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The Trojan Horse Investigation

System Failure and British Values

The Investigation Team

Northern Education

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Overview

Birmingham service a large population of students; there are 437 schools in the city (320 maintained schools and 117 academies), many of them highly successful in meeting the educational and social needs of children. There are many examples of good schools and good governance.

My investigation dealt with a small section of schools where there were serious concerns reported to me.

The Trojan Horse Letter – A Five Step Plan

- Step 1** Identify in a densely populated locality that you want to target. Start with the poorest performing first as they will be easiest to influence and take over.
- Step 2** Select a group of Salafi parents within the school community. When the parents have been identified, start to turn them against the head teacher and leadership team. Tell each parent that the school is corrupting their children with sex education, teaching about homosexuals, making children pray Christian prayers and take part in mixed swimming and sports.
- Step 3** Install a governor to 'drip feed' ideals for an Islamic school. Once successful, the governor will be moved to another school, to distance them from any troubles and to allow them to do the same to a new school.

The Trojan Horse Letter – A Five Step Plan

- Step 4 Identify 'weak and disgruntled' staff and encourage them to complain to prompt an investigation, preferably and external investigation, so that the head teacher resigns or is sacked.
- Step 5 Instigate an anonymous and named letter campaign to governors, local MPs, education authorities, Ofsted, Governor Support, the local papers and the DfE to keep pressure on the head teacher and place doubt in the minds of stakeholders. This will weaken the head teacher's resolve until they give up.

The Trojan horse letter says that the plan is simple – *“It is about people seeing our intentions as respectable and our being accepted by the key stakeholders such as the Director of Education and the City Council .. This is about causing the maximum amount of organized (sic) chaos.”*

Terms of Reference

The terms of reference for the investigation asked me to report on the following:

Do you believe there is any substance in the allegations made in the letter?

If so, do you believe that Birmingham City Council should take any specific steps to avoid or reverse the implementation of such a targeted takeover?

Based on the information obtained during the course of your Inquiry, are there any recommendations that you wish to make to Birmingham City Council in respect of further action or investigations which may be required, in relation to the Trojan Horse letter or otherwise, following the conclusion of your inquiry?

Findings

The evidence does not support a conclusion that there was a systematic plot to take over schools.

However, elements of the five steps were present in a large number of the schools considered as part of the investigation.

There were 'activists' who regarded their role of being a governor as a means to an end. Where they judged a school to be failing the students, they saw their role as one of leading change through the replacement of school leadership and an improper manipulation of school governance.

There was evidence that there were individuals who were connected to each other who had been seeking to promote and encourage Islamic principles in schools, for example, by seeking to introduce Islamic collective worship, or raising objections to elements of the curriculum that are viewed as anti-Islamic (eg sex education, mixed PE, citizenship)

Findings

The evidence suggested that there was a pattern to the behaviour of 'activist' governors translating their agenda into:

- placing demands upon head teachers to modify curriculum provision which denies students their right to access a broad and balanced curriculum, including the right to understand other world religions and the right to sex and relationship education
- placing inappropriate demands on head teachers by repeatedly requesting information
- being overly challenging and sometimes aggressive in management of head teachers
- undermining headteachers during Ofsted inspections
- interference in operational matters
- inappropriate appointment of friends and relatives

Findings

There were examples of governing bodies removing head teachers or members of the LT, or causing disruption to their roles. This has been manifested either in explicit campaigns to remove specific members of staff or by the general behaviour of certain governors, or governing body, to bully or harass a headteacher or seek to remove them without due process. This has gone beyond the governing body's role of "Holding the head teacher to account....."

It was clear that in some governing bodies there have been individuals who have shown an utter disregard for the Nolan principles, rejecting responsibility for displaying integrity, objectivity and honesty in all matters related to governance. These governing bodies did not see it as their role to ensure that some members of the board act as guardians of good behaviour through processes of audit and risk against a range of responsibilities that governors hold.

