



# **Government Response to the Education Select Committee Report: Extremism in schools: the Trojan Horse affair**

Presented to Parliament  
by the Secretary of State for Education  
by Command of Her Majesty

July 2015





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Print ISBN 9781474122610

Web ISBN 9781474122627

ID P002739597 07/15

Printed on paper containing 75% recycled fibre content minimum

Printed in the UK by the Williams Lea Group on behalf of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office

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## Introduction

1. The Department for Education has considerably increased its understanding of the challenge of extremism, and its capacity to monitor it and help schools to respond to it in the past few years. The risk of young people being radicalised or drawn into terrorism has risen. ISIL and others are using social media to radicalise and recruit young people, and young people form a growing proportion of those travelling to Syria and Iraq. Events in Birmingham have shown risks that can be present within our schools.
  
2. Schools have a vital role to play in protecting pupils from the risks of extremism and radicalisation which will be underpinned by the new duty in the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 “to have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism”, which comes into force on 1 July. This reinforces the safeguarding role that schools already play in this area. Schools should also prepare young people for life in modern Britain. At the heart of this is their responsibility to promote the fundamental values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs. Schools should be safe spaces where young people can discuss controversial issues of many kinds including gaining the knowledge and confidence to challenge extremist beliefs and ideologies.
  
3. Extremism has no place in our schools. We will investigate quickly any evidence that suggests a school is not keeping children safe from extremist ideas, ideology or radicalisation. All schools are subject to a robust inspection regime, and we will not hesitate to take firm and swift action if pupils are in any way being placed at risk. We are tackling this problem both by taking determined action where we find areas of concern, and building resilience in the system. We have increased the capacity of our Due Diligence and Counter Extremism Group. With the leadership of a Director entirely devoted to this area, we:
  - a) have strengthened the accountability regime and oversight for all schools – maintained, academies and independent - to strengthen the ability of institutions in the education system to tackle extremism;
  - b) have worked with Ofsted as it strengthens its inspection frameworks to include Fundamental British Values;
  - c) are collaborating with the Home Office and Police to develop advice and material to support schools in meeting their new duty to prevent young people from being drawn into terrorism, as part of the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015;
  - d) are undertaking a review of schools where there is evidence of links with young people who may have travelled to Syria, to learn lessons that will inform future work to support schools with concerns about their role,

including their ability to tackle the risks of online grooming, radicalisation and extremist influences;

- e) have pursued action in relation to individuals and schools connected with the events in Birmingham to ensure that young people receive the education they deserve;
- f) have put in place a dedicated helpline for schools to raise extremism concerns more easily; and
- g) have delivered training and awareness raising in extremism to all DfE senior civil servants and set up new information management systems in direct response to the Permanent Secretary's report in January.

## **Birmingham**

- 4. The problems that emerged in Birmingham and came to light through the 'Trojan Horse' letter did not happen overnight. According to Peter Clarke's investigation they reflected a culture that built up over some 20 years, in which aggressive, intolerant and unprofessional behaviour by some governors became acceptable practice, or at least something that was not strongly challenged, for fear of causing offence on religious or cultural grounds.
- 5. The Select Committee concluded that "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". This downplays the seriousness of events in Birmingham and risks undermining our efforts to tackle extremism. It is important to state clearly just how damaging these were to the young people in the care of those schools. Peter Clarke was very clear that the situation threatened the ability of young people to integrate into modern British society and develop resistance to extremist or radicalising views. He identified "a number of people, associated with each other and in positions of influence in schools and governing bodies, who espouse, endorse or fail to challenge extremist views".
- 6. The report concluded that:
  - a) a culture of bullying and intimidation of staff who did not share these views emerged;
  - b) groups of teachers at the schools in question encouraged ambitions to increase segregation;
  - c) children learned to be intolerant of difference and diversity and were denied the opportunity to enjoy and exploit to the full the opportunities of a modern multi-cultural Britain; and
  - d) young people were increasingly encouraged to accept unquestioningly a particular hard line strand of Sunni Islam leaving them vulnerable to radicalisation.
- 7. This meant that through concerted and co-ordinated action, the life chances of young people attending these schools was wilfully narrowed, intolerance was



permitted and young people were vulnerable to indoctrination by extremist ideologies.

