



House of Commons
Education Committee

Extremism in schools: the Trojan Horse affair

Seventh Report of Session 2014–15

*Report, together with formal minutes relating
to the report*

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The Education Committee

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Summary

The Trojan Horse affair epitomises many of the questions and concerns expressed elsewhere about the changing school landscape and the overlapping roles of the organisations responsible for oversight of schools. No evidence of extremism or radicalisation, apart from a single isolated incident, was found by any of the inquiries and there was no evidence of a sustained plot nor of a similar situation pertaining elsewhere in the country. Our report therefore covers the response of the Department for Education and Ofsted to the situation and wider lessons for the school system.

The number of overlapping inquiries contributed to the sense of crisis and confusion, and the number of reports, coming out at different times and often leaked in advance, was far from helpful. The scope for coordination between inquiries by the Education Funding Agency, Ofsted and others is restricted by their statutory roles but more coordination could and should have been achieved. All the reports included recommendations that went far beyond the situation in the particular schools concerned and the DfE should draw together the recommendations from all the investigations and set out its response.

Ofsted's inability to identify problems at some Birmingham schools on first inspection when they were found shortly afterwards to be failing raises questions about the appropriateness of the framework and the reliability and robustness of Ofsted's judgements and how they are reached. Confidence in Ofsted has been undermined and efforts should be made by the inspectorate to restore it in Birmingham and beyond.

The proven "lack of inquisitiveness" within the DfE prior to the receipt of the Trojan Horse letter may be partially explained by the general level of awareness of such issues at the time. However, the Department was slow to take an active interest between the receipt of the letter in December 2013 and March 2014 when the issue became public. This is more surprising, given the change in context and the heightened emphasis on combating radicalisation and extremism.

The greater autonomy of academies makes it easier for a group of similar-minded people to control a school. While it should be remembered that several of the governors criticised in Birmingham were local government appointees, the DfE needs to be alert to the risks of abuse of academy freedoms of all kinds and be able to respond quickly.

It is vital that information is shared effectively between the various bodies responsible for oversight of schools. This was a problem in Birmingham and the DfE needs to keep its new arrangements under review to ensure that they are working well.

The recent steps taken to strengthen the DfE's Due Diligence and Counter Extremism Division are welcome, all the more so for being overdue. We recommend that the Secretary of State make an annual written ministerial statement on the priorities and achievements of the DDCED.

The British values which are now to be promoted in all schools are universal and an

important part of what children should learn. We support the introduction of the requirement on all schools to ensure that such values are actively promoted to all students. Monitoring how they are promoted in individual schools must be done with common sense and sensitivity.

1 Introduction

Background

1. In March 2014 an anonymous document came to light, claiming that schools in Birmingham had been deliberately targeted by Muslims standing as school governors in order to replace school leaders with heads who would adopt a more Islamic agenda in running the schools. The ‘Trojan Horse’ letter purported to offer advice to communities in other cities as to how this could be done.¹

2. The document had been sent to the leader of Birmingham City Council in November 2013, with a covering letter (also anonymous) stating that “This letter was found when I was clearing my bosses files and I think you should be aware that I am shocked at what your officers are doing.” The letter writer adds “You have 7 days to investigate this matter after which it will be sent to a national newspaper who I am sure will treat it seriously”.²

3. At least five official investigations were held into the allegations made in the letter, instigated by Ofsted, the Department for Education (DfE), the Education Funding Agency (EFA), Birmingham City Council and the West Midlands police. The fallout from these reports is not yet complete: Ofsted is still working with the schools that were put into special measures as a result of its inspections in spring 2014, whilst the latest update from the Secretary of State for Education on the Government’s actions to address issues raised was given to the House of Commons on 29 January 2015. Birmingham City Council has agreed an improvement plan which it must now put into action.

4. This is therefore a situation which has received significant amounts of official attention and resources. It has also commanded much media attention and attracted much controversy, not least amongst communities in Birmingham and those affected by the wider implementation of measures introduced in response to the investigations. On this basis, we decided to inquire into extremism in schools and the Trojan Horse affair.

Conduct of inquiry

5. In May 2014 we requested information from Birmingham City Council, Ofsted and the DfE on the terms of reference of their investigations, their scope, mode of operation and timetable, and co-ordination with other investigations. Following this, we took oral evidence in July 2014 from Ofsted, in September 2014 from Ian Kershaw, Birmingham City Council’s Independent Adviser, from Peter Clarke, Education Commissioner for Birmingham and from Birmingham City Council and in October 2014 from the new Secretary of State for Education, Nicky Morgan MP, who had replaced Michael Gove MP at the Cabinet reshuffle in July. Many of the issues which arise from the Trojan Horse

1 See annex 2 of Report into allegations concerning Birmingham schools arising from the ‘Trojan Horse’ letter, HC 576, July 2014 [Clarke report] for text of letter

2 Ibid, p 108

investigation illustrate wider concerns and we have also drawn upon evidence collected in the course of our other inquiries, particularly that into academies and free schools.

6. Our work has also examined, and benefitted from, the reports produced by Ian Kershaw for Birmingham City Council and Peter Clarke for the Secretary of State.³

Scope of inquiry and report

7. All the official investigations into the Trojan Horse allegations agree that the number of schools affected is small and that there is no evidence of widespread extremism in schools in Birmingham or elsewhere in the country. In the summary to his report, Ian Kershaw stressed the need to keep his findings in perspective, stating that “My report deals with a small number of schools where there are concerns and system weaknesses that exist [...] The issues covered in my report do not significantly affect the majority of schools in Birmingham and this bigger picture must not be forgotten. [...]”⁴ Similarly, Nicky Morgan during her statement on 22 July described Peter Clarke’s report as showing that “this was a determined effort by a small number of people [...] to gain control of a small number of schools”.⁵ Although Ofsted has investigated allegations of similar practices or of extremism in other forms elsewhere, especially in Tower Hamlets, there is no evidence of a widespread plot to take over schools. In January 2015 the DfE stated that it had “found no area to have the same extent of vulnerabilities in its state schools as Birmingham”.⁶

8. All our witnesses also accepted that they had found no evidence of extremism in schools. Sir Michael Wilshaw told us: “We did not see extremism in schools. What we did see was the promotion of a culture that would, if that culture continued, have made the children in those schools vulnerable to extremism because of [...] the disconnection from wider society and cultural isolation”.⁷ Reflecting this, Nicky Morgan told the House on 22 July: “There has been no evidence of direct radicalisation or violent extremism but there is a clear account in the [Clarke] report of people in positions of influence in these schools, who have a restricted and narrow interpretation of their faith, not promoting British values and failing to challenge the extremist views of others”.⁸ We heard only one instance to the contrary: Ian Kershaw told us that he had evidence that a film promoting violent jihadist extremism had been shown to children in one classroom and the teacher had not been disciplined.⁹

9. The one example given by Ian Kershaw is clearly unacceptable and action should have been taken by the school to prevent it, but a single instance does not warrant headline

3 Investigation report: Trojan Horse letter, July 2014 [Kershaw report]; Report into allegations concerning Birmingham schools arising from the ‘Trojan Horse’ letter, HC 576, July 2014 [Clarke report]

4 Kershaw, para 4

5 HC Deb, 22 July 2014, [col 1252](#)

6 Implementation of recommendations from “Report into allegations concerning Birmingham schools arising from the ‘Trojan Horse’ letter”, DfE, 29 January 2015

7 Q2

8 HC Deb, 22 July 2014, [col 1247](#)

9 Qq175-7

claims that students in Birmingham—or elsewhere in England—are being exposed to extremism by their teachers. The Birmingham City Council Trojan Horse Review Group was firm that it did not “support the lazy conflation—frequently characterised in the national media in recent months—of what Ofsted have termed issues around ‘a narrow faith based ideology’ and questions of radicalisation, extremism or terrorism”.¹⁰ We agree.

