

The Trojan Horse Affair:



A Documentary Record

A report from Policy Exchange's Understanding Islamism project

Dr Damon L. Perry and Dr Paul Stott

Forewords by Rt Hon Michael Gove MP, Nick Timothy CBE
and Khalid Mahmood MP



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I'm on a master's program for Investigative Journalism currently.

I graduate this September.

The Trojan Horse began as my dissertation project, and it is my first attempt to start righting wrongs.

I never believed in the official narrative regarding the Trojan Horse.

I never believed the letter was authentic.

I never believed Tahir Alam was masterminding the sinister Islamic plot.

I never believed Birmingham City Council.

I never believed Peter Clarke.

I never believed Michael Gove.

I never believed Rizvana Darr and I never believed your sisters wrote those resignation letters.

What I believe is, I'm going to change this narrative, inshallah.

Hamza Syed, in a letter sent to Mr Aslam, the brother of two former teaching assistants at Adderley Primary School.¹

1. *The New York Times*/Serial Productions, "The Trojan Horse Affair" Part 6 ("Cucumbers and Cooker Bombs"), 03:23, <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2022/podcasts/trojan-horse-affair.html#listen>.

Forewords

When the Trojan Horse affair erupted in 2014, our respective roles as the Education Secretary and Special Adviser to the Home Secretary placed us at the heart of the Government's response to a scandal within our educational system. Our experience included working with Ofsted, child safeguarding agencies, the police, and intelligence agencies. Between us, we received briefings on matters of extremism in schools, children's social care, live investigations into terror plots, and other sensitive issues. Few issues posed as significant a concern to young people as Trojan Horse. Thousands of young people's lives stood to be affected by a concerted effort to transform a network of schools in line with Islamist ideas and values that would hamper their outlooks and life chances.

Ever since the facts about Trojan Horse were established, there has been a concerted effort to muddy the waters. We are told, for example, that what happened was never about extremism, that the problems with the takeover of secular, state schools were limited to governance malpractice. This is what the MCB, MEND, and other campaigning organisations would have us believe. But it is simply incorrect. Trojan Horse most certainly involved problems of governance, but these problems were driven by the beliefs and agenda of the teachers and governors involved.

Those beliefs – what Peter Clarke described as “a hardline and politicised strand of Sunni Islam” – motivated those involved in segregating boys and girls, exposing pupils to intolerant views, pressuring girls to wear headscarves, broadcasting the call to prayer across the playground, bullying headteachers and governors to leave their posts, and installing sympathetic replacements.

The notion that the events in Birmingham had nothing to do with extremism is as dangerous as it is false, since it conceals an ugly truth that too many prefer not to acknowledge: we have a problem in Britain with Islamist ideology and its adherents, who seek to impose their intolerant values on Muslim communities, including children, through non-violent means including the capture of important institutions such as schools. The fear of being branded “Islamophobic” has only made it more difficult to speak up about such extremism.

There is a well-organised campaign that seeks to undermine our counter-extremism work and the Government's counter-radicalisation strategy, Prevent. This is important to note in anticipation of the Independent Review of Prevent. Many of the key players in this campaign – who will no doubt repeat their demands for the scrapping of Prevent regardless of how it is fine-tuned – are also involved in undermining the truth about Trojan Horse. The common thread to their campaigning is the allegation of state-driven “Islamophobia”.

An important element of this campaign of grievance is the activists' insistence on writing their own truths. Their attempt to rewrite the history

of Trojan Horse was given fresh wind earlier this year by a podcast series from Serial and The New York Times, which has taken a peculiar stance towards Britain in recent years, repeatedly portraying this country as an insular backwater whose inhabitants are drowning in a tide of nostalgia, racism and bad food.

But the podcast was replete with errors and omissions. Echoing a familiar trope in the narrative of professional grievance activists, they claimed that Park View's "takeover" of other schools was requested by the DfE, as if the Government's Academies Programme had greenlighted the spread of intolerant ideas and practices across the schools in Birmingham. The reporters' disgraceful treatment of Richy Thompson of Humanists UK was exposed by Thompson's recordings of their conversations. In the words of Sonia Sodha, an Observer columnist, the series "presents a one-sided account that minimises child protection concerns, misogyny and homophobia ... In doing so, it breaches the standards the public have the right to expect of journalists, with cruel consequences for those it uses and abuses along the way."

