



**Conference of World Bank,
UNICEF and OSF
7th-8th April 2014 – Bucharest**

***"Early Childhood Care and
Education – transition to school –
Roma children"***

“Early Childhood Care and Education – transition to school – Roma children”

- **Welcome**
- **Introductions**
- **Our time together**



Our time together!

- **In the time available we would like to share with you a **'Trilogy'****
- **1st story** – *"The big hole and the two skyscrapers"*
- **2nd story** – *"You know the sun could be shining!"*
- **3rd story** – *"The little lessons learned"*

“The big hole and the two skyscrapers”

This story you already know so I will be brief!



“The big hole and the two skyscrapers” (1)

- **European context**
- Roma population 12 to 15 million people (UNICEF);
- Unique history- Indian sub-continent in the 10th Century;
- All went wrong in the 16th Century;
- Social exclusion and despised status; (banishment, enslavement, expulsion, state persecution, racist discrimination, and genocide)
- Has it changed much today?

“The big hole and the two skyscrapers”(2)

○ Take education

- Chronic lack of accurate data that would afford ethnic disaggregation and comparative analysis;
- But, Roma children's **transfer** and acceptance into quality inclusive education, access, participation, retention and attainment are also chronic and in marked contrast to non-Roma populations in Europe; The realistic relative contrast!

Equal
educational
opportunities
The non-
Roma
communities



Unequal
educational
opportunities
The Roma
communities

“The big hole and the two skyscrapers”(3)

- “Serious lack of access to early childhood education contributes to their unsuccessful **transition** to primary school” *[ranges from only 0.2 to 17% in SEE countries]* (UNICEF);
- Primary school enrolments in CEE countries is also low *[for every 1 Romani child enrolled - 4 non-Romani enrolments]*;
- Between 20% and 30% of Romani children never go to school; *[How different this might be if they had access to quality ECEC]*
- Unacceptable levels of Romani young children and school age pupils suffering racially segregated school/class placements and in special/practical schools and classes;
- Between 30% and 50% drop out of primary school before the 8th grade;
- The data for secondary school education is also alarming in many countries.
- Participation in higher education is generally almost negligible.
- **This sorry tale perhaps betrays an historic lack of major investment into ECD and early childhood educational opportunities in some countries. In the UK I think we did not invest enough in Roma, Gypsy and Traveller families and young children. ‘Transition to the ski slopes with no skis!’**

So that is Europe's big hole!
It is stark, worrying and difficult to resolve!
Thus, the value of this conference and its wise focus on
'transition to school'



“The big hole and the two skyscrapers”

- **If some people with whom we work don't believe you (perhaps some politicians!) then there are two skyscrapers for them consult!**
- **The history books on Romani people [1,000s and 1,000s]**
- **And the international surveys/research reports over the last 30 years [1,000s and 1,000s]**(World Bank, UN, UNDP, Council of Europe, OSF, UNICEF, UNESCO, EU/FRA, OSCE etc.)
- **GOVERNMENTS CAN'T SAY THEY DO NOT KNOW!**



2nd story: “You know the sun could be shining” (1)

- **Many positive developments**
- **Open Society Foundations Roma Early Childhood Program: the *Kopaçi* Program**
 - Roma Early Childhood Inclusion Reports (RECI+) (Partnership of - OSF, UNICEF and REF)
 - Roma Parent Support Projects in communities
 - Roma Early Years Network (REYN)
- ‘RomEd’ **Council of Europe/EU** Mediators training;
- Roma teaching assistants;
- **The work of the World Bank** (Roma Education Fund) **UNICEF, EEA** (Bulgaria [transition](#) funding)
- **This list surely to be added to by your contributions to the discussion later – positive pictures emerging in many places in Europe.**

“You know the sun could be shining”

(2)

- **Because we know what to do!**
- Successful experience in the UK
 - What we found;
 - What we did;
 - What we achieved.

Context 1: What we found, what we did, what we achieved!