10. We also note that we have seen no evidence to support claims of an organised plot to take over English schools. We discussed this in some detail with witnesses.

11. In keeping with these findings, our report covers the response of the DfE, Ofsted and Birmingham City Council to the situation and wider lessons for the school system. We concentrate on the processes followed by those responsible for oversight and the recommendations made in the various reports, rather than the detailed accounts of how the Trojan Horse situation came about or what the investigations found.

10 Trojan Horse Review Group, Report to Leader of Birmingham City Council, 18 July 2014, p.13

2 The investigations

Timeline

12. We have put together the following timeline of key events connected to the Trojan Horse affair:

2010

Birmingham head tells DfE and others of his concerns about Birmingham schools

2013

November: Anonymous 'Trojan Horse' letter sent to Birmingham City Council and others, claiming the existence of a plot to impose a more hardline Muslim ethos on Birmingham schools, resulting in the ousting of four headteachers.

December: The DfE receives a copy of the letter. West Midlands police counter-terrorism unit, alerted by BCC, start to examine the case.

2014

5-6 March: First inspection by Ofsted of Park View.

7 March: The existence of the letter becomes public. The DfE, Education Funding Agency and Birmingham City Council confirm they are investigating.

17-18 March: Ofsted undertakes a second inspection of Park View.

21-25 March: EFA visits Park View academies.

27 March: Michael Gove writes to Ofsted asking them to investigate 15 named schools

31 March: The DfE says it is looking into claims that the Trojan Horse plot targeted 12 schools.

2-10 April: Ofsted inspects 15 schools.

9 April: The governors of Park View Educational Trust describe the ongoing investigations as a "witch-hunt".

10-11 April: EFA visits Oldknow Academy.

11 April: Birmingham City Council appoints Ian Kershaw as Independent Chief Advisor, reporting to the Trojan Horse Review Group

14 April: Birmingham City Council says it is looking into allegations involving 25 schools in the city, including primaries, secondaries and academies. Council leader Sir Albert Bore says he does not believe there is a "plot".

15 April: Michael Gove appoints Peter Clarke as Education Commissioner to take an

overview of evidence in relation to Birmingham schools and the allegations relating to the 'Trojan Horse letter'.

20 April: Sir Michael Wilshaw takes personal charge of Ofsted's Trojan Horse investigations.

3 May: Sir Michael says Ofsted has inspected 21 schools.

3 June: Three of the schools under investigation publish their Ofsted reports. Ninestiles and Small Heath are rated as "outstanding" and Washwood Heath as "good".

3 June: Home Secretary Theresa May writes to Michael Gove asking whether it is true that the DfE was warned about the allegations in 2010 and Birmingham Council warned as far back as 2008.

9 June: Ofsted publishes inspection reports on the 21 schools and the DfE publishes Education Funding Agency reports on Park View Educational Trust and Oldknow Academy Trust. Five schools, including four academies, are placed in special measures. Lord Nash writes to the four academies, setting out the steps which must be taken by 4 July to address breaches of the funding agreement, the Academies Financial Handbook and the Independent Schools Standards. The five schools are: Park View Academy, Nansen Primary School, Golden Hillock School (together forming Park View Educational Trust); Oldknow Academy; and Saltley School and Specialist Science College. A sixth school, Alston Primary School, was already in special measures and remains so.

19 June: Saltley School governors resign en masse.

15 July: Chair of Governors, Tahir Alam, and board of trustees at Park View Educational Trust resign.

18 July: Draft of Clarke report published in the Guardian. Kershaw report published by Birmingham City Council.

22 July: Clarke report published by the DfE. Nicky Morgan makes statement to the House.

19 August: Oldknow Academy Trust governors resign and new members appointed, led by Dr Barry Henley, a Birmingham City Councillor. Bhupinder Kondal withdraws resignation as head of Oldknow and takes up post again.

24 September: Appointment of Sir Mike Tomlinson as education commissioner for Birmingham.

2015

16 January: Publication of Wormald review of DfE action on warnings received prior to the Trojan Horse letter

29 January: Statement to the House by Nicky Morgan on progress in implementing Clarke report recommendations.

Action by the DfE before the Trojan Horse letter

13. Rumours about what was happening in schools in Birmingham have allegedly been around for at least a decade. The DfE acknowledged that a headteacher from the city, Mr Tim Boyes, told the Department of his concerns in 2010. Mr Gove did not attend the meeting, although another Minister was present.¹¹ In addition, Ian Kershaw found “evidence [which] suggests that the DfE was aware of the connections between some of the individuals and the potential risks that this posed”.¹²

14. In his statement to the House in June 2014, Mr Gove accepted that “There are questions for [...] the Department for Education” about whether warning signs were missed. He asked the Permanent Secretary, Chris Wormald, to investigate how the DfE had dealt with warnings “since the formation of this Government and before”.¹³ After a considerable delay, the Wormald review was finally published in January 2015. It found that there were no instances where specific “warnings” were ignored by the Department and no cases where Departmental officials or Ministers acted inappropriately. It did find that “the Department has lacked inquisitiveness on this issue, and [...] has not historically treated the issue with the same robustness as it has demonstrated in dealing with warnings about, for example, child protection”.¹⁴ Mr Wormald concluded that “the Department needs to be more vigilant, more inquisitive and have more robust systems in place than it has in the past”.¹⁵

Reaction to the Trojan Horse letter

15. On 7 March 2014, when the existence of the Trojan Horse letter became public, the DfE and the EFA confirmed to the press that they were investigating the allegations but did not make clear what form these investigations had taken since December 2013. Nearly three weeks then passed before Michael Gove wrote to Ofsted on 27 March, commissioning inspections of 15 schools in Birmingham under section 8(1) of the Education Act 2005. Mr Gove’s letter referred to “serious allegations made in relation to some of these schools, including a large number of reports in the press in the last month” and stated that “Press coverage also alleges that the same behaviours have been seen in other local schools”.¹⁶

16. Mr Gove told the House on 9 June that “when the specific allegations in the Trojan horse letter were shared with the Department for Education, it was rapid in seeking to deal with those problems and ensuring that appropriate inspection and action was taken”.¹⁷ We requested further information on the actions of the DfE following receipt of the letter. In response, the DfE set out how between December and the end of January 2015 officials had

11 Review into possible warnings to DfE relating to extremism in Birmingham schools (the Wormald Review), January 2015, DfE

12 Kershaw report, p. 24

13 HC Deb, 9 June 2014, [col 265](#)

14 The Wormald Review, conclusions

15 Ibid

16 Letter from Michael Gove to Sir Michael Wilshaw, HMCI, 27 March 2014

17 HC Deb, 9 June 2014, [col 279](#)

“kept in touch with BCC over the progress of its internal enquiry into the allegations and began its own investigations of the allegations using open source checking on the schools and individuals mentioned within the letter”.¹⁸ The DfE supplied the following timeline of “significant dates” which shows how action within the DfE sped up once Ofsted has started its inspections in Birmingham.