Little wonder that the podcast was such a travesty, when one of its reporters admitted he knew the conclusions of his investigation before it even began. Hamza Syed declares on the podcast: "I never believed Tahir Alam was masterminding the sinister Islamic plot. I never believed Birmingham City Council. I never believed Peter Clarke. I never believed Michael Gove. I never believed Rizvana Darr and I never believed your sisters wrote those resignation letters. What I believe is, I'm going to change this narrative, inshallah." These are the words of an activist, not a credible journalist.

This important report by Policy Exchange shows how wrong are the Islamists' claims of victimhood and denials of wrongdoing. It is the first document that brings together a comprehensive series of timelines detailing what exactly happened in Birmingham schools, with an analysis of the key issues at the heart of the scandal. It also provides the important context entirely absent from the media and academic treatment of the issue to date: a deliberate strategy going back decades to "Islamise" education led by associates of Tahir Alam, the man at the centre of Trojan Horse.

The facts of the Trojan Horse scandal were established in independent reports by Ofsted, Peter Clarke and Ian Kershaw. Those facts are not open to debate, for they are facts. It should not be necessary to reassert what happened in a new report like this, but thanks to campaigners and useful idiots in publications like The New York Times, it sadly is. This is an excellent report and we should consider it the final word.

Rt Hon Michael Gove MP

Nick Timothy CBE

Policy Exchange Senior Fellow and former Chief of Staff to the Prime Minister

When the Trojan Horse affair emerged into public view in the spring of 2014, as the MP for Perry Barr in Birmingham, I had an insider's perspective on the unfolding drama. Numerous teachers, head teachers and governors confided in me at the time about their concerns. But they were prevented from speaking out, either due to gagging clauses in compromise agreements signed with Birmingham City Council (BCC), or for fear of reprisals from extremists. I spoke up about this and asked the then Education Secretary and leader of BCC to allow these witnesses to speak out without losing their payoffs or pensions.

The reports from Peter Clarke and Ian Kershaw, both published in July 2014, reported many wrong doings by a small but dedicated network of Muslim teachers and governors. But because neither Clarke nor Kershaw found evidence of radicalisation or violent extremism – never their remit in the first place – the non-violent extremist and intolerant attitudes and practices in the affected schools were swept under the carpet by the HOC Education Select Committee's report and all those alleging that those responsible for the wrong-doing were the real victims.

In 2014, thanks to compromise agreements, the public were already prevented from knowing the full facts about what was going on in the affected schools in Birmingham. Eight years on, there is a risk that the truth – as understood by the public and well as within more specialist academic circles – will be even more diminished by *The New York Times'* podcast aired in February of this year. This threw fuel to the fire of conspiracy theories about a supposed “witch hunt” of Muslims led by an “Islamophobic” government. The podcast was uncritically embraced and promoted by activists who claim Muslims were scapegoated by the official inquiries and the media coverage of the Trojan Horse affair. But these activists do not represent all Muslims, many of whom told me they were too afraid to publicly challenge the activists' narrative.

This is why I whole-heartedly welcome Policy Exchange's report on the matter. It provides a much-needed corrective to the podcast and the relentless campaign by the activist teachers and governors involved in the Trojan Horse affair to undermine the facts with a false victimhood narrative. It provides a set of chronologies that detail the unfolding events of 2014 – and the concerns that were raised years before – as well as a timely reminder of the range of issues found in the schools. Not only does it present a much fuller picture of events, but it also challenges some of the myths that are central to the activist's account: that there was no extremism at all – just mere governance issues here and there, that Trojan Horse was a “hoax” devised to push through the Prevent duty, and that the undue religious influence found in the schools was nothing more than having Islamic collective worship. This report serves as an important reference for the public record. There is no way the activists will admit that they did anything wrong, but the public, including the people of Birmingham, deserve access to a more comprehensive account of what happened.