- ***What we found:***
- Concerns raised in mid 1960s (Plowden Report)– there was no data available but it was thought that almost **no** Roma, Gypsy, Traveller Children (tens of thousands) attended school or received a satisfactory education
- No children in early years/ECEC or kindergarten provision and so **transition** to primary education was not even relevant!
- **Why?**
- 1. Centuries of 'official' disinterest, persecution and social exclusion rooted in racism. (read English history books!)
- 2. Survival response in community with self-sufficient independence and minimal dependency on mainstream society.
- **Babies and young children kept at home in the heart of the family as a strategy for protection and social persistence in a hostile world!**

Context 2: What we found, what we did, what we achieved!

- ***What we did:***
- **From 1970s used central government funding to encourage nearly all local authorities to establish a bespoke/non-statutory Traveller (Roma) Education Support Service (TESS).** (for Roma/Gypsies/Travellers/Fairground/Circus/Bargee families – all nomadic at that time)
- **Mostly stand alone separate professional creations at local authority level but with national inspection responsibilities!**
- **Many services invested heavily in ECD and access to early years/ECEC provision so that the transfer to primary school would be successful.**

What we found, what we did, what we achieved!

(1) targeted investment

- *What we achieved:*
- **Development of highly skilled multidisciplinary professional teams with clear understanding of good policy, provision and practice in almost every local authority.**
- **Strong commitment to the issues and outspoken advocacy for/with the communities. Defended RGT families with their professional lives!**
- **Strong voice of national professional organisations e.g. NATT+ and ACERT (Google them!)**
- **Leading (frequently unwillingly) local and national governments to a better understanding and positive policy actions: e.g. Gypsy, Roma, Traveller history month and the National Strategies project.**
- **Unique model of best practice in all of Europe.**

What we found, what we did, what we achieved!

(2) Outcomes

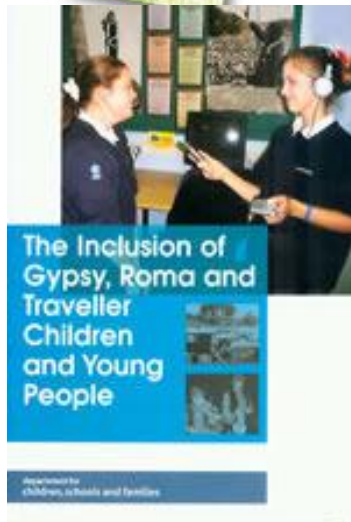
- Increasing access to quality early years (ECEC) provision easing the **transfer** to primary school.
- Most (90+%) primary children in school with good attendance, progress and improving levels of attainment
- 50% of secondary pupils in school for the first time in history.
- Provision of intensive high quality in-service training and the development of quality books and culturally relevant learning resources.
- **So Traveller Education Support Services (TESS) helped to roll back the damaging impact on educational opportunities of 400 years of 'racist abuse by the state'.** (I am only talking about the UK here!)

The development of quality books and culturally relevant learning resources to affirm ethnic identity and provide an inclusive curriculum for all children

- Wide range of educational 'toys' for young children



The National Strategies



So we had got rid of the bars of educational exclusion!





What we did to improve transfer and access to quality primary education?

- Outreach work to families with young children irrespective of location
- Building relationships of trust
- Providing medical advice and support
- Introducing families to local ECEC provision
- Providing 'toy libraries'
- Taking mobile nursery/kindergarten provision to the families on sites.

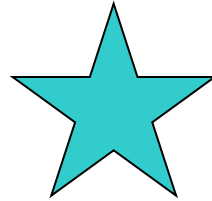
Outreach visits to sites - initially seen as challenging – police ‘no-go’ areas!



Toy libraries taken out to nomadic families with young children



Mobile Play-schools/kindergartens



But what tools; what helpful contexts; how did the TESSs work and how did we do it?

(1)

- **Establish a range of NGOs (Good cop/bad cop!) Be skilled in 'rattling sabres'!**
- **Tap into 'neutral' funding streams unnoticed!**
- **Build a national network of committed professional workers – use their anger and advocacy – protect them from attack!**
- **Provide national in-service training opportunities.**
- **Find sympatric civil servants/local government officers – support them in policy developments and advise them on strategies of how to outwit/stitch-up ministers and politicians and still keep their jobs!**
- **Ideally, you need an influential double agent mole on the inside who is willing to sleep with the enemy if needs be!**

But what tools; what helpful contexts; how did the TESSs work and how did we do it?

