goal?

At entry level for the Programme, Yellow Flag schools undertake an assessment of teacher training in equality, over 90% of teachers had not received any form of equality training.

Post the Yellow Flag Anti-Racism and Equality Training, schools reported that:

- 70% staff had a better understanding of racism,
- 72% staff had a better understanding of cultural diversity
- 63% staff had opportunity to discuss and raise relevant issues in the school

Ensuring such training will actively inform the school staff to be mindful of their behaviour towards students from minority ethnic groups, especially Travellers.

Goal 4: Building stronger bridges between education and the wider community

What do you think the key strategic priorities for education (primary and post-primary), over the next 3 years, should be?

National education policies supporting the inclusion of children of non-Irish nationals as well as Traveller children have included the Report and Recommendations for a Traveller Education Strategy published in 2006; The Intercultural Education Strategy 2010-2015; and more recently the DES Action Plan on Bullying 2013 which recognised that some children, particularly children of non-Irish nationals and Traveller children are more vulnerable to racist bullying because of their identity and recommended that preventative strategies needed to be put in place by schools to address this. However, both the Strategies and the

Plan, significant drivers of good intention, do not have mandatory requirements and so the ad hoc emphasis, is an inconsistent and ineffective remedy.

So, to build stronger bridges between education and the wider community, and the community of Travellers, a whole of education and community approach is required.

Key strategic priorities should include **promoting action to put in place mandatory requirements for schools to engage with community organisations representing minority ethnic groups, especially Traveller organisations** to establish a whole school and community approach towards the wellbeing of ethnic minority, especially Traveller students.

List 3 key strategic actions that should be prioritised for primary and post-primary education over the next 3 years.

1. Providing additional resources of support to primary and post primary schools i.e. a dedicated **Equality and Diversity officer**, allows primary and secondary schools to move beyond the school walls out into the wider school community.
2. **Mandatory structures facilitating minority ethnic parental engagement and linking with community organisations.**

How do you think we should measure our progress towards this goal- if we are successful in achieving this goal what will have improved/be different?

Success would be determined through a broad range of measures visible in schools such as:

- Feedback from ethnic minority parents and community organisations about engagement with schools.
- Monitoring engagement of the school with the wider community as part of the specific strategy to oversee the work of the Equality and Diversity Officers.

Are there specific metrics you use to measure your organisation's achievement in relation to this goal that could be adopted by the Department?

The Yellow Flag Programme implements a lot of actions in relation to this goal which are explained in detail below. Until now, we have measured impact with respect to these actions through feedback from community engagement and through an independent evaluation the programme undertook in 2018.

As mentioned previously, the YFP also undertakes an 'Intercultural Review' with parents and students in this regard.

Are there particular priorities under this goal that we should progress in collaboration with your organisation?

1. In Yellow Flag Step 6 '**Going beyond the school walls**' schools are given the support and tools to make links with key community leaders whether they be parents, faith leaders or community group leaders. In traveller and ethnic minority spaces, these key leaders are often an important link to parents and students in the school community and they support the policy actions of inclusion and diversity work that cross over between school, home, community centre and church spaces. Supporting schools to develop these relationships is an essential part of the solution to culture and diversity needs/issues for students in schools.
2. **Engagement by Black and minority ethnic, including Traveller, parents** was a source of benefit to the parents themselves and a resource for the YFP in the schools; knowledge from which they could bring back into the community.
3. **Connecting with minority ethnic groups, especially Traveller organisations** has offered a valued resource to the schools in implementing the YFP and, in some instances, offered valued networking opportunities for teachers. The building of relationships and connections between schools and local Traveller's and Migrant organisations in the community is one of the key benefits that have emerged from the programme. These links endure after the schools have completed the YFP.

How could greater collaboration/engagement benefit students under this goal?

The experience and situation of students, on foot of schools' engagement with the YFP, is an area of evident impact. This impact includes: strengthened relationships between students; increased confidence and pride among Black and minority ethnic, including Traveller students; new interest in cultural diversity among all students; and a greater ability to articulate issues of racism and cultural diversity among all students.

Goal 5: Providing better national planning and support services

What do you think the key strategic priorities for education (primary and post-primary), over the next 3 years, should be?

The Yellow Flag Programme was designed to have a broad multi-ethnic focus including supporting Traveller children to celebrate their ethnicity in an inclusive way alongside children from other minority ethnic groups. It has the potential to offer practical ways to make policy commitments happen across Government strategies, including in -

- the implementation of the education commitments in the National Traveller Roma Inclusion Strategy, in particular those being piloted in relation to retention of Traveller and Roma children; anti-bullying procedures and the Wellbeing

Policy Statement and Framework for Practice, of the Department of Education and Skills.