- 5 February: DfE officials talk to whistleblowers about Park View School.
- 10 February: DfE passes on detailed allegations about Park View School to Ofsted, who subsequently decide to inspect the three academies run by PVET.
- 12 February: Meeting between Michael Gove and Sir Albert Bore.
- 5-6 March: Ofsted section 8 inspection of Park View School.
- 7 March: DfE hears concerns from a former governor of Golden Hillock School.
- 17-18 March: Ofsted full section 5 inspection of Park View School.
- 19 March: Michael Gove hosts meeting with BCC, West Midlands Police and other government departments to discuss Birmingham.
- 20 March: Michael Gove meets two Birmingham MPs.
- 24 March: Michael Gove chairs meeting with three Birmingham MPs and an MP’s researcher
- 21, 24, 25 March: The Education Funding Agency visits the three academies in Park View Trust to monitor compliance with Funding Agreements and Independent School Standards.
- 27 March: Michael Gove commissions Ofsted to carry out a batch inspection of 15 schools in Birmingham.
- April 2-10: Those batch inspections of 15 schools are carried out by Ofsted.
- April 10-11: The Education Funding Agency visits Oldknow Academy to monitor compliance with the Funding Agreement and Independent School Standards.
- April 15: Peter Clarke is appointed as Education Commissioner and DfE publishes a press notice together with his Terms of Reference.¹⁹

18 Department for Education ([EIS0002](#)) p1

19 Department for Education ([EIS0002](#)) p2

Coordination of investigatory activity

17. By mid-April 2014 the number of investigations into schools in Birmingham had escalated, with the EFA, BCC, Ofsted, and the Education Commissioner, not to mention the police, all conducting inquiries with different terms of reference and involving different schools. With all this activity already underway, on 15 April 2014 Michael Gove appointed Peter Clarke, former head of counter-terrorism at the Met police, as Education Commissioner with a remit:

To further investigate the allegations and the representations and evidence received to date, and by drawing on a range of further material and evidence, to establish fully what has happened in the schools of concern; to understand the implications for the school system both in Birmingham and more widely with a view to making recommendations to ensure that schools in Birmingham are well-governed and that Birmingham's children are adequately safeguarded from exposure to extremist views or radicalisation.

18. The appointment of Peter Clarke was greeted with concern by some of those involved in Birmingham. The Chief Executive of BCC explained that the difficulty was “the message [the appointment] sent to communities that somebody with a strong counterterrorism background was being sent in, and also the message it gave to head teachers that we were not having a joint inquiry with the local authority”.²⁰ Councillor Jones explained:

The local authority had hoped to conduct an inquiry that was joint between us, the Department for Education and Ofsted, and DCLG were also involved in those discussions [...] At the 11th hour, the Secretary of State decided it would not be a joint inquiry, and announced the appointment of Peter Clarke to conduct a separate inquiry. He then decided to instruct Ofsted to inspect the schools separately [...] We could have achieved a cheaper and more streamlined inquiry had we had one inquiry rather than the three disparate ones.²¹

19. Ofsted questioned Cllr Jones's chronology and asserted in supplementary evidence that it “would not have been appropriate for Ofsted to be part of a ‘joint inquiry’”.²² It coordinated the publication of its first batch of inspection reports with those of the EFA which was looking at the schools which were academies.

20. There were also attempts to coordinate the inquiries conducted by Ian Kershaw and Peter Clarke. Mr Kershaw's terms of reference specifically asked him to “coordinate your investigation with Mr Clarke in relation to [academy] schools if they fall within the remit of both investigations”.²³ Relevant evidence was shared where appropriate, although the different timescales for completion meant that not all evidence could be shared. The

20 Q270

21 Q272-5

22 Ofsted ([EIS0001](#)) para 6

23 Kershaw report, p. 94

Kershaw team interviewed 76 witnesses, 18 of whom were seen jointly by Ian Kershaw and Peter Clarke. The Kershaw inquiry also received information from seven interviews conducted by Peter Clarke's team.²⁴

21. The Kershaw report was published earlier, and in a fuller form, than planned because of a leak to the media of the Clarke report. This meant that the BCC Review Group which was overseeing the Kershaw investigation was given an “exceptionally limited time—a matter of a few hours—to have sight of, absorb, reflect upon and consider the executive summary” of the report before they were expected to comment on it.²⁵ Although the Review Group broadly supported the Kershaw recommendations, they expressed concern that it had not had sight of Mr Clarke's report and that “to run separately two independent investigations of the same issues has unquestionably served to reinforce suspicions that there are ‘parallel universes’ between central and local government”.²⁶

Government responses to the reports

22. As requested by the former Secretary of State, Ofsted pulled together its findings from the inspections of Birmingham schools into an advice note which was published at the same time as the inspection reports in June 2014. In the note, Sir Michael Wilshaw set out a list of nine recommendations for implementation by the DfE. On 14 October, following the first monitoring inspections of the schools in special measures, Ofsted issued a second advice note with four further recommendations.

23. We asked Sir Michael in January 2015 what progress had been made in implementing the recommendations in his advice notes. He told us “very limited progress”.²⁷ Following our meeting he asked the DfE to update us on progress. In March Lord Nash provided us with a chart matching DfE actions against Sir Michael Wilshaw's advice.²⁸

24. The Government accepted all the recommendations in the Clarke report and on 29 January 2015 the DfE published a progress report, which indicated that “all the recommendations have been implemented or are on track”.²⁹ The Secretary of State declared that as a result “I am confident that if the events we witnessed in Birmingham were repeated again today they would be identified and dealt with more quickly and in a far more effective way”.³⁰

25. The Government did not issue an official response to the Kershaw report which was made primarily to Birmingham City Council, but nevertheless contained recommendations pertinent to the DfE and Ofsted, including on academies (see paragraph 42 below) and on the requirement on schools to provide a daily act of collective worship

24 Kershaw report, p. 75

25 Trojan Horse Review Group, Report to Leader of Birmingham City Council, 18 July 2014, p4

26 Ibid, p4

27 Oral evidence taken on [28 January 2015](#), HC (2014-15) 880, Q72

28 Department for Education ([EIS0003](#))

29 HC Deb, 29 January 2015, [col 1015](#)

30 Ibid

wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character. There has been no public attempt by the DfE to pull all these reports together and address them in a coordinated way.

Conclusions and recommendations

26. There was a proven “lack of inquisitiveness” within the Department for Education prior to the receipt of the Trojan Horse letter. Whilst this may be partially explained by the general level of awareness of such issues at the time, the timeline supplied by the DfE indicates that the Department was slow to take an active interest between the receipt of the letter in December 2013 and March 2014 when the issue became public. This is more surprising, given the change in context and the heightened emphasis on combating radicalisation and extremism. We are not convinced that “open source checking” was a sufficient response to the seriousness of the allegations being made to the DfE.

27. The sheer number of organisations which became involved indicated the complexity of emerging oversight arrangements for schools. The number of overlapping inquiries contributed to the sense of crisis and confusion, and the number of reports, coming out at different times and often leaked in advance, was far from helpful.

28. The scope for coordination between inquiries by the EFA, Ofsted and others is restricted by their statutory roles but more coordination could and should have been achieved. The DfE must ensure that such needless duplication does not happen again.