(2)

- There has to be quality ethnic data!
- Justify policy actions on the basis of compliance with existing legislation! “We have to do this because the law says so!”
- Facilitate community pressure when appropriate!
- Try to manage the mass media!
- Finally, always think about and anticipate the usual tactics of politicians with racist behaviour patterns/agendas (tendencies to: discriminate; segregate; untouchable; slight of hand; black-is-white; burial; data/research challenge; blind-eye; trickery.) **You will have seen it all!**

The need for a helpful context (3)

- Long history of educational inclusion (closed nearly all our special schools in the 1980s following the Lisbon Council on Inclusion)
- Cheaper to have one school than many! But parents wanted it too!
- Black/Asian immigration since 1950 bringing with them a mirror!
- Progress under the radar!
- Transition helped **greatly** by the employment of RGT professionals working in kindergartens and schools.

And finally, how did TESS work so successfully? (4)

- The right context for inclusion and anti-racism is essential
- Teams of professionals (e.g. Cambridgeshire)– outreach to communities/families and building trust for the first time with the 'official' world!
- Demonstrating delight, interest, respect, affection and value in RGT families, babies and young children
- Linking the shy hands of RGT parents to the reluctant hands of the kindergarten and primary school!
- Identifying and 'destroying' any hindrance to the 4 'As'
- (Acceptance/Access/Attendance/Achievement) (e.g. clothes, transport, dinners, books, medial support – you name it!!!!!!!)

But it did take 40 years! And it is far from finished!

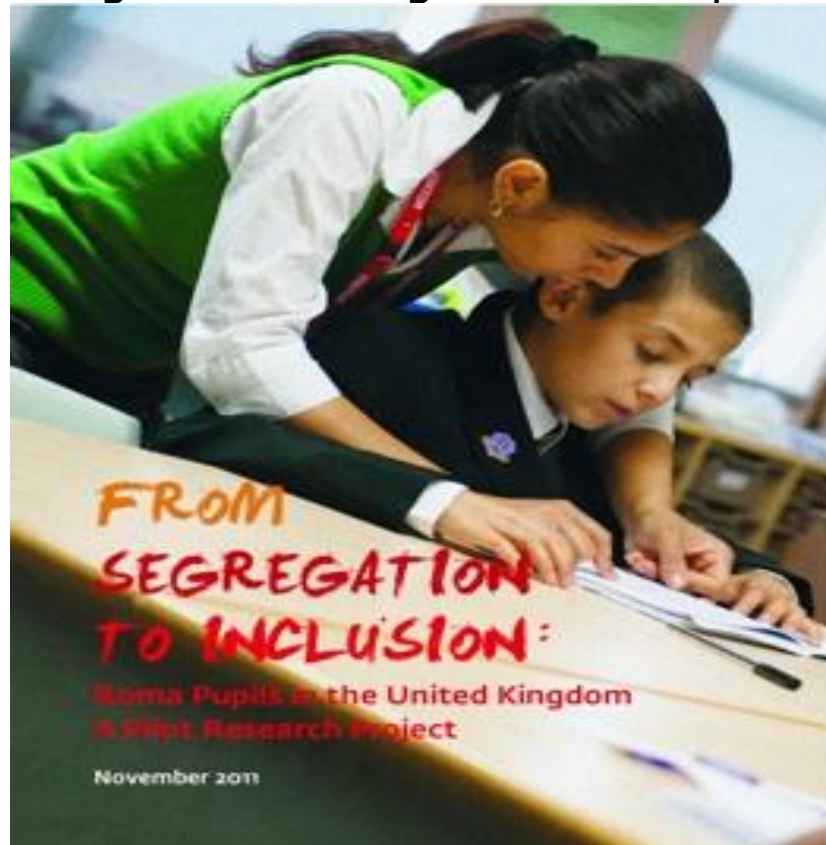


3rd story – “*The little lessons learned*” (1)