Impact – pupils and students

In some schools and academies pupils and students did not have access to :

- a broad and balanced curriculum
- appropriate sex or relationship education
- a balanced science education
- equal rights for girls to participate in sports or PE
- a balanced religious education
- appropriate worship

Impact - staff

In some schools and academies the evidence showed that:

- a number of headteachers and senior staff were removed inappropriately
- a higher than normal number of senior staff left via compromise agreements
- headteachers and senior staff resigned under the weight of bullying and harassment
- people appointed to posts inappropriately
- staff were working in a climate of fear

Conclusions – system failures

Monitoring risk

- LA resource reductions
- LA focus on only schools that require improvement or in special measures weakened intelligence about others
- Failure to systematically collect or analyse data and intelligence (financial, complaints, whistleblowing, soft intelligence)
- Over-reliance upon Ofsted ratings and exam results by LA, DfE and Education Funding Agency
- Ofsted intelligence weakened by 'outstanding' schools not being subject to normal inspection regime

Conclusions – system failures

Monitoring risk

- Complaints data not co-ordinated within council and therefore not analysed
- Different LA services working in silos
- Lack of shared intelligence about schools and academies between LA, DfE, EFA and Ofsted
- Lack of robust process of due diligence by DfE in ascertaining capacity or suitability of multi academy trust to undertake further sponsorship of academies

Conclusions – system failures

Complaints handling

- Issues about conduct of LA in dealing with complaints about LA governing bodies without investigation
- LA unclear about how complaints from staff or parents about academy sponsors or governors behaviour can be handled
- LA accepted that resolution of complaints about head teachers can be dealt with via compromise agreements
- LA culture of not wanting to address difficult issues with governance in some schools for fear of being accused of being racist or Islamophobic.

Conclusions – system failures

Complaints handling

- Whistleblowing process ineffective and not trusted by employees
- Commitment to community cohesion, at times, overrode commitment to doing what is right
- Lack of capacity by LA to robustly undertake investigations into complaints about governance or leadership in schools

Conclusions – system failures

Policy

- There was no overarching LA policy or strategy describing the kinds of relationship it wished to promote and pursue with stakeholders in the process of supporting or challenging schools to deliver high quality education no matter the status of the school.
- There was no alignment of the schooling system with regeneration or community cohesion strategies.
- The LA did not have an integrated approach toward provision of support and challenge to governance, financial probity management, employee relations, school improvement, or legal employment services.
- School and governors support services had a conflict of interest as a service provider and as a supervisory body.

Conclusions – system failures

Ofsted and other stakeholders

- Ofsted failed to identify dysfunctional governance and instances of the manipulation of a balanced curriculum when conducting routine inspections.
- The LA cannot rely on Ofsted to assess the governance in schools or academies.
- Ofsted does not inspect financial management, the quality or breadth of the curriculum offered or the adequacy of governance in overseeing these matters
- It was not possible to discern a relationship between the LA, Ofsted, the DfE or the EFA in the process of sharing critical data and intelligence.

Conclusions – system failures

SACRE, RE and assemblies

- SACRE, as an advisory body, has no powers to monitor or evaluate the quality of religious education in schools or academies.
- The LA no longer monitors curriculum provision
- Ofsted Section 5 inspections do not routinely monitor RE curriculum provision.
- Determinations for academies not to provide a daily act of Christian worship are approved or not by the Secretary of State.
- There is no obligation or right of SACRE to specify what form an act of worship should take if it is not to be a Christian act.

Key issues for the system

- Local Authorities' policy toward working in partnership with stakeholders
- Role of Directors of Children's Services
- Key stakeholders of LAs, DfE, EFA and Ofsted working in partnership to share intelligence about governance, leadership and improvement
- DfE/EFA due diligence procedures
- Ofsted inspection process
- Governor selection, induction and training
- Head teacher induction and training about governance
- Role of LA governors
- Training of chairs of governors
- Audit and risk processes for governing bodies and sponsors

HMCI advice note to Rt Hon Michael Gove

1. A culture of fear and intimidation has developed in some of the schools since their previous inspection.
2. Some head teachers reported that there has been an organised campaign to target certain schools in Birmingham in order to alter their character and ethos
3. Birmingham City Council has failed to support a number of schools in their efforts to keep pupils safe from the potential risks of radicalisation and extremism. It has not dealt adequately with complaints from head teachers about the conduct of governors.
4. Her Majesty's Inspectors identified breaches of funding agreements
5. In several of the schools inspected, children are being badly prepared for life in modern Britain.