29. *All the reports included recommendations that went far beyond the situation in the particular schools concerned. The findings of the reports need to be drawn together. We recommend that DfE draw together the recommendations from all the investigations and set out its response.*

3 Role of Ofsted

Ofsted involvement

30. As the timeline in paragraph 12 indicates, Ofsted began inspecting schools in Birmingham in March 2014 as a result of concerns raised with them directly. Ofsted activity then intensified when the Secretary of State wrote to Sir Michael Wilshaw to request further investigations and later when Sir Michael took personal charge of the investigations.

31. The outcome of the Ofsted investigations has raised questions about the organisation itself, including how the inspections in Birmingham were conducted and the reliability of Ofsted inspections more generally.

Conduct of Ofsted inspections

32. Birmingham City Council questioned the way in which the Ofsted inspections in the city were conducted. The Chief Executive, Mr Rogers, expressed concerns to us about the speed at which the investigatory teams had been mobilised and whether they had sufficient depth and breadth of expertise to address the specific issues at stake. He also stated that because of the perception that the inspectorate needed to demonstrate independence of judgement, Ofsted had refused to share information with the Council. One result of this was that “their findings are somewhat the poorer, because they are not as deeply informed as they might be”.³¹ The lack of information-sharing also meant that the Council was not clear about the accusations levelled at its schools. Councillor Jones explained that “For some of those concerns [raised in HMCI’s advice note on 21 Birmingham schools] we could find evidence maybe only in one school that was mentioned explicitly in that schools’ corresponding Ofsted report, and, for some, we could not find evidence mentioned at all in the Ofsted report”.³²

33. Ofsted did share information with the DfE: the letters sent by Lord Nash to the four academies placed in special measures (Park View, Golden Hillock, Nansen and Oldknow) on 9 June 2014 went into great detail about each breach of the funding agreement or school standards, drawing upon evidence from the Ofsted inspections which was made available to DfE officials but not published.

34. Lee Donaghy, Assistant Principal of Park View Academy, told the Home Affairs Committee that the way his school had been depicted in the media affected the outcome of the inspections, arguing that “there is absolutely no way that Ofsted inspectors could have come into the school in that atmosphere and have made a judgement on a school in an

31 Q281

32 Q281

impartial way”.³³ He claimed that the Ofsted inspectors’ “lines of questioning were not impartial. They followed very narrow agendas. Their use of evidence was very selective”.³⁴

Reliability and robustness of Ofsted judgements

35. In several cases the schools concerned had received previous Ofsted inspections with markedly different outcomes. For example, Oldknow Academy (the only academy to have received a full school inspection report since conversion prior to the Trojan Horse investigations) was inspected by Ofsted in January 2013 and judged to be outstanding in all aspects. Following the inspection in April 2014, it was placed in special measures. Sir Michael Wilshaw visited Park View himself in 2012 when it became the first school to be awarded an outstanding rating under the new tougher Ofsted framework. He declared “All schools should be like this and there’s no reason why they shouldn’t be”.³⁵

36. In a letter to the Guardian just before the publication of the Ofsted reports, Sir Tim Brighouse and a group of other leading educationalists and Muslim leaders argued that:

It is beyond belief that schools which were judged less than a year ago to be outstanding are now widely reported as “inadequate”, despite having the same curriculum, the same students, the same leadership team and the same governing body.³⁶

37. These criticisms were picked up by the two independent reviewers. Ian Kershaw found that “In some schools and academies, Ofsted has failed to identify dysfunctional governance and instances of the manipulation of a balanced curriculum when conducting routine Ofsted inspections, prior to the most recent inspections”.³⁷ Mr Clarke recommended that “Ofsted should consider whether the existing framework and associated guidance is capable of detecting indicators of extremism and ensuring that the character of a school is not changed substantively without following the proper process”.³⁸

38. Following the inquiry reports, Ofsted changed its framework to include checking that schools are actively promoting British values and that they are offering a broad and balanced curriculum that prepares pupils for life in modern Britain. The criteria for unannounced inspections have also been broadened.³⁹

39. In his statement to the House on 9 June 2014, Michael Gove said: “There are critical questions about whether warning signs were missed [...] the chief inspector has advised

33 Oral evidence taken before the Home Affairs Committee on [17 June 2014](#), HC (2014-15) 352, Q31

34 Oral evidence taken before the Home Affairs Committee on [17 June 2014](#), HC (2014-15) 352, Q32

35 Quoted in [“Ofsted inspectors make U-turn on ‘Trojan Horse’ school, leak shows”](#), The Guardian, 30 May 2014, accessed 3 March 2015

36 [“Education experts voice fury over Ofsted’s ‘Trojan Horse’ schools inquiry”](#), The Guardian, 3 June 2014, accessed 3 March 2015

37 Kershaw report, p.14

38 Clarke report, p.89

39 Implementation of recommendations from “Report into allegations concerning Birmingham schools arising from the ‘Trojan Horse’ letter”, DfE, 29 January 2015, p.5

me that he will consider the lessons learned for Ofsted”.⁴⁰ When asked about these lessons, Sir Michael Wilshaw told us that, during a normal Ofsted inspection, “when inspectors are in for two days, they are looking at progress, outcomes, teaching and a whole other range of issues; it is possible to miss [warning signs of problems with governors]”.⁴¹ He argued that “if we are going to do a good job, we need more time to do it and we need more inspectors”.⁴² In January this year he added:

I think the lessons to be learned [...] is that schools can change very quickly; they can decline very quickly, and there needs to be careful monitoring by both the local authority and the Department through the regional commissioners on what is happening in these schools.⁴³

40. He considered that “A lesson for Ofsted is that we need expertise”.⁴⁴ He assured us that Ofsted had “built up expertise in this area: we have appointed people with expertise in radicalisation and extremism who liaise very well with the Department and the police” and that “our intelligence about what is happening on the ground is a lot better than it was”.⁴⁵

Conclusions

41. Ofsted’s inability to identify problems at some Birmingham schools on first inspection when they were found shortly afterwards to be failing raises questions about the appropriateness of the framework and the reliability and robustness of Ofsted’s judgements and how they are reached. Either Ofsted relied too heavily on raw data and did not dig deep enough on previous occasions or alternatively the schools deteriorated so quickly that Ofsted reports were rapidly out of date, or it could be that inspectors lost objectivity and came to some overly negative conclusions because of the surrounding political and media storm. Whichever of these options is closest to the truth, confidence in Ofsted has been undermined and efforts should be made by the inspectorate to restore it in Birmingham and beyond.