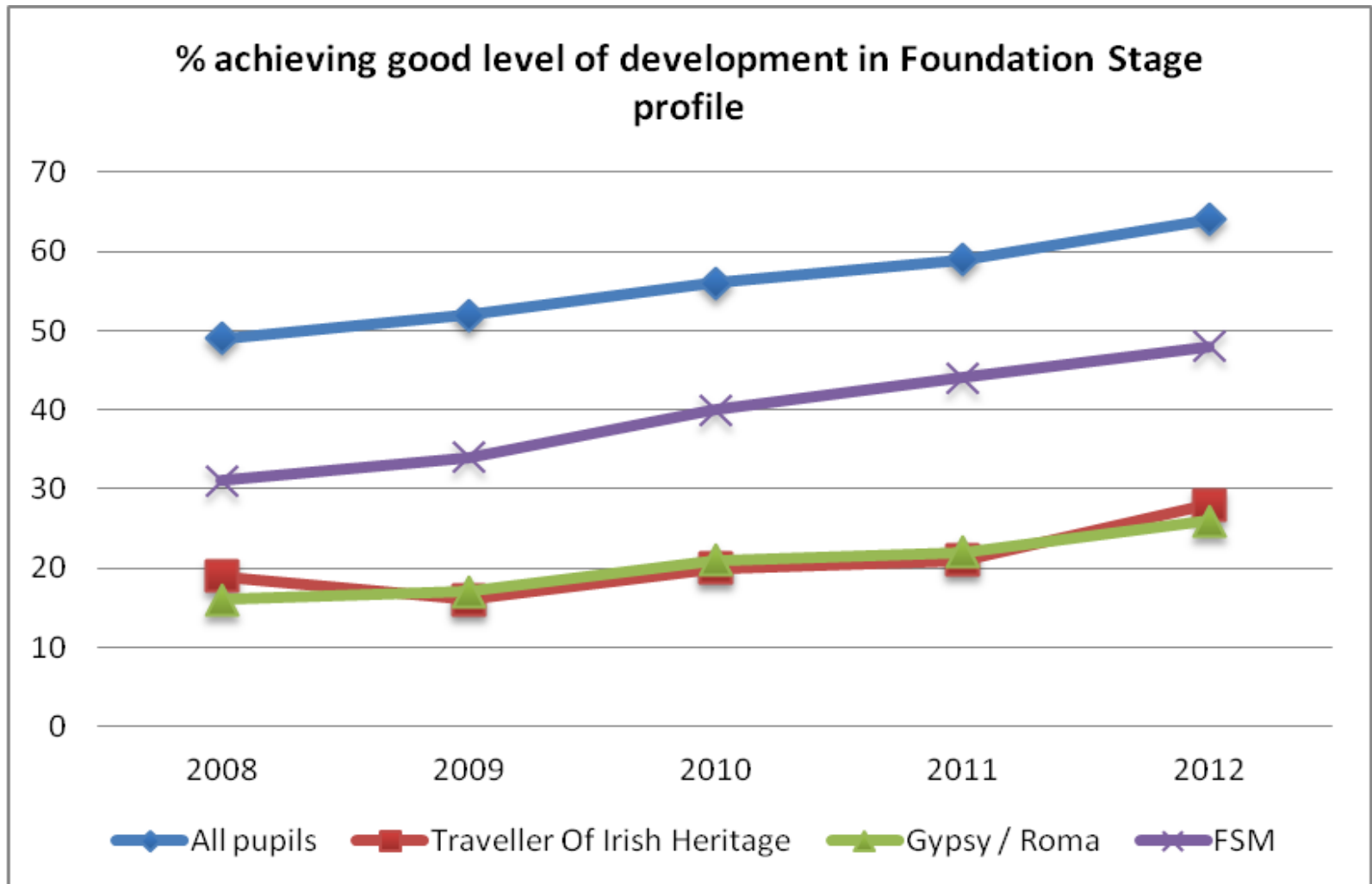
- 40 years is now not on our side! But we do know what to do and what works – it just needs moral political leadership and the will!
- The crucial importance of ethnic data!
- Never think that certain groups of children can't learn!
- All children have the greatest potential – but it is only realized if they get a good start in home-based ECD and quality kindergarten provision where the quality of teaching and learning is high, as too the teacher expectations!
- Then **transfer** to primary education will be that much more smooth and successful.
- And Roma, Gypsy and Traveller children can be very successful in good kindergartens and primary schools!

