

Catholic Values and ‘British Values’

The background to the debate on ‘British values’

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THE BACKGROUND TO THE DEBATE ON BRITISH VALUES

Prevent Strategy (2011)

Faced with the threat of further terrorist attacks, the government launched the Prevent Strategy in June 2011. In the foreword to this document the Home Secretary, the Rt Hon. Theresa May MP, pledged *'an unyielding fight against extremism.'* In the education section of this report it was noted that, *'There have been allegations that a minority of independent faith schools have been actively promoting views that are contrary to British values, such as intolerance of other cultures and gender inequality.'*¹

In this document British values were listed as, *'democracy, rule of law, equality of opportunity, freedom of speech and the rights of all men and women to live free from persecution of any kind.'*²

To address these concerns it was proposed that, *'Working with DfE, Ofsted will ensure that inspectors have the necessary knowledge and expertise to determine whether extremist and intolerant beliefs are being promoted in a school and then to take appropriate action. Consideration is being given to strengthening Independent School Standards.'*³

Operation Trojan Horse (2013-14)

In late November 2013 Birmingham City Council received the *'Trojan Horse'* letter. The letter was incomplete and had no signature or addressee. Its authenticity has been questioned. The letter set out a five-stage process to remove head teachers and take control of schools so that they could be run on strict Islamic principles.

Birmingham City Council carried out an internal enquiry and passed a copy of the letter to West Midlands Police. In December 2013 West Midlands Police passed a copy of the letter to the Home Office who in turn passed a copy to the Department for Education's *'Extremist Unit'*. Media reporting on the letter began at the end of February 2014, with many articles providing details of alleged incidents of concern for parents and teachers.

On 15th April 2014 the Secretary of State for Education, the Rt Hon. Michael Gove MP, appointed Peter Clarke as the Education Commissioner for Birmingham to investigate the allegations. Peter Clarke is an ex-deputy assistant commissioner of the Metropolitan Police.

¹ *The Prevent Strategy*, The Home Office, 2011, p. 68

² *Ibid.*, p. 34

³ *Ibid.*, p. 70

Peter Clarke's report was published on 22nd July 2014. His inquiry found no *'evidence of terrorism, radicalisation or violent extremism in the schools of concern in Birmingham.'*⁴ However, his report raised concerns about *'clear evidence that there are a number of people, associated with each other and in positions of influence in schools and governing bodies, who espouse, sympathise with or fail to challenge extremist views.'*⁵ It was recommended that, *'Ofsted should consider whether the existing inspection 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. This includes ensuring that the appropriate boundaries for a non-faith school are not breached.'*⁶

Birmingham City Council and Ofsted also conducted their own investigations into these allegations. Ofsted's inquiry was led by Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools, Sir Michael Wilshaw. Ofsted inspected 21 schools in Birmingham. Reporting on 9th June 2014, they placed 5 schools in special measures. The Chief Inspector said that there was evidence of an *'organised campaign to target certain schools'* and found that some governors attempted to *'impose and promote a narrow faith-based ideology'* in secular schools. Outlining Ofsted's findings to the House of Commons, the Secretary of State for Education stated, *'We already require independent schools, academies and free schools to respect British values. Now we will consult on strengthening this standard further, so that all schools actively promote British values.'*⁷ British values were listed as, *'democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs'*.⁸

None of the schools that were investigated by Ofsted, or by Peter Clark, were Catholic schools or indeed were designated as schools with any religious character. As the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Most Revd and Rt Hon. Justin Welby, has commented, the *'commentary around "Trojan Horse" has made it sound as if schools with a religious character are a problem. That's simply not true and that fact seems to need a lot of repeating: no church schools or faith-based schools were caught up in "Trojan Horse".'*⁹

Independent School Standards (2014)

The Department for Education launched a short consultation on revisions to the Independent School Standards on 23 June 2014. This included the proposal that free schools, academies and independent schools must, *'actively promote the fundamental*

⁴ *Report into allegations concerning Birmingham schools arising from the 'Trojan Horse' letter*, Peter Clarke, Department for Education, July 2014, p. 95

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 99

⁷ *Trojan Horse report: All schoolchildren to be taught British values from September*, says Michael Gove, Christopher Hope, The Daily Telegraph, 9 June 2014

⁸ *Promoting British Values in Schools*, Katherine Sellgren, BBC News website, 10 June 2014

⁹ *Reconciliation in action: speech by the Archbishop of Canterbury to church school leaders and Chairs of governing bodies*, 7 November 2014

*British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs.*¹⁰ It should be noted that this was a finite list of values and not an open ended one that could be easily altered by ministers.