40 HC Deb, 9 June 2014, [col 265](#)

41 Q53

42 Q56

43 Oral evidence taken on [28 January 2015](#), HC (2014-15) 880 , Q65

44 Ibid

45 Ibid

4 Lessons for the DfE

Academies

42. Four of the five schools placed in special measures in Birmingham were academies (three as part of the Park View Educational Trust). Some commentators questioned whether the rise of academies made it easier for governors to change the ethos of a school, unchecked. For example, Sir Tim Brighouse commented:

The arrival of academies and free schools has created an open season for lay people and professionals keen to pursue their own eccentric ideas about schooling; and when trust or governor vacancies occur, some perpetuate the very English tradition of inviting friends to join them. When the community is white it doesn't cause much comment. In mono-ethnic east Birmingham, however, it is seen as a Muslim plot to expose pupils to an undefined "extremism".⁴⁶

43. This view was supported by an anonymous Birmingham head, also writing in the Guardian, who reported his/her own observations about how colleagues in other schools had been "marginalised, ignored, belittled and patronised" and in some cases forced out of jobs, before concluding:

This isn't really about Islam: it's about how academies make it easy for governing bodies, a chair of governors, or a sponsor with an agenda—religious or otherwise—to completely undermine school leaders. There is simply no one stopping them.⁴⁷

44. The DfE was criticised by both Ian Kershaw and Peter Clarke for the speed at which academy chains had been allowed to expand. Ian Kershaw recommended that "BCC, in consultation with the DfE, should review the process of due diligence in determining the suitability and capacity of a multi academy trust as a sponsor of a maintained school converting to academy status".⁴⁸ Peter Clarke told us that the process was currently "opaque" and that, in the case of Golden Hillock which had been sponsored by Park View Educational Trust, "no-one could actually set out for me a very clear timeline of decision-making, rationale and so on".⁴⁹

45. Sir Michael Wilshaw told us in July 2014 that "There is a big debate to be had about how increasingly autonomous schools are going to have effective oversight".⁵⁰ In his statement to the House a month earlier, Mr Gove undertook to "work with Sir Michael

46 ["Trojan horse affair: five lessons we must learn"](#), The Guardian, 17 June 2014, accessed 3 March 2015

47 ["A Birmingham head: Trojan horse is not about Islam, it's about academies"](#), The Guardian, 17 June 2014, accessed 3 March 2015

48 Kershaw report, p.21

49 Q208

50 Q26

Wilshaw to ensure, as he recommends, that we can provide greater public assurance that all schools in a locality discharge their full statutory responsibilities”.⁵¹ He also stated that “one of the things that is clear from the action that has been taken in schools today is that academies and, for that matter, free schools, are subject to a higher level of accountability than local authority schools”.⁵² On 22 July Nicky Morgan was only slightly less categorical: “The expansion of the academy programme has been one of the great success stories of this Government, and the actions of a small number of individuals will not divert us from that path”.⁵³ She told us: “I do not accept the premise that it is because of academisation that these problems happened. It is because of certain individuals that these problems happened”.⁵⁴

46. The Government nevertheless accepted Mr Clarke’s recommendations that the process for academy conversion needed to be reviewed. Nicky Morgan told the House on 29 January that:

Since Peter Clarke’s report was published, my department has strengthened the process for converting to academy status or joining a multi-academy trust. New checks are now done on prospective trustees. Regional Schools Commissioners decide convertor applications using local intelligence, with help from local Headteacher Boards.⁵⁵

Governance

47. The Trojan Horse Review Group asserted in their report that “the central challenge emerging from [Kershaw’s] investigation and related matters is the credibility and transparency of the framework within which school governors operate.”⁵⁶ Both Kershaw and Clarke found the behaviour of governors to be at the heart of what had occurred, leading to a series of recommendations on improving governance in schools. Ofsted came to similar conclusions and advised the Secretary of State on action to be taken to address common issues with regard to governance, including mandatory training, the introduction of professional governors and the publication of Registers of Interest.⁵⁷

48. The DfE has responded to the recommendations by revising the Governor’s Handbook to ensure that governors are aware of their responsibilities and the skills required and to address issues of whether governors have the capacity to serve in more than one school.

51 HC Deb, 9 June 2014, [col 266](#)

52 HC Deb, 9 June 2014, [col 280-1](#)

53 HC Deb, 22 July 2014, [col 1250](#)

54 Q405

55 HC Deb, 29 January 2015, [col 1017](#)

56 Trojan Horse Review group report, p.10

57 HMCI: Advice note provided on academies and maintained schools in Birmingham to the Secretary of State for Education, 9 June 2014

The handbook now also advises all schools to publish information on their governing bodies on their websites.⁵⁸

Whistle-blowing and warnings

49. One of the facts which emerged quickly from the Trojan Horse story was that the difficulties faced by the schools had been brought to the attention of Birmingham City Council and the DfE on several occasions prior to the receipt of the anonymous letter which precipitated the current investigations. In consequence, all the inquiry reports referred to the need for improvements in how information from whistle-blowers and more general warnings are handled by the agencies involved.

50. Peter Clarke recommended that BCC, the DfE, Education Funding Agency and Ofsted should review their respective channels for raising issues of concern, and that “The Department for Education should ensure that the receipt of sensitive complaints forms part of the new Regional School Commissioners’ responsibilities, and that the Regional Schools Commissioners are able to refer complaints and concerns to the relevant agency for further investigation”.⁵⁹ Sir Michael Wilshaw called for a review of whistleblowing procedures for all schools, including academies, and within local government and central government.⁶⁰

51. The Clarke and Kershaw reports both referred to the importance of improving how information is shared between all those bodies which have responsibility for oversight of schools. For example, Ian Kershaw pointed out that Ofsted focusses on school governors in terms of support and challenge for the leadership of the school and their ability to improve school performance but not on their conduct more generally—“Ofsted does not inspect good financial management, the quality, breadth and balance of a school’s curriculum offer to students, or the adequacy of governance generally”. This leaves a “fundamental gap” and makes it vital that Ofsted, BCC, the DfE and the EFA gather and share information.⁶¹ However, Mr Kershaw noted that “It is not possible to discern a relationship between BCC, Ofsted, the DfE and the Education Funding Agency in the process of sharing critical data and intelligence”.

52. Peter Clarke added: “It seems that if you have got a structure that is inevitably split because of the range of agencies and departments involved, you need to make sure that information is shared in a timely and efficient manner across them.”⁶²

53. In her July 2014 statement, Nicky Morgan suggested that the new head teacher boards “will be the best people for teachers to turn to in the first instance” when issues emerge in

58 Implementation of recommendations from “Report into allegations concerning Birmingham schools arising from the ‘Trojan Horse’ letter”, DfE, 29 January 2015, p.7

59 Clarke report, p.85

60 HMCI: Advice note provided on academies and maintained schools in Birmingham to the Secretary of State for Education, 9 June 2014

61 Kershaw report, p.14

62 Q206

their schools.⁶³ The DfE is putting in place new measures to address whistle-blowing, including improvements to the process for schools staff and the public to contact the Department and extending legal protections for staff making whistle-blowing allegations.⁶⁴ Its January 2015 update also set out the role of the Regional Schools Commissioners in handling and responding to safeguarding concerns and working with local authorities, Ofsted and others to ensure that all complaints and concerns are identified and reported to the DfE.⁶⁵

Appointment of education commissioner

54. Following the publication of the Clarke report, the DfE announced that a new education commissioner would be appointed for Birmingham, reporting jointly to BCC and the Secretary of State. Nicky Morgan added in her statement that “If we are unable to make rapid progress with those new arrangements, I will not hesitate to use my powers to intervene further”.⁶⁶ The appointment of the new education commissioner was considerably delayed and it was not until 24 September—two months after the statement—that it was announced that Sir Mike Tomlinson would take up the role. The Secretary of State explained to us that “it took time to find the right person over the course of the summer and to negotiate with them and their release from other activities”.⁶⁷