Transformative worlds for some lucky children

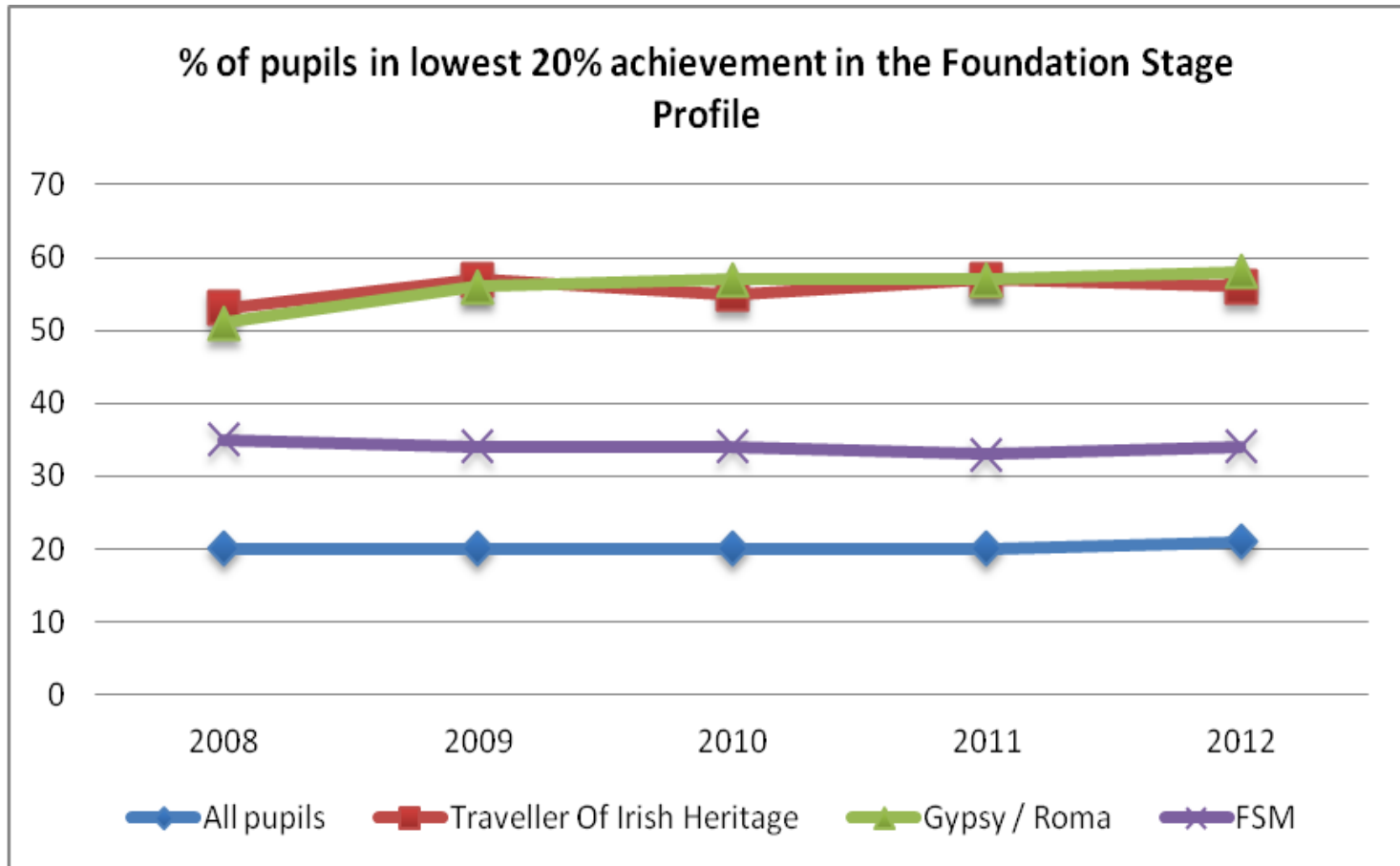
- Roma pupils in Czech and Slovak special schools show great unrecognised intelligence in UK primary schools!