8. It is therefore only right that reviews were undertaken by a number of bodies to determine what each could have taken to act on this issue. It became evident that these schools were failing children in all areas; a host of educational, safeguarding and financial management concerns were identified in the Ofsted and EFA reviews.
9. As soon as concerns came to light, swift action was taken to address the issues at the 14 schools identified in the Clarke report, and the seven further schools also inspected by Ofsted in spring 2014. Four academies and a maintained school implicated in the 'Trojan Horse' affair, were placed into special measures by Ofsted (a further maintained school went into special measures in January 15). These four academies have been placed under new academy trust governance arrangements, the first of the two maintained schools has reopened as an academy under the control of a strong sponsor, and the second maintained school is now under secure interim governance arrangements.
10. We have extended Sir Mike Tomlinson's appointment as Birmingham Education Commissioner to March 2016, providing ongoing support and oversight as Birmingham City Council work to address the failings identified in the Clarke and Kershaw reports. Sir Mike has been working closely with the Council to help them to deliver immediate improvements in vulnerable schools and to reshape council's structures, building a credible and effective role for them in supporting the city's schools.
11. We have also acted on individuals. Several interim prohibition orders are already in place as a temporary measure to make sure that teachers implicated in 'Trojan Horse' are not currently in classrooms or teaching, whilst we bring cases for permanent barring against them. These are difficult and contentious cases and will take time to conclude. Like other regulatory processes, these cases require gathering relevant evidence, recording the testimony of witnesses and providing the affected individuals with the opportunity to comment on the serious allegations made. We are also seeking to use new powers to ban implicated governors from involvement in the management of schools. These too are complex legal processes which we are following meticulously to ensure that all cases are considered appropriately.
12. More widely, national policies set in the wake of 'Trojan Horse' are well established in schools, with signs that they are beginning to change expectations and behaviours. The full impact of legislation around fundamental British values, governance and indeed the Prevent Duty that comes into force on the 1 July will take time, but together they are a strong framework for action when concerns arise and act as a stronger disincentive to those seeking to impose extremist views on vulnerable young people. We will be providing further advice to schools to support them in meeting this duty.

13. This swift action was an absolute priority for the Department. But despite our progress, it is important to remember the wider context of the community in which the events of 'Trojan Horse' took place. Fundamental challenges of cohesion, local relationships, identity, equality and misunderstanding remain, and run much wider and deeper than the 'Trojan Horse' events in these schools. The rise of ISIL presents challenges unimaginable just a year ago. Tackling new threats will require concerted, sustained effort at both central and local level, which engages local communities in driving long term change.

## Section 2: The Investigations

The Select Committee concluded:

“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.”**

14. On receipt of the ‘Trojan Horse’ document in December 2013, the Department took immediate action; contacting police and the local authority, undertaking investigative research and assessing the possibility that these behaviours may have spread to other schools and individuals mentioned in the original document. This work, in addition to the “open source checking” referenced in the Committee’s Report directly informed Ofsted’s decision to inspect Park View School and the action that followed. Rather than “being slow to take an active interest”, the Department actively pursued the concerns.
15. DfE, Ofsted, Birmingham City Council and EFA each conducted inquiries into the ‘Trojan Horse affair’, leading to a wide range of recommendations. Each organisation and each inquiry had a different focus, examining the extent to which their role and their policies could play a part in preventing a further Trojan Horse-like incident and a frank assessment about what could have been done in the run up. Ofsted conducted section 5 and 8 inspections of schools in keeping with its remit, while the EFA looked specifically at whether the four academies that were implicated in ‘Trojan Horse’ were compliant with the Independent School Standards and their own Funding Agreements. Peter Clarke and Ian Kershaw were given specific remits by DfE and BCC that

represented the national and regional remits of the commissioning parties. Notwithstanding their separate remits, Clarke and Kershaw shared resources and as far as possible looked at evidence together. Therefore, while looking at some of the same schools, there was no “needless duplication”.