It was also proposed that for schools to meet the necessary standard for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of their students they should, *'encourage respect for other people, paying particular regard to the protected characteristics set out in the Equality Act 2010.'*¹¹ Before this change, all schools were subject to the Equality Act and, in the case of state-funded schools, the Public Sector Equality Duty. The government stated clearly that these proposals did not extend schools' obligations under the Equality Act, require schools to promote other faiths, or require schools to promote the protected characteristics.¹²

This consultation concluded on 4th August. The changes outlined above came into effect very soon afterwards on 29th September.

Revised Ofsted School Inspection Handbook (1st September 2014)

On 31st July 2014 Ofsted published a revised inspection handbook. This came into effect on 1st September 2014 and included an alteration which meant that inspectors would *'pay even greater attention to a school's curriculum to ensure that it is appropriately broad and balanced to help prepare young people for life in modern Britain.'*¹³

From now on inspectors will judge the extent to which schools encourage the social development of their pupils and their *'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'*. They will inspect the extent to which *'pupils develop and demonstrate skills and attitudes that will allow them to participate fully in and contribute positively to life in modern Britain.'*¹⁴

When assessing schools' leadership and management, governance and curriculum, consideration will be given to the extent to which pupils are prepared for life in modern Britain. A school in which *'pupils are intolerant of others and/or reject any of the core values fundamental to life in modern Britain'* will be graded inadequate.

Counter Terrorism and Security Bill (2014-15)

On 26th November 2014 the Home Secretary unveiled a new Counter Terrorism and Security Bill. A factsheet published by the Home Office on 3rd December 2014 to accompany the Counter Terrorism and Security Bill stated that it will:

¹⁰ *Independent School Standards consultation*, Department for Education, June 2014

¹¹ *Ibid*

¹² *Ibid*

¹³ *Revised guidance for maintained schools and academies inspections*, Ofsted, 31st July 2014

¹⁴ *Ibid*

- Create a new duty on certain bodies to have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism. The duty will apply to bodies including local authorities, the police, prisons, providers of probation services, schools, colleges, and universities.
- Allow the Secretary of State to issue guidance to those bodies on how the duty should be fulfilled.
- Give the Secretary of State power to direct a body to take certain action, which would be used to enforce compliance where the Secretary of State is satisfied that the body has failed to discharge the duty. These directions would be enforceable by a court order.¹⁵

These plans were criticised by the Revd Nigel Genders, the Chief Education Officer of the Church of England, as *'a step too far'*. He has commented that, *'As a country we have access to both counter terrorism experts and educational professionals. Suggesting these groups swap roles in an attempt to build a safer society needs more thought.'*¹⁶ In our response to the consultation on these proposals, the Catholic Education Service highlighted difficulties in defining extremism, the limited availability of organisations to train teachers and governors in this area and the need for schools to have clarity in how Ofsted inspectors will apply these rules.

The legislation received Royal Assent on 12 February 2015. Section 26 of the Act came into effect on 1 July, requiring all schools "to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism". Department for Education advice¹⁷ on this duty included the following:

- **Schools and childcare providers should have clear procedures in place for protecting children at risk of radicalisation.** These procedures may be set out in existing safeguarding policies. **It is not necessary for schools and childcare settings to have distinct policies on implementing the Prevent duty.**
- **School staff and childcare providers should understand when it is appropriate to make a referral to the Channel programme.** Channel is a programme which focuses on providing support at an early stage to people who are identified as being vulnerable to being drawn into terrorism.
- Individual schools and childcare providers are best placed to assess their training needs in the light of their assessment of the risk. **As a minimum, however, schools should ensure that the Designated Safeguarding Lead undertakes Prevent awareness training and is able to provide advice and support to other members of staff on protecting children from the risk of radicalisation.**

¹⁵ *Counter-Terrorism and Security Bill Factsheet (Part 5 – Chapter 1)*, Home Office, November 2014

¹⁶ *Is Ofsted equipped to police extremism?*, Nigel Genders, Church of England Communications Office, 27 November 2014

¹⁷ *The Prevent duty: Department advice for schools and childcare providers*, Department for Education, June 2015.

- The statutory guidance makes clear the need for schools to ensure that children are safe from terrorist and extremist material when accessing the internet in schools. **Schools should ensure that suitable filtering is in place.**
- If a member of staff in a school has a concern about a particular pupil they should follow the school's normal safeguarding procedures, including discussing with the school's designated safeguarding lead, and where deemed necessary, with children's social care.
- Those concerned about extremism in a school or organisation that works with children, worried that a child might be at risk of extremism, should contact the government's helpline on 020 7340 7264.

Links to the government's advice can be found here

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/protecting-children-from-radicalisation-the-prevent-duty>