- the intercultural guidelines of the NCCA and current work on a Traveller history and culture module by the NCCA.
- the education commitments in the Migrant Integration Strategy, in particular those relating to admission and enrolment, teacher training, diversity in the school curriculum, and school involvement of migrant parents

Key strategic priorities should include making mandatory the commitments under the Migrant Integration Strategy. The DES should also now develop an action and implementation plan for all actions they have responsibility for under the National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy (NTRIS) in partnership with Traveller organisations.

List 3 key strategic actions that should be prioritised for primary and post-primary education over the next 3 years

- Investing adequate resources in schools to deliver on intercultural education outcomes including the appointment of a **dedicated Equality & Diversity Officer. Mandatory structures facilitating minority ethnic parental engagement and linking with community organisations** should be put to action as part of the Migrant Integration Strategy.
- **Mandatory cultural and diversity training of teachers**, delivered in collaboration with specialised trainers from ethnic minority and traveller groups, together with the introduction of history and traveller culture across the curriculum has great potential to heal the intergenerational hurt that has been experienced by so many travellers throughout education in Ireland. This would deliver a firm education commitment relating to the National Traveller Roma Inclusion Strategy and the Migrant Integration Strategy to improve the retention of Traveller and Roma children.
- Monitoring implementation and accountability should be implemented across all related school mechanisms, to measure effectiveness and reach to Traveller students, on all the actions related to strategy for Traveller education, and for the **National Traveller Roma Integration Strategy Traveller Education Pilot be incorporated into central planning and all related strategies streamlined.**

How do you think we should measure our progress towards this goal- if we are successful in achieving this goal what will have improved/be different?

Success will be achieved when our outcomes in formal education mirror national recommendations made in other education spaces. In 2017, the National Youth Council of Ireland's (NYCI) '**Make Minority a Priority**' outlined the following recommendations in their report:

- Ensure **appropriate supports and spaces are available to create safe and supported spaces for young minority ethnic people** where they can share their experiences with others from minority ethnic backgrounds to help them to explore and negotiate their sense of identity should be provided.
- Ensure **appropriate Anti-racism and intercultural training is delivered** as core competencies of youth workers in order to ensure that organisations are better equipped to support minority ethnic young people.

Are there specific metrics you use to measure your organisation's achievement in relation to this goal that could be adopted by the Department?

No

Are there particular priorities under this goal that we should progress in collaboration with your organisation?

The Yellow Flag Programme takes a whole-school approach centred around fostering a positive sense of identity in children of minority identities, and within the majority community. Through the Migrant Integration Strategy three actions related to implementation by the Department of Education and Skills, on enhancing schools approaches to cultural diversity and anti-racism, it aims to:

1. *To review the effectiveness of training for teachers on managing diversity and tackling racism* (action 31). The YFP provides mandatory anti-racism and intercultural training to all staff in participating schools.
2. *To ensure schools are encouraged to support migrant parents' participation in the school life of their children* (action 34). A compulsory step in the YFP, Step 6 Going Beyond the School Walls is about developing relationships with parents and the wider community and fostering parental involvement is a key objective throughout the programme.
3. *That the school curriculum will continue to foster and develop positive attitudes towards diversity and celebrating difference.* Step 7 of the YF Programme is Classroom Work, where a school is provided with a comprehensive set of multi-media resources and guides for teachers to bring themes of interculturalism, equality, diversity and anti-racism right across the subject ranges at primary and post-primary levels.

How could greater collaboration/engagement benefit students under this goal?

Investing adequate resources in schools to deliver on intercultural education outcomes effectively has a multiple effect on other national outcomes for children and young people. It delivers in relation to mental health and well-being as health and well-being organisations

and research, HSE, Mental Health Ireland and Jigsaw Youth Mental Health often reference the relevance of protective factors and risk factors in a young person's life.

Risk factors to a young person are experiences of discrimination and racism; isolation; bullying; feeling disconnected in school life. Protective factors are the antithesis, having a positive education experience; feeling connected in school with peers, teachers and the relevance of the curriculum to life experience; strong supports available to deal with identity-based bullying and discrimination; feeling their contribution in school life is valued. The more protective factors a young person has in their school community, there is a reduced likelihood of using services for their mental health.