



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

Rt Hon Nadhim Zahawi
Secretary of State for Education
Sent by email: MINISTERS@education.gov.uk

11 February 2022

Dear Mr Zahawi

We are writing to you as Co-chairs of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Gypsies, Travellers and Roma, Officers of the Race Equality in Education APPG and Co-chair of the APPG for the Prevention of Genocide and Crimes Against Humanity, to urge the Department for Education to address the pressing need for a more inclusive teaching and learning environment for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children.

The case for including teachings about the Roma victims of the Holocaust and the need for schools to mark Gypsy Roma Traveller History Month has never been stronger.

Last week saw the exposure of an abhorrent Jimmy Carr sketch currently available on Netflix, where he celebrated the Roma Genocide. In the show he says:

“When people talk about the Holocaust, they talk about the tragedy and horror of 6 million Jewish lives being lost to the Nazi war machine. But they never mention the thousands of Gypsies that were killed by the Nazis. No one ever wants to talk about that, because no one ever wants to talk about the positives.”

An estimated 500,000 Roma and Sinti people were murdered, tortured, starved, and subjected to forced labour and medical experimentation under the Nazi regime – this is not the material of comedy. But beyond the comments in themselves, a deeper problem lies in that a lack of awareness of the harms of this rhetoric and about the Roma Holocaust, coupled with prejudicial views, which has enabled the show to be aired and applauded by audiences.

One of the keys to addressing these deep-seated prejudicial views is through education. Whilst the Holocaust is on the curriculum, inclusion of Roma as victims is not compulsory in those teachings. This must change, so that children and society as a whole can fully understand the dangers of ‘othering’ and racist views against Roma and Gypsy communities, which is very much alive in modern Britain. It is wholly inappropriate to leave it to the discretion of schools as to whether or not to include the annihilation of such a large proportion of Europe’s Roma and Sinti people - it must be recognised in teachings on the Holocaust.

Martin Docherty-Hughes MP

Member of Parliament for West Dunbartonshire | Scottish National Party
Titan Enterprise Business Centre, 1 Aurora Avenue, Queens Quay, Clydebank, Dunbartonshire, G81 1BF

T: 0141 952 2988 | E: martin.docherty.mp@parliament.uk | W: martindocherty.scot



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

The Council of Europe recognised the pressing need for this and called on member states to include the history of Roma and/or Travellers in school curricula and teaching materials. The [recommendation](#) of 2020 has yet to be adopted by the UK Government. We urge you to commit to address racial hatred against these marginalised groups and adopt the recommendation.

The saddening lack of awareness of the Roma victims in the Holocaust was shown in by [research](#) from YouGov which found that 55% of surveyed British adults did not know that an estimated 500,000 Roma and Sinti people were killed by the Nazis during the Holocaust.

The high levels of prejudicial views against Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities was highlighted by the Equalities and Human Rights Commission in their [National Barometer of Prejudice and Discrimination](#). This found that people in the UK held the highest level of prejudice towards Gypsies and Travellers of any protected characteristic group. The fact remains that Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities continue to experience hate and discrimination on a day-to-day basis in the UK. Greater understanding of cultural diversity and difference is the strongest approach to reducing prejudice – education is key to this.

There is a desperate need for positive narratives about Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities to be taught and an important and achievable step would be for the Department for Education to support schools to celebrate Gypsy, Roma and Traveller History Month.

These measures would also contribute some desperately needed steps to help address the poor educational outcomes for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children, who have the [lowest educational attainment](#) at GCSE of all ethnic groups in the UK. Contributing factors to this include the lack of understanding and visibility of the culture and history, as well as the high levels of [racist bullying and prejudicial views held within educational institutions](#). This arguably contributes to the substantial drop-out of the many Gypsy, Traveller and Roma children who are the victims of such bullying, particularly from secondary school.

A number of Cabinet Ministers have rightly condemned the 'joke' but Government must move to address this in a way that effects meaningful change. Whilst we are encouraged to see the funding package announced by Communities Minister in July 2021 to support the educational outcomes of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children, wider work needs to be done address prejudice and to improve the outcomes nationally.

We call on you, as Secretary of State for Education to take action and implement the teaching of the Roma genocide as a mandatory part of Holocaust teaching in schools, and to support schools to mark Gypsy, Roma, Traveller History Month. This needs to be part of a wider

Martin Docherty-Hughes MP

Member of Parliament for West Dunbartonshire | Scottish National Party
Titan Enterprise Business Centre, 1 Aurora Avenue, Queens Quay, Clydebank, Dunbartonshire, G81 1BF

T: 0141 952 2988 | **E:** martin.docherty.mp@parliament.uk | **W:** martindocherty.scot



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

package of measures to improve the educational outcomes of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children and to tackle deep-seated prejudice.

Yours sincerely

Martin Docherty Hughes MP and Baroness Janet Whitaker, Co-chairs of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Gypsies, Travellers and Roma

Lord Nick Bourne, Honorary President of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Gypsies, Travellers and Roma

Lord Simon Woolley, Vice Chair and Kim Johnson MP Officer of the Race Equality in Education APPG

Fleur Anderson MP, Co-chair of the APPG for the Prevention of Genocide and Crimes Against Humanity

Martin Docherty-Hughes MP

Member of Parliament for West Dunbartonshire | Scottish National Party
Titan Enterprise Business Centre, 1 Aurora Avenue, Queens Quay, Clydebank, Dunbartonshire, G81 1BF

T: 0141 952 2988 | **E:** martin.docherty.mp@parliament.uk | **W:** martindocherty.scot