Khalid Mahmood MP

Member of Parliament for Birmingham Perry Barr

Introduction

In February 2022, “The Trojan Horse Affair” podcast, released by The New York Times and Serial Productions, reinvigorated public interest in the events surrounding a letter sent anonymously to Birmingham City Council (BCC) in November 2013, which outlined a “long term plan” to “take over a number of schools [in Birmingham] and ensur[e] they are run on strict Islamic principles”.² The letter described steps to meet this goal, including installing sympathetic governors and ousting staff that would impede this project. The letter also sparked off a series of investigations in 2014, including those led by Ofsted, the Department for Education (DfE), and BCC. These in turn led to misconduct tribunals of a small number of teachers, which subsequently collapsed in 2017. The podcast chose to focus on the origin of the letter – which, whilst denounced as fake by the teachers under investigation and activist sympathisers, has not been definitively proven to be authentic or inauthentic. Significantly, the podcast did not examine the actual events that were reported to have occurred in the schools in question. It therefore painted an unbalanced picture of what happened and triggered a wave round of media and social media coverage of the affair. This included another round of evermore strident denials of wrongdoing by some of the Birmingham teachers against whom misconduct cases collapsed, and by the man at the centre of the controversy – Tahir Alam. There were also renewed and emboldened accusations of a deliberate “witch hunt” of Muslims in education by the Government and the then Education Secretary Michael Gove; demands for a public apology to these teachers; and calls for a public inquiry.

The lack of a robust response by the Government and mainstream media to these accusations and demands, and the lack of a firm response to the partisan claims of the podcast and subsequent new media coverage of the affair – both of which omitted many details of the findings of some of the official inquiries – has left a huge gap in what by default could become seen as the accepted truth of the affair. This report sets out to address this danger by providing a fuller, documentary account of what happened and a corrective to the skewed coverage that the NYT/Serial podcast prompted, particularly in Islamist-led activist social media. It needs to be remembered that the various inquiries at the time uncovered numerous uncomfortable truths about school governance, the unjustified narrowing of the curriculum in some schools, financial mismanagement, the bullying of teachers, and a lack of support for these teachers from BCC. There was also, of course, the uncovering of the fact that some teachers at the affected schools held or failed to challenge misogynistic, homophobic,

2. Trojan Horse letter, in Peter Clarke, “Report into allegations concerning Birmingham schools arising from the ‘Trojan Horse’ letter”, HC 576, House of Commons, July 2014, pp.107-112. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/340526/HC_576_accessible_-_pdf. Hereafter referred to as “Clarke Report”.

and even extremist views.

It is important to recognise the success, in audience terms, of “The Trojan Horse Affair” podcast. To take an illustrative snapshot, on February 24, 2022, it was the fourth most popular podcast in the UK on Spotify, and the second most popular on Apple podcasts. The format of a series of programmes, told in the style of a real crime investigation and interspersed with musical snippets, is one popular with young technologically savvy audiences. Handily for the podcast makers, members of this social group tend to be well educated and would typically consider themselves to be politically progressive. Whilst not instinctively questioning of the agenda of those claiming to speak for minority religious groups, they tend to be sensitive to any accusations of prejudice or discrimination from the Government. This is an influential audience, and one that some of the organisations which had previously agitated around the Trojan Horse affair, such as the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB), Muslim Engagement and Development (MEND) and CAGE, may struggle to reach. In connecting the perhaps inevitable support from activists in the milieu of those organisations with a new audience, the NYT and Serial quickly found they had a commercial success on their hands. The influence of the podcast on young people’s views of the Trojan Horse affair is difficult to ascertain, but many would have been too young to remember the more balanced coverage of events at the time. In the absence of broader yet more granular coverage of the facts, there is a real danger that half-truths, distortions, and omissions will come to describe and define the Trojan Horse affair for the current and indeed future generations.

This report is comprised of twelve chapters. The first of these is a timeline of key events leading up to the receipt by BCC of the Trojan Horse letter and the key events that followed involving the schools, BCC, Ofsted and the DfE. The timeline begins in 2010 when a Birmingham headteacher, Tim Boyes, met with the DfE to warn of “the challenges that political Islam posed for schools in Birmingham”.³ The issues he raised were similar to those in the Trojan Horse letter. In a second meeting, a suggestion was made to continue the discussion with a wider group of headteachers, but no further discussions took place.⁴ The timeline also includes the publication in 2015, by the DfE, of a report - “Review into possible warnings to DfE relating to extremism in Birmingham schools” – which acknowledged six different warnings about potential extremism in Birmingham schools between 1994 and 2013, all prior to the Trojan Horse letter. The report concluded that “the Department needs to be more vigilant, more inquisitive and have more robust systems in place than it had in the past”.⁵ The timeline ends in 2016, when Birmingham’s education commissioner Sir Mike Tomlinson banned the use of the term “Trojan Horse” to describe alleged attempts by groups to take over schools and covertly impose a Muslim ethos.

