



## **Note on DEIS, DEIS Plus and the Traveller and Roma Education Strategy**

**April 2026**

*Pavee Point welcomes the introduction of the DEIS Plus scheme as an important step towards addressing educational inequality in Ireland. As part of the broader DEIS Strategy to 2035, DEIS Plus provides enhanced, targeted supports to schools with the highest concentrations of need. The scale of investment signals a recognition that existing measures have not been sufficient to address structural inequalities within the education system.*

*For Traveller and Roma children and young people, who disproportionately experience inequality in terms of access, experience, and outcomes, DEIS Plus presents an important opportunity. Its focus on targeted intervention, additional staffing, and enhanced wellbeing and engagement supports align with key priorities identified in the Traveller and Roma Education Strategy (TRES) and the National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy II (NTRIS).*

*However, the extent to which this translates into meaningful change will depend on how supports are implemented in practice, and whether they are aligned across policy frameworks and governmental departments.*

### **Policy Context: DEIS, DEIS Plus and TRES**

The DEIS Strategy to 2035, its Implementation Plan 2026–2028, and the DEIS Plus scheme together form the core framework for addressing educational inequality in Ireland. The DEIS Strategy provides the overarching policy architecture, the Implementation Plan sets out delivery mechanisms, and DEIS Plus introduces intensified supports for schools with the highest levels of need.

TRES provides a complementary, targeted and rights-based framework focused on the specific experiences of Travellers and Roma.

There is clear alignment between these frameworks. The DEIS Strategy explicitly recognises Traveller and Roma children within its equity framework and situates itself within a broader policy landscape that includes TRES, the Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice, and national attendance and inclusion initiatives. The Implementation Plan further reinforces this through commitments to implement TRES, evaluate community-based supports, and improve early years participation for Traveller and Roma children.

Taken together, these frameworks demonstrate a shared focus on key areas including attendance, retention, transitions, parental engagement, and mental health/well-being.

## **Strong Foundations: Alignment with Key Areas of Need**

There is significant overlap between DEIS and TRES in terms of the challenges they seek to address. Both frameworks identify attendance, progression through the education system, transitions, parental engagement, and student wellbeing as critical pressure points.

The expansion of Home School Community Liaison (HSCCL) supports, increased guidance provision, and a stronger emphasis on wellbeing and school-community engagement are particularly relevant. These measures align closely with TRES priorities around trust-building, participation, and inclusive school environments.

The focus on transitions, including progression to further and higher education, is also important given the well-documented drop-off points for Traveller and Roma students. Similarly, the emphasis on school climate and belonging reflects a shared understanding that engagement in education is shaped by students' experiences within the school environment.

These developments represent a meaningful investment in areas that are known to support improved outcomes for Travellers and Roma.

## **From Recognition to Implementation: A Gap in Delivery**

Despite this alignment, a key challenge remains in how these policies are implemented in practice.

A strength of DEIS Plus lies in its data-driven identification model, which includes Traveller and Roma children as priority cohorts in determining school eligibility. However, while Travellers and Roma are recognised in how resources are allocated, **they are not explicitly reflected in how supports are designed or delivered.**

This creates a central tension: Traveller and Roma learners are visible in identification, but less visible in implementation. This is particularly significant given their overrepresentation in DEIS and DEIS Plus schools, and continued poorer outcomes across attendance, retention, and progression.

The relationship between DEIS and TRES further highlights this issue. While DEIS and DEIS Plus provide mainstream supports, TRES outlines targeted actions addressing the specific structural barriers faced by Travellers and Roma. However, alignment between these frameworks is not clearly articulated, raising concerns about policy coherence and coordinated delivery.

## **Data, Visibility and Accountability**

Both DEIS and TRES place strong emphasis on data, monitoring, and evaluation. The Implementation Plan includes commitments to strengthening data systems and improving the evidence base for policy.

However, the effectiveness of these measures depends on the quality of ethnicity data. Where Traveller and Roma children and young people are under-identified or inconsistently recorded, there

is a risk that they remain unseen in both delivery and evaluation. This limits the ability to effectively target supports, measure outcomes, and ensure accountability.

## **Conclusion**

The DEIS framework, including DEIS Plus, represents a significant investment in addressing educational inequality and aligns with many of the priorities identified in Traveller and Roma education policy.

However, the key challenge is one of integration. While DEIS provides the mainstream architecture for addressing inequality, TRES provides the targeted framework required to ensure that Traveller and Roma students are not overlooked within a generalised model.

Ensuring meaningful impact will require stronger alignment between these frameworks, a whole-of-government approach to delivery, and a consistent focus on culturally responsive and anti-racist implementation. Without this, there is a risk that Travellers and Roma, while recognised in policy, may not be fully supported in practice.