16. Recommendations rightly went beyond the specific schools in question to bolster the regulatory framework so that concerns about the radicalisation of young people can be addressed wherever they arise. The Secretary of State has twice set out progress to Parliament (in July 2014 and January 2015), carefully drawing together the lessons from Birmingham and responding to complementary recommendations in both the Ofsted and Clarke reports.

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### Section 3: Role of Ofsted

The Select Committee concluded:

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.**

17. Independent inspection has an important role to play in holding providers to account for the quality and effectiveness of the education system. Ofsted will respond directly to the serious concerns raised by the Select Committee.

## Section 4: Lessons for the DfE

The Select Committee concluded:

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. 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.**

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.**

18. Operating a school-led system in which those at the front line are empowered to act with autonomy is the cornerstone of this government's education policy. We believe that individual schools and teachers are far better placed to decide what works and what doesn't, driving innovation and improving outcomes for young people. But this autonomy is exercised with a system of firm accountability. Peter Clarke's review identified behaviours in Birmingham schools that emerged over two decades, long before any of the schools involved became academies, free of local authority control. The Select Committee report points to academies as being particularly vulnerable to abuse of freedoms whilst noting that "several of the governors criticised in Birmingham were local government appointees". This understates the role of the local authority whilst overlooking the strong monitoring in place for academies.
19. It is clear from the complaints raised by heads and evidence gathered throughout the review that the Council did not have good systems for monitoring and recording governance or supporting the operation of governing bodies. Substantial work by the authority, overseen by the Secretary of State's Birmingham Education Commissioner, appointed under statutory direction, is now addressing this. Together, they are strengthening the authority's leadership of education, have put in place new arrangements with the Birmingham Education Partnership to support school improvement, overhauled the nomination and vetting of governors and rolled out wider safeguarding training to schools.
20. We will create a national database of school governors by toughening up requirements on schools to publish the identities of their governors. We will strengthen requirements on all state funded schools through both statutory

guidance and the Academies Financial Handbook so that they publish details of their governors, including details of where they serve on governing bodies of schools elsewhere, to increase transparency to parents and wider communities and enable more effective oversight.

21. Local authorities remain responsible for providing assurance that maintained schools discharge their full statutory responsibilities. Departmental guidance to local authorities on “Schools causing concern”, revised in January 2015, makes clear that local authorities should take an active interest in the quality of governance in maintained schools. To prevent schools becoming “eligible for intervention”, as described in the guidance, local authorities should promote and support high standards of governance. To do so, they should be champions for high quality in school governance; help ensure that governors have the necessary skills; and have in place appropriate monitoring arrangements to identify signs of failure in relation to governors’ oversight of finance, safety or performance standards. They should also have arrangements in place for maintaining records of governors in maintained schools, which can be used to aid communication with governors and provide for them to undertake any necessary due diligence.
22. The eight Regional Schools Commissioners, together with their head teacher boards, play a crucial role in oversight of any academies at which concerns arise and the EFA continues to oversee academy compliance with all relevant regulations. To further strengthen academy oversight, the Department:
  - a) has strengthened the due diligence and assessment of multi academy trusts as a sponsor of a maintained school converting to academy status;
  - b) requires academy trusts to publish on their website details of their members and trustees, including any relevant interests such as governorships in other education institutions. In addition, from September 2015 academy trusts will be required to publish details about their local governing bodies including who serves on them;
  - c) has made it easier for academy trusts to notify the Department of changes in governance; and
  - d) through rigorous new requirements, can now direct academy trusts to remove members and trustees who are deemed unsuitable.
23. The Due Diligence and Counter Extremism Group contributes to the oversight of all schools and has grown in capacity and remit since the publication of the Clarke report. Now a director-led group in its own right, it has expanded in remit and resource, bringing in expertise from the counter terrorism, policing and intelligence sectors to undertake investigations and casework. DDCEG acts as a central point of co-ordination for information sharing and monitoring extremism concerns in schools. It works closely with NCTL, EFA, other government Departments, the police, local authorities and RSCs as concerns arise. The group regularly shares information with these bodies and has promoted the details of a central helpline with all local authorities, police representatives and head teacher unions. We agree that updating Parliament on the priorities and achievements of the group is desirable, but believe it

would be most useful for the Secretary of State to report to the Committee during the course of the year if and when issues of significance emerge, rather than producing an annual statement. This would be at odds with the approach taken to updating Parliament on the rest of the Department's business.