Significant events did not stop there, however, and are covered in other chapters in the report. Chapter two includes another chronology, detailing the responses by Islamists and their activist sympathisers to the Trojan Horse

3. Chris Wormald, “Review into possible warnings to DfE relating to extremism in Birmingham schools”, Department for Education, January 2015, p.7. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/396211/Review_into_possible_warnings_to_DfE_relatng_to_extremism_in_Birmingham_schools.pdf. Hereafter referred to as “Wormald Review”.

4. Judith Burns, “‘Trojan Horse review’: DfE ‘lacked inquisitiveness’”, BBC News, January 16, 2015, <https://www.bbc.com/news/education-30847474>; Edward Malnick, “Trojan Horse ‘plot’: ministers failed to intervene amid warnings 20 years ago”, *The Telegraph*, January 16, 2015, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/education-news/11350961/Trojan-Horse-plot-ministers-failed-to-intervene-amid-warnings-20-years-ago.html>.

5. Wormald Review, pp.6, 12.

affair. This timeline ends in February 2022 with a series of interviews held by University of Oxford academic Usaama al-Azami with Tahir Alam and others. These are notable since they demonstrate how the response to the Trojan Horse affair has not only become more narrowly focused but also more strident. At times it has felt almost hysterical, claiming that there was a conspiracy between the DfE, the then Education Secretary Michael Gove, and others, including Peter Clarke, to scapegoat Muslims and stymie their efforts to improve the education of Muslim children, and even to use the Trojan Horse affair as a Trojan Horse itself for an “Islamophobic” counter-extremism and security agenda.

Chapter two also notes the alignment of the far left, in particular the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), with the Islamist-led narrative that Trojan Horse was a state-sanctioned exercise in “Islamophobia”. In 2014, the SWP’s *Socialist Worker* characterised concerns about Birmingham schools as “blatant racism”⁶ and more recently, in February 2022, it encouraged its readers to listen to the NYT/Serial podcast, whilst claiming that the Trojan Horse affair had led to racist attacks.⁷

An additional timeline is provided in chapter three of the report, which covers the events involving the misconduct cases of teachers involved in the Trojan Horse affair. The hearings for 15 teachers were discontinued in the summer of 2017 after the NCTL’s lawyers failed to disclose evidence to the defence in the cases of five former senior teachers at Park View Educational Trust.⁸ However, Tahir Alam, the former chair of governors and a listed director of Park View Educational Trust, was banned from managing independent schools and from being a governor of maintained schools in September 2015 by Nicky Morgan, the then Education Secretary, on the basis that he had engaged in conduct “aimed at undermining fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs”.⁹ Alam and several teachers involved in the “Park View Brotherhood” WhatsApp group, including Razwan Faraz, are the focus of chapter four of the report. Alam and Faraz, in particular, have always protested their innocence but have become more vocal about the Trojan Horse affair since the NYT/Serial podcast broadcast in February 2022, demanding a public apology from Michael Gove and “a change in policy”.¹⁰ This has been echoed by the MCB, which has called for a public inquiry into the matter.¹¹

Chapter five places the events of the Trojan Horse affair within the context of a decades-long project to “Islamise” the provision of education in the UK and elsewhere. The concept of “Islamisation” is not a conspiracy fabricated by “right wing” media or “Islamophobic” government; for decades it has been a key element of the strategic thinking and planning of organisations and individuals linked to Tahir Alam, the central figure in the Trojan Horse affair. These include Akram Khan Cheema, an associate of Alam and former colleague at the Association of Muslim Schools UK – the largest representative body in the country for Muslim schools – and Ghulam Sarwar, the Director of the Muslim Educational Trust, an MCB