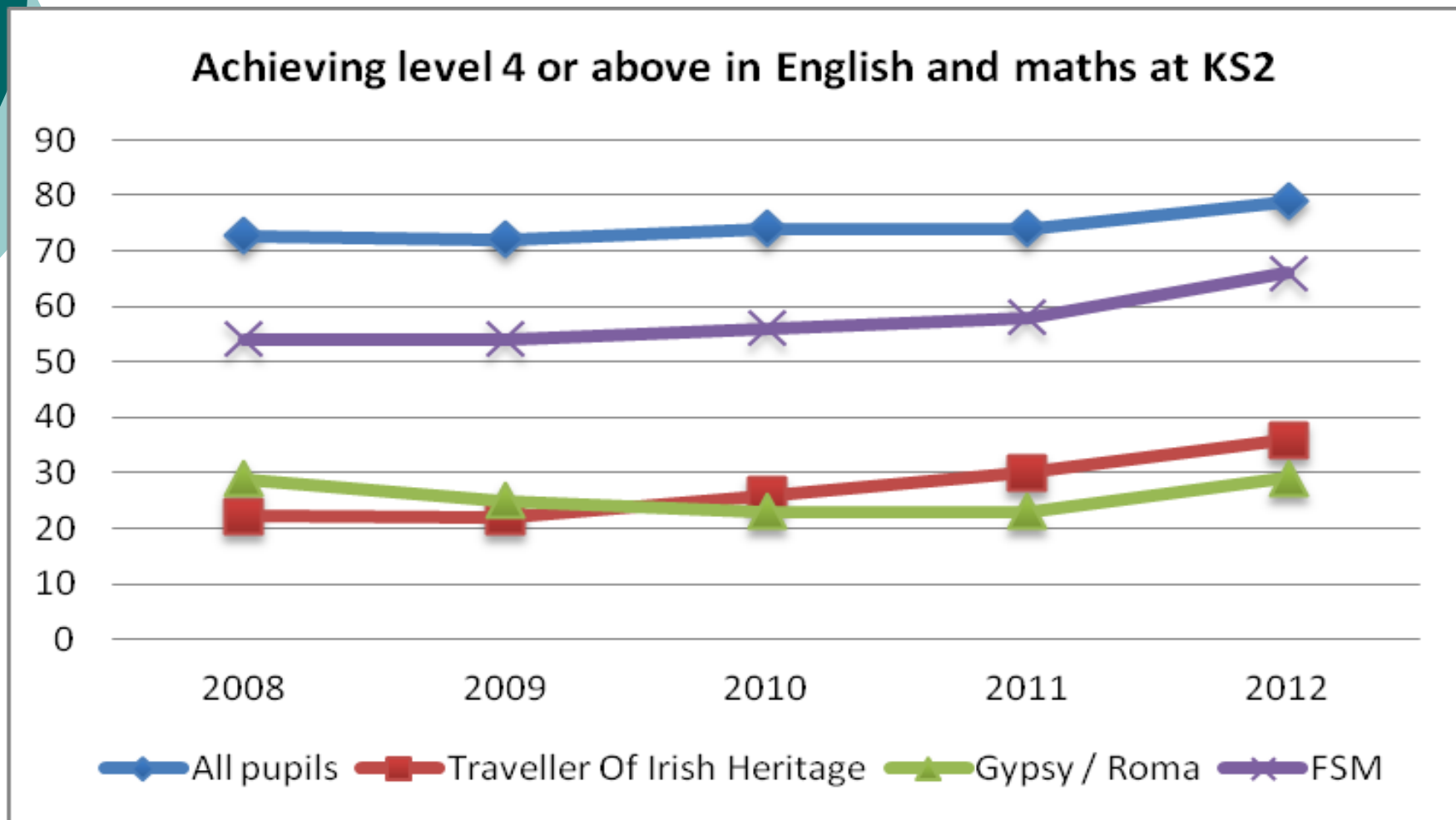
The crucial importance of ethnic data – UK educational data available for early years education 3-5 years of age (1)