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## **Section 5: Promotion of British values**

The Select Committee concluded:

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.

24. We welcome the Select Committee's endorsement of our policy that all schools should actively promote the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs. This policy applies across all 21,000 state-funded and 3,000 independent schools, helping to develop a generation of well-rounded tolerant young people, who leave school ready to be active citizens who participate in modern Britain. We fully support the Committee's recommendation that the promotion of the values in individual schools should be done sensitively, and in such a way as to ensure that schools provide safe spaces for young people to discuss controversial issues, and be given the knowledge and confidence to challenge extremist beliefs and ideologies.

## Section 6: Impact on young people in Birmingham

The Select Committee concluded:

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.

25. We agree that the children of Birmingham, and indeed all children, deserve the best opportunities in life, free from exposure to radicalisation or extremist ideologies. As a result, the Department for Education has led action against individuals at the heart of the alleged plot, intervened in the schools affected and put in place significant scrutiny and support for the local authority. We are continuing to build resilience in the system, to ensure that every school is equipping its pupils for life in modern Britain.
26. NCTL are considering the case against a number of teachers, referring those for hearings where inappropriate or unprofessional behaviour is believed to have taken place and placing individuals under interim prohibition orders where the evidence warrants this. We are also considering the evidence against a number of former Birmingham school governors, using new powers to bar individuals from the management of independent schools (and, by extension, maintained schools, Free Schools and Academies).
27. Fourteen schools were mentioned in Peter Clarke's report; these and a further seven were inspected by Ofsted in the spring of 2014. Progress is being made in all of these 21 schools.
  - a) New trust arrangements have been secured with the four academies placed into special measures by Ofsted in spring 2014, and they continue to be supported and monitored by the RSC for the West Midlands and the Education Funding Agency. Two of these academies are now operating under a new Trust and the other two will re-open under a separate new sponsor in September 2015;
  - b) Of the two local authority maintained schools placed in special measures (in spring 2014 and January 15 respectively): one has since converted into an academy, with a strong sponsor, and is now making sound progress; and, the other is now operating under a Birmingham City Council-appointed interim executive board (IEB). Both remain under a close monitoring watch by the Department, Birmingham City Council and the Birmingham Education Commissioner;
  - c) Six of the 21 schools are now deemed to be no longer of concern and three more are now very close to the point where they too can be deemed to be no longer of concern; and
  - d) The final six are making sound progress in addressing the issues identified by Ofsted.
28. We agree that recruiting good people to these schools is essential to secure sustained improvements. The local authority and its partners are currently



working with national school workforce recruitment organisations to stimulate a wider field of candidates to better fill head teacher, teacher and other school workforce vacancies in the city.

29. Sir Mike Tomlinson, appointed by the Secretary of State as education commissioner for the city in September 2014, continues to work closely with Birmingham City Council to support and challenge them as they take action to address the fundamental criticisms in both the Kershaw and Clarke reports. In March 2015, the Council's Cabinet agreed that it would form a strategic school improvement partnership with the Birmingham Education Partnership (BEP) with effect from September 2015. As a school-led organisation with over 300 head teachers in Birmingham, the BEP will provide tailored school improvement support. In April 2015, the Council strengthened its senior leadership for education by appointing Colin Diamond (an experienced Director of Children's Services and former DfE senior civil servant) as interim Executive Education Director to lead on the delivery of the Council's improvement plan. We are pleased that Birmingham continues to restructure its Children's Services department to work more effectively and provide better oversight and accountability. The Council has already delivered several of the actions set out in its single improvement plan published in December 2014, including delivering enhanced safeguarding training to schools, overhauling the local authority governor nomination and vetting process and strengthening schools' safeguarding whistleblowing arrangements.
30. Sir Mike continues to report to the Secretary of State regularly and his recent assessment is that the Council continues to make progress. We continue to work closely with him.





ISBN 978-1-4741-2261-0



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