Ofsted key concerns in five schools

- RE teaching often inspires students to work to high standards.... but understanding of other religions is scant as the curriculum focuses primarily on the study of Islam.
- Leaders do not sufficiently develop pupils' understanding of different customs, traditions or religions .. in Britain. This does not prepare pupils adequately for life in modern Britain
- Pupils have limited knowledge of religious beliefs other than Islam.....Teaching is inadequate because it does not achieve the necessary gains in pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding of all the major religions

Ofsted key concerns in five schools

- The curriculum ... does not foster an appreciation of, and respect for, pupils' own or other cultures. It does not promote tolerance and harmony between different cultural traditions.
- Group of governors ...are endeavouring to promote a .. narrow faith-based ideology in .. a maintained and non-faith academy.
- Students focus almost entirely on Islam. Students are invited to develop moral understanding through .. Islamic assemblies. However, no opportunities exist for non-Muslims to attend alternative assemblies.

HMCI recommendations to SoS

- The Department for Education (DfE) should continue to reinforce the requirement on all schools to provide a broad and balanced curriculum and promote British values.
- The DfE should ensure that leadership and governance training programmes emphasise the importance of promoting British values, including tolerance and mutual understanding.
- The DfE should continue to remind schools of the legal requirement to publish key information, including curriculum plans, on school websites.
- Ofsted will continue to check curriculum information on school websites as part of its ongoing risk assessment procedures to determine whether no-notice inspection is necessary.

DFE Guidance November 2014

Through their provision of SMSC, schools should:

- enable students to develop their self-knowledge, self-esteem and self-confidence;
- enable students to distinguish right from wrong and to respect the civil and criminal laws of England;
- encourage students to accept responsibility for their behaviour, show initiative, and to understand how they can contribute positively to the lives of those living and working in the locality of the school and to society more widely;

DFE Guidance November 2014

- enable students to acquire a broad general knowledge of and respect for public institutions and services in England;
- further tolerance and harmony between different cultural traditions by enabling students to acquire an appreciation of and respect for their own and other cultures;
- encourage respect for other people; and
- encourage respect for democracy and support for participation in the democratic processes, including respect for the basis on which the law is made and applied in England.

British values - the DFE view

The understanding and knowledge expected of pupils as a result of schools promoting fundamental British values includes:

- an understanding of how citizens can influence decision-making through the democratic process;
- an appreciation that living under the rule of law protects individual citizens and is essential for their wellbeing and safety;
- an understanding that there is a separation of power between the executive and the judiciary, and that while some public bodies such as the police and the army can be held to account through Parliament, others such as the courts maintain independence;

British values - the DFE view

- an understanding that the freedom to choose and hold other faiths and beliefs is protected in law;
- an acceptance that other people having different faiths or beliefs to oneself (or having none) should be accepted and tolerated, and should not be the cause of prejudicial or discriminatory behaviour;

and

- an understanding of the importance of identifying and combatting discrimination.

British values - the DFE view

- an acceptance that other people having different faiths or beliefs to oneself (or having none) should be accepted and tolerated, and should not be the cause of prejudicial or discriminatory behaviour; and
- an understanding of the importance of identifying and combatting discrimination

Ofsted view of British values

Under social development

- acceptance and engagement with the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs; the pupils develop and demonstrate skills and attitudes that will allow them to participate fully in and contribute positively to life in modern Britain.

Ofsted - view of British values

- understanding and appreciation of the range of different cultures within school and further afield as an essential element of their preparation for life in modern Britain
- knowledge of Britain's democratic parliamentary system and its central role in shaping our history and values, and in continuing to develop Britain

Ofsted - view of British values

Under cultural development:

- understanding and appreciation of the wide range of cultural influences that have shaped their own heritage and those of others
- understanding and appreciation of the range of different cultures within school and further afield as an essential element of their preparation for life in modern Britain
- knowledge of Britain's democratic parliamentary system and its central role in shaping our history and values, and in continuing to develop Britain

Top tips

- ✓ Conveying and explaining British values is everyone's job
- ✓ British values are to be found in song, dance, sport, poetry, music, literature, history, geography, film, photography and cartoons.....
- ✓ British values are inclusive of all faiths and of none.
- ✓ British values come from multiple cultures, different classes and different genetic pools.
- ✓ Children are able to describe British values of fairness, honesty and tolerance, often more generously than adults.
- ✓ Children need opportunities to meet and see people from different cultures, ethnic groups, classes, religious beliefs and none, as well as be able to express their own views.

Top tips

“Every man should have a built-in automatic crap detector operating inside him.”

Ernest Hemingway, 1954