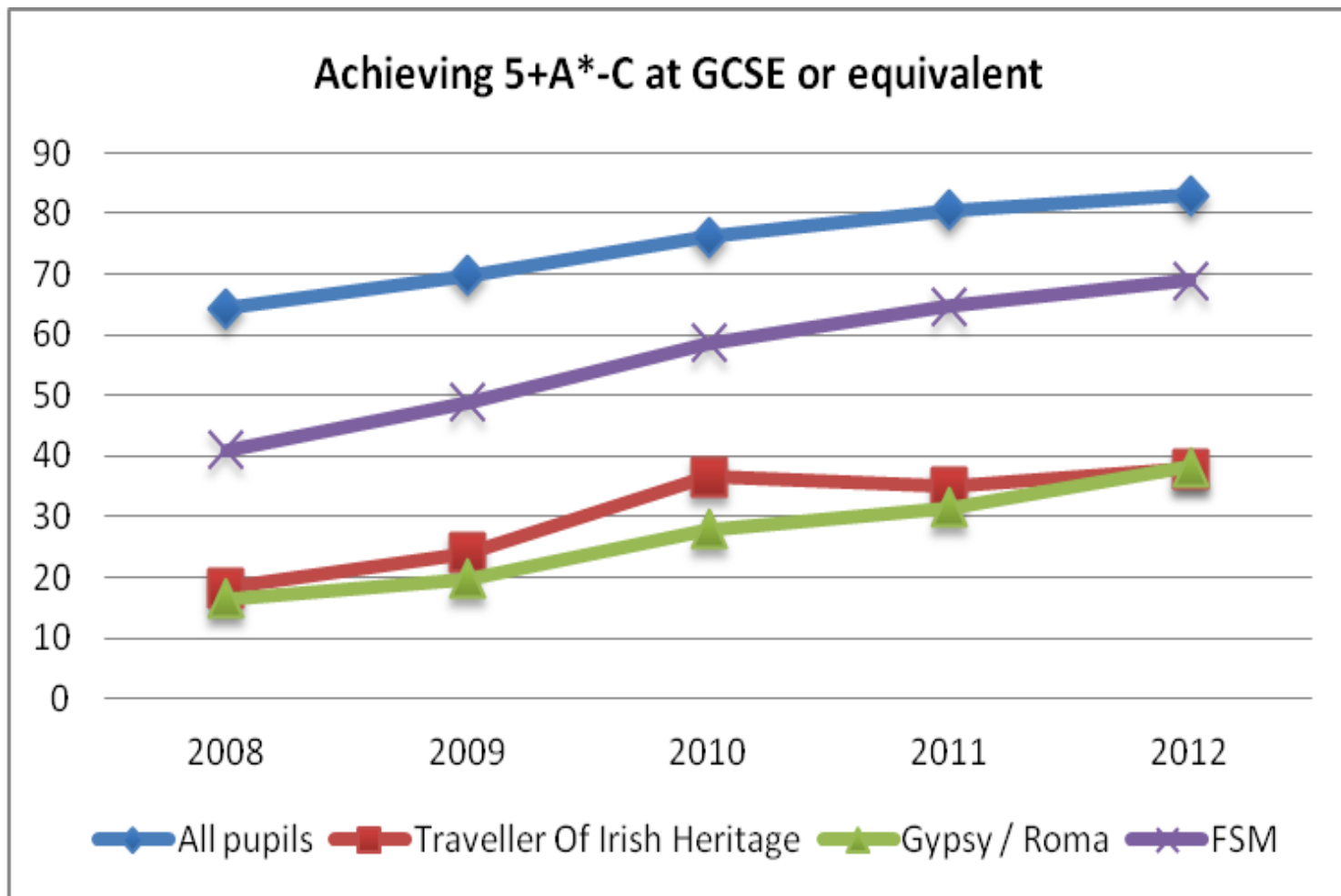
The crucial importance of ethnic data – UK educational data available for early years education 3-5 years of age (2)



The crucial importance of ethnic data – UK educational data available – end of Primary Education 11 years of age (2)



The crucial importance of ethnic data – UK educational data available – end of Primary Education 16 years of age (3)



3rd story – “The little lessons learned” (2)

- 40 years is now not on our side! But we do know what to do and what works – it just needs moral political leadership and the will!
- The crucial importance of data
- Never think that certain groups of children can't learn!
- The needs assessment must take into account the history of the Roma and what has happened to them over five centuries of abuse
- Avoid blaming the victims at all cost
- Need for central governments to require **ALL** kindergartens and schools to be inclusive with goals being flexibly achieved
- Invest in sharing best practice nationally and internationally.

Thank you for listening

- **Have a wonderful conference and let us welcome a new dawn in quality early childhood education for Roma and a smooth transition to school.**