Due Diligence and Counter Extremism Division

55. The DfE was the first Whitehall department to set up its own counter-extremism unit when the Due Diligence and Counter Extremism Division (DDCED) was established in late 2010 “to deliver DfE’s commitments in the government’s Prevent strategy, and to carry out financial and non-financial due diligence on those applying to set up free schools”.⁶⁸ The unit works “to ensure that children and young people are safeguarded from extremists and extremist views in schools or in out-of-school-hours learning, and stop young people from becoming radicalised [...] or acting on extreme views”.⁶⁹

56. In June 2014 the DDCED had 20 members of staff, some of whom were supporting the work of the Education Commissioner in his inquiry into Birmingham schools.⁷⁰ Mr Gove told the House on 9 June 2014: “Unreported and under-appreciated, [the unit] has prevented a number of extremist or unsuitable organisations from securing access to public funds”.⁷¹

63 HC Deb, 22 July 2014, [col 1258](#)

64 Implementation of recommendations from “Report into allegations concerning Birmingham schools arising from the ‘Trojan Horse’ letter”, DfE, 29 January 2015, p.3

65 Ibid

66 HC Deb, 22 July 2014, [col 1248](#)

67 Q359

68 Memorandum from the [Department for Education](#)

69 Ibid

70 Ibid

71 HC Deb, 9 June 2014, [col 269](#)

57. Peter Clarke was critical of the DDCED in his report. He told us:

If the division wants to fulfil what its title suggests it should be doing, which is due diligence and counter-extremism, it needs to improve its capacity to actually mount an investigation [...] I was surprised to find that actually, the department is not well-equipped at the moment to be an investigative body and to carry out its role of ensuring due diligence around a whole range of issues. I would suggest that it needs to up its game.⁷²

58. In response to the Clarke report and the subsequent Wormald review, the DfE has acted to strengthen the Division. The Secretary of State told the House that she had “increased my Department’s capacity and expertise in counter extremism—dramatically expanding the Due Diligence and Counter Extremism Group in the DfE and placing it under the leadership of a full-time Director”.⁷³ The complement of staff at the time of the Wormald review had grown to 25; following that review it is to be increased to 36.⁷⁴ Other measures include introducing a system for staff across the DfE to refer concerns about extremism to the DDCED; introducing a case handling system within DDCED for warnings received; establishing a Counter Extremism Steering Group; requiring briefing for all Deputy Directors on extremism; and introducing monthly reports from the DDCED to the DfE Management Committee on cases received and action taken.⁷⁵

59. We suggested to the Secretary of State that she might consider publishing an annual report on the priorities and activities of the DDCED. She was enthusiastic about the proposal, responding “Certainly. It is always good to make clear to people what it is there for and what it has been doing”.⁷⁶

Conclusions and recommendations

60. **Our recent report on academies and free schools addresses many of the issues of oversight which have arisen in the context of the Trojan Horse inquiries.⁷⁷ The greater autonomy of academies makes it easier for a group of similar-minded people to control a school. While it should be remembered that several of the governors criticised in Birmingham were local government appointees, the DfE needs to be alert to the risks of abuse of academy freedoms of all kinds and be able to respond quickly.**

61. **It is vital that information is shared effectively between the various bodies responsible for oversight of schools. This was a problem in Birmingham and the DfE needs to keep its new arrangements under review to ensure that they are working well.**

72 Q226

73 HC Deb, 29 January 2015, [col 1017](#)

74 Wormald Review

75 Wormald Review

76 Q447

77 Education Committee, Fourth Report of Session 2014-15, [Academies and free schools](#), HC 258

62. The recent steps taken to strengthen the Due Diligence and Counter Extremism Division are welcome, all the more so for being overdue. The unit should also have a higher profile. We recommend that the Secretary of State make an annual written ministerial statement on the priorities and achievements of the DDCEd.

5 British values

Active promotion of British values

64. In his statement on 9 June 2014, Michael Gove announced that the Government would “put the promotion of British values at the heart of what every school has to deliver for children”.⁷⁸ The definition of British values adopted is that set out in the Prevent strategy, ie: democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, mutual respect and tolerance of those of different faiths and beliefs. The new requirement actively to promote British values is the most wide-reaching of all the measures taken by the DfE in response to the Trojan Horse affair, extending to maintained schools, academies and nurseries.

65. School leaders expressed immediate concerns about this change on the grounds that it was too rushed and likely to have unintended consequences. Malcolm Trobe of the Association of School and College Leaders told the BBC that there was a danger of “over-regulation” and “a knee-jerk response” and that the proposals could make teachers reluctant to discuss controversial topics.⁷⁹ The Christian Institute also raised objections, claiming that the regulations “could be used to punish any school in the independent sector which has a religious ethos, a set of traditional beliefs, or who don’t over-promote every minority group’s world view”.⁸⁰

66. Regulations were laid before Parliament on 8 September 2014 to bring the changes into force in academies from 29 September. The explanatory memorandum provided with the regulations outlined the outcome of the consultations on the DfE proposals. Of the 1462 responses, 909 were against the changes because of fears that they would introduce new values, extend the equality agenda, discriminate against Christianity and undermine religious freedoms. A further 516 questioned whether the changes were required. The DfE reported that “a significant number” of respondents disagreed with the proposed changes but the Department considered that “this was because of misunderstanding the effect or raising issues that were not part of the consultation”. As a result, the DfE made no changes to its proposals before making the regulations.⁸¹

67. We raised with the Secretary of State the possibility that the requirement actively to promote British values could have unforeseen negative consequences. In particular, we discussed with her issues around free speech and academic freedom and whether the requirement concerning tolerance would inhibit legitimate debate in schools or the engagement of guest speakers with non-mainstream views. The Secretary of State accepted that “I do not think any of us are saying that any of this is particularly easy”.⁸² She

78 HC Deb, 9 June 2014, [col 266](#)

79 [“School heads warn of Trojan Horse overreaction”](#), BBC News, 12 August 2014, accessed 3 March 2015

80 Ibid

81 Explanatory memorandum to the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014 (SI 2014, No. 2374)

82 Q326

suggested that heads “could ask for advice externally or with their governors”⁸³ if in doubt about what was allowed. She also accepted that “we can certainly share best practice”, although she was unwilling to “lay down rules” about how the requirement was to be interpreted.⁸⁴

68. At the time of the Trojan Horse investigations the most recent guidance on schools and the Prevent strategy was a June 2013 document by the Association of Chief Police Officers, *Prevent, Police and Schools. Helping Schools Stay Safe: Guidance for police officers and police staff*, which sets out the context for schools and suggests activities for police and schools to undertake in partnership.⁸⁵ The most recent DfE guidance was the *Learning together to be safe* toolkit for schools published in 2008 by the last government, although the DfE published a research report in 2011 on *Teaching approaches that help to build resilience to extremism among young people*. The DfE confirmed in October 2014 that the latter document remained “relevant guidance for schools”.⁸⁶ In November 2014 the DfE published statutory advice for heads of maintained schools in the form of a very short report (nine pages including covers) on *Promoting fundamental British values as part of SMSC in schools*.⁸⁷

69. Another concern was that the new requirements were a national solution to a local problem. The Secretary of State has consistently confirmed that the DfE has no evidence of similar activities outside Birmingham. She told us that “There are sometimes individual schools where concerns are raised with the local authority or with the Department [...] but nothing on the scale of the number of schools involved in Birmingham so far”.⁸⁸ On the other hand, she argued that “It could be a nationwide issue [...] and if we dismiss this and try to say that this is a one-off, we will be letting down a generation of children and families across the country”.⁸⁹ In her statement in January this year, she stressed that the British values in question “unite rather than divide” and that “Every school should be promoting fundamental British values, not just because they act as a bulwark against extremism, but because it is the right thing to do”.⁹⁰

Ofsted inspection of British values

70. Ofsted now inspects the active promotion of British values as part of its judgement on leadership. Although Sir Michael Wilshaw previously suggested that there should be an additional separate judgement on the curriculum to include preparation for life in modern

83 Q435

84 Qq437,439

85 Association of Chief Police Officers, [“Prevent, Police and Schools. Helping Schools Stay Safe: Guidance for police officers and police staff”](#), (June 2013)

86 Department for Education ([EIS0002](#))

87 Department for Education, [Promoting fundamental British values as part of SMSC in schools](#) (November 2014)

88 Q328

89 Q329

90 HC Deb, 29 January 2015, [cols 1017-8](#)

Britain, this has not been pursued.⁹¹ There have been a number of reports of Ofsted inspectors coming into conflict with faith schools over inspections as a result of the changes to the inspection regime. For example, on 3 October 2014 the Guardian reported that a snap inspection of a Roman Catholic secondary school in Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk, had found that younger pupils at the school “show less awareness of the dangers of extremism and radicalisation” and questioned whether the school prepared pupils “for life and work in modern Britain”. The report was rapidly withdrawn for review.⁹² A school in Lincolnshire was told it could not be rated as outstanding because its pupils lacked “first hand experience of the diverse make-up of modern British society”.⁹³ There have also been controversial inspections of three orthodox Jewish schools.⁹⁴

71. Sir Michael Wilshaw defended Ofsted’s strategy for inspecting British values in schools. He told us “We are very clear in our guidance, and that is why it has been difficult in some of the faith schools that we have been to [...] but we are determined to keep to the course we have set”.⁹⁵ He argued that it was “absolutely essential” that schools, whether secular or faith schools, took on their “big responsibility to ensure that they teach British values, advise youngsters on what is happening in our society and give them access to knowledge about different faiths, communities and cultures”.⁹⁶

Conclusion

72. The British values which are now to be promoted in all schools are universal and an important part of what children should learn. We support the introduction of the requirement on all schools to ensure that such values are actively promoted to all students. Monitoring how they are promoted in individual schools must be done with common sense and sensitivity.

91 Advice note provided on academies and maintained schools in Birmingham to the Secretary of State for Education, Rt Hon Michael Gove MP, as commissioned by letter dated 27 March 2014, 9 June 2014

92 [“Catholic school breaches ‘Trojan Horse’ Ofsted rules”](#), The Guardian, 3 October 2014, accessed 3 March 2015

93 [“Ofsted criticises school for lack of diversity”](#), BBC News, 20 November 2014, accessed 3 March 2015

94 [“Ofsted downgrades Jewish school for failing new ‘Trojan horse’ regulations”](#), The Guardian, 29 October 2014, accessed 3 March 2015

95 Oral evidence taken on [28 January 2015](#), HC (2014-15) 880, Q70

96 *Ibid*, Q69

6 Impact on children in Birmingham

73. Nicky Morgan has stressed that “At the end of the day, this is all about making sure that the young people at the heart of these schools get the best possible education to fulfil their potential”.⁹⁷ There is some way still to go to make this a reality. Prior to the Trojan Horse investigations, the Park View Educational Trust appeared to be providing a high level of education for students at its academies. Both Oldknow and Park View itself were judged to be outstanding and results at both schools were above the national average. Following the upheavals of last spring, GCSE results at Park View dropped significantly in 2014 from 75% A* to C in 2013 to just 58% in 2014.⁹⁸ Councillor Jones told us that “a lot of the children in the schools affected have had a very difficult time [...] There has been relentless negative media coverage of them, their communities, their religion, their schools, in the press, day in and day out”.⁹⁹

74. In late January 2015—more than nine months after the first Ofsted inspections in Birmingham—the five schools most heavily involved were still in special measures. Sir Michael Wilshaw told us that “three have made progress, two have not”.¹⁰⁰ The latest Ofsted inspection report on Park View, published in January 2015, found that the school was not making sufficient progress towards the removal of special measures, largely because of the significant number of teaching staff currently absent from the academy. This had had a detrimental effect on the quality of teaching, students’ progress and students’ behaviour.¹⁰¹

75. On 29 January the Secretary of State announced that new trustees were in place at all the academies, “led by outstanding and dedicated head teachers”.¹⁰² Oldknow Academy and Golden Hillock are to be taken over by the ARK academy chain. Saltley School and Specialist Science College (the only state maintained school to be placed in special measures) is to become an academy, sponsored by another Birmingham school, Washwood Heath Academy.¹⁰³

76. When asked whether the children, communities and schools in Birmingham had benefitted from Ofsted’s intervention, Sir Michael Wilshaw told us:

They have benefited in some sense, because they are not the subject of the sort of policies that would be pursued by these governors with a very

97 HC Deb, 29 January 2015, [col 1022](#)

98 [“GCSE results down at Park View and Golden Hillock schools”](#), BBC News, 21 August 2014

99 Q236

100 Oral evidence taken on [28 January 2015](#), HC (2014-15) 880, Q68

101 Ofsted report following special measures inspection of Park View School the Academy of Mathematics and Science, letter dated 28 November 2014, published 8 January 2015

102 HC Deb, 29 January 2015, [col 1015](#)

103 HC Deb, 29 January 2015, [col 1015](#)

particular view of how schools should be run. They are free of that. But those schools have been through an enormous amount of turmoil.¹⁰⁴

He added:

These children are lovely. I have been to Birmingham several times, and I am enormously impressed by both the children and parents—I have attended public meetings with those parents, who want those schools to do well. They have been badly let down by the governors and by the fact that we cannot get enough good leaders and teachers in those schools.

77. Sir Michael made a “strong recommendation to the Department [...] that additional funding should be found so that we can recruit good people to those schools very quickly, because unless that happens and we see improvement across the board, people who have gone to ground but who want to exploit the situation will do so”.¹⁰⁵ The Secretary of State indicated in her statement the following day that the DfE would “consider all reasonable requests for additional funding [at Park View Academy] if and where it can help”.¹⁰⁶

78. The DfE progress report in January 2015 suggested that problems still exist with the BCC leadership on education. The Secretary of State informed the House that she considered reform was too slow at the Council and that “if the Council do not take urgent steps to improve their leadership capacity, I am prepared to make use of the powers available to me to issue a statutory direction to the Council”.¹⁰⁷ She also announced that the appointment of the education commissioner, Sir Mike Tomlinson, had been extended to March 2016 “to oversee the council’s delivery of the plan they have developed”.¹⁰⁸

Conclusion

79. The children in the schools affected in Birmingham deserve better from all involved. The DfE must continue to monitor the situation in the individual schools. We welcome the extension of the appointment of Sir Mike Tomlinson as education commissioner to address wider problems in education in Birmingham.

104 Oral evidence taken on [28 January 2015](#), HC (2014-15) 880, Q68

105 Oral evidence taken on [28 January 2015](#), HC (2014-15) 880, Q68

106 HC Deb, 29 January 2015, [col 1015](#)

107 HC Deb, 29 January 2015, [col 1016](#)

108 HC Deb, 29 January 2015, [col 1016](#)

7 Conclusion

80. The Trojan Horse affair epitomises many of the questions and concerns expressed elsewhere about the changing school landscape and the overlapping roles of the organisations responsible for oversight of schools. In this light, it is less about extremism than about governance and the ability of local and central agencies to respond to whistle-blowers and challenges posed by individual schools. We note once again that no evidence of extremism or radicalisation, apart from a single isolated incident, was found and that there is no evidence of a sustained plot nor of a similar situation pertaining elsewhere in the country.

81. It is important to return to the need to ensure a good education for the children at the schools affected. They, and their schools, will continue to require support from local and central agencies to make this a reality.

Conclusions and recommendations

The investigations

1. There was a proven “lack of inquisitiveness” within the Department for Education prior to the receipt of the Trojan Horse letter. Whilst this may be partially explained by the general level of awareness of such issues at the time, the timeline supplied by the DfE indicates that the Department was slow to take an active interest between the receipt of the letter in December 2013 and March 2014 when the issue became public. This is more surprising, given the change in context and the heightened emphasis on combating radicalisation and extremism. We are not convinced that “open source checking” was a sufficient response to the seriousness of the allegations being made to the DfE. (Paragraph 26)
2. The sheer number of organisations which became involved indicated the complexity of emerging oversight arrangements for schools. The number of overlapping inquiries contributed to the sense of crisis and confusion, and the number of reports, coming out at different times and often leaked in advance, was far from helpful. (Paragraph 27)
3. The scope for coordination between inquiries by the EFA, Ofsted and others is restricted by their statutory roles but more coordination could and should have been achieved. The DfE must ensure that such needless duplication does not happen again. (Paragraph 28)
4. *All the reports included recommendations that went far beyond the situation in the particular schools concerned. The findings of the reports need to be drawn together. We recommend that DfE draw together the recommendations from all the investigations and set out its response.* (Paragraph 29)

Role of Ofsted

5. Ofsted’s inability to identify problems at some Birmingham schools on first inspection when they were found shortly afterwards to be failing raises questions about the appropriateness of the framework and the reliability and robustness of Ofsted’s judgements and how they are reached. Either Ofsted relied too heavily on raw data and did not dig deep enough on previous occasions or alternatively the schools deteriorated so quickly that Ofsted reports were rapidly out of date, or it could be that inspectors lost objectivity and came to some overly negative conclusions because of the surrounding political and media storm. Whichever of these options is closest to the truth, confidence in Ofsted has been undermined and efforts should be made by the inspectorate to restore it in Birmingham and beyond. (Paragraph 41)

Lessons for the DfE

6. Our recent report on academies and free schools addresses many of the issues of oversight which have arisen in the context of the Trojan Horse inquiries. The greater autonomy of academies makes it easier for a group of similar-minded people to control a school. While it should be remembered that several of the governors criticised in Birmingham were local government appointees, the DfE needs to be alert to the risks of abuse of academy freedoms of all kinds and be able to respond quickly. (Paragraph 60)
7. It is vital that information is shared effectively between the various bodies responsible for oversight of schools. This was a problem in Birmingham and the DfE needs to keep its new arrangements under review to ensure that they are working well. (Paragraph 61)
8. *The recent steps taken to strengthen the Due Diligence and Counter Extremism Division are welcome, all the more so for being overdue. The unit should also have a higher profile. We recommend that the Secretary of State make an annual written ministerial statement on the priorities and achievements of the DDCEd.* (Paragraph 62)

British values

9. The British values which are now to be promoted in all schools are universal and an important part of what children should learn. We support the introduction of the requirement on all schools to ensure that such values are actively promoted to all students. Monitoring how they are promoted in individual schools must be done with common sense and sensitivity. (Paragraph 72)

Impact on children in Birmingham

10. The children in the schools affected in Birmingham deserve better from all involved. The DfE must continue to monitor the situation in the individual schools. We welcome the extension of the appointment of Sir Mike Tomlinson as education commissioner to address wider problems in education in Birmingham. (Paragraph 79)

Formal Minutes

Wednesday 11 March 2015

Members present:

Mr Graham Stuart, in the Chair

Alex Cunningham
Pat Glass
Caroline Nokes

Mr David Ward
Craig Whittaker

Draft Report (*Extremism in schools: the Trojan Horse affair*), proposed by the Chair, brought up and read.

Ordered, That the draft Report be read a second time, paragraph by paragraph.

Paragraphs 1 to 81 read and agreed to.

Resolved, That the Report be the Seventh Report of the Committee to the House.

Ordered, That the Chair make the Report to the House.

Ordered, That embargoed copies of the Report be made available, in accordance with the provisions of Standing Order No. 134.

Supplementary evidence from the Department for Education was reported to the House for publication.

[Adjourned till Wednesday 18 March at 9.15 a.m.]

Witnesses

The following witnesses gave evidence. Transcripts can be viewed on the Committee's inquiry page at www.parliament.uk/extremism-in-birmingham-schools.

Wednesday 9 July 2014

Question number

Sir Michael Wilshaw, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector, Ofsted, **Lorna Fitzjohn**, Regional Director for the West Midlands, Ofsted, and **Andrew Cook**, Her Majesty's Inspector, Ofsted

[Q1-143](#)

Tuesday 2 September 2014

Mr Peter Clarke, Education Commissioner, Birmingham, and **Mr Ian Kershaw**, Independent Chief Adviser Birmingham City Council

[Q144-230](#)

Councillor Brigid Jones, Cabinet Member for Children and Family Services, Birmingham City Council, and **Mr Mark Rogers**, Chief Executive for Birmingham City Council

[Q231-307](#)

Wednesday 15 October 2014

Rt Hon Nicky Morgan MP, Secretary of State for Education

[Q308-471](#)

Published written evidence

The following written evidence was received and can be viewed on the Committee's inquiry web page at www.parliament.uk/extremism-in-birmingham-schools. EIS numbers are generated by the evidence processing system and so may not be complete.

- 1 Department For Education ([EIS0002](#))
- 2 Department For Education ([EIS0003](#))
- 3 Department For Education ([EIS0004](#))
- 4 Ofsted ([EIS0001](#))

List of Reports from the Committee during the current Parliament

All publications from the Committee are available on the Committee's website at www.parliament.uk/education-committee.

The reference number of the Government's response to each Report is printed in brackets after the HC printing number.

Session 2010-12

First Special Report	Young people not in education, employment or training: Government Response to the Children, Schools and Families Committee's Eighth Report of Session 2009-10	HC 416
Second Special Report	The Early Years Single Funding Formula: Government Response to the Seventh Report from the Children, Schools and Families Committee, Session 2009-10	HC 524
Third Special Report	Transforming Education Outside the Classroom: Responses from the Government and Ofsted to the Sixth Report of the Children, Schools and Families Committee, Session 2009-10	HC 525
Fourth Special Report	Sure Start Children's Centres: Government Response to the Fifth Report from the Children, Schools and Families Committee, Session 2009-10	HC 768
First Report	Behaviour and Discipline in Schools	HC 516-I and -II (HC 1316)
Second Report	The role and performance of Ofsted	HC 570-I and II (HC 1317)
Fifth Special Report	Looked-after Children: Further Government Response to the Third Report from the Children, Schools and Families Committee, Session 2008-09	HC 924
Third Report	Services for young people	HC 744-I and -II (HC 1501)
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