6. Sadie Robinson, “Panic over ‘Islamists’ in Birmingham schools is blatant racism”, *Socialist Worker*, April 22, 2014, <https://socialist-worker.co.uk/news/panic-over-islamists-in-birmingham-schools-is-blatant-racism/>.
7. Charlie Kimber, “How Michael Gove spread the racist ‘Trojan Horse’ conspiracy”, *Socialist Worker*, February 7, 2022, <https://socialistworker.co.uk/comment/how-michael-gove-spread-the-racist-trojan-horse-conspiracy/>.
8. National College for Teaching and Leadership, “Mr Monzoor Hussain, Mr Hardeep Saini, Mr Arshad Hussain, Mr Razwan Faraz, Ms Lindsey Clark: Professional conduct panel outcome Panel decision and reasons on behalf of the Secretary of State for Education in respect of applications for the proceedings to be discontinued”, May 2017. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/619386/PVL_Panel_decision_and_reasons_for_web.pdf.
9. Department for Education, “Regulation of school managers and governors: prohibition direction”, September 2015, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/459386/Regulation_of_school_managers_and_governors_Tahir_Alam.pdf.
10. Robert Carter/@Bob_cart124, Twitter post, February 19, 2022, https://twitter.com/Bob_cart124/status/1495090054229897218.
11. Muslim Council of Britain, “Who was behind the National Hoax? Muslim Council of Britain Calls for Independent Public Inquiry into ‘Trojan Horse’ Affair”, MCB Press Release, February 10, 2022. <https://mcb.org.uk/press-releases/who-was-behind-the-national-hoax-muslim-council-of-britain-calls-for-independent-public-inquiry-into-trojan-horse-affair/>.

affiliate, whose work was recommended in the MCB's guidance on Muslim pupils, co-authored by Alam. Khan Cheema has published explicitly on the necessity of the "Islamisation of Knowledge"¹² for a "new world order".¹³ Sarwar has likewise stated that Islamic education should be part of "efforts worldwide to establish Islam as an all-encompassing way of life".¹⁴ It is clear that there is a network of Islamist educationalists in Britain who, until 2014, were quite open about "Islamising" education for British Muslims. This has never been merely about Islamic collective worship, but about teaching the entire National Curriculum from a specific – and arguably contestable – Islamic viewpoint.

Chapter six looks at the House of Commons Education Committee report into the Trojan Horse affair, published in March 2015. This report stated, "All our witnesses also accepted that they had found no evidence of extremism in schools."¹⁵ It claimed 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".¹⁶ This report was grist to the Islamists' mill. It led numerous Islamist or Islamist-supporting activists and media outlets to declare that there had been no extremism or collectively organised efforts to introduce inappropriate practices in schools in Birmingham whatsoever. They referred to this report as evidence for the allegedly "hoax" nature not just of the original anonymous letter, but also of the numerous and fully substantiated reports of the problems in the affected schools. However, the Education Committee report appeared to consider only the violent form of extremism. As John Ware noted in March 2015, "No one, least of all Mr Clarke, Mr Kershaw or ministers has ever claimed that violent extremism was found in the schools."¹⁷ Clarke himself had written in his report of July 2014: "I neither specifically looked for, nor found, evidence of terrorism, radicalisation or violent extremism in the schools of concern in Birmingham."¹⁸ However, with reference to the definition of extremism in the Prevent strategy¹⁹ – which includes opposition to "mutual respect and tolerance of difference faiths and beliefs" – Clarke "found 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".²⁰ Such views were expressed, for example, in a WhatsApp group named "Park View Brotherhood".

Chapter seven of the report challenges the view that the Trojan Horse affair was the pretext used by an Islamophobic government to justify the introduction of the Prevent duty, which came into force in 2015 obliging public institutions, including schools, to pay "due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism".²¹ This assertion was put forward both in the recent *New York Times*/Serial podcast and by various activist media outlets. The Government has neither responded to nor challenged this completely erroneous charge. The simple and incontrovertible fact is that concerns about extremism in Birmingham schools had been expressed years before BCC's receipt of the Trojan Horse

12. MAK Cheema and Musharraf Hussain, "Islamisation of Knowledge: The concept, the process and the outcomes", Karimia Institute, February 19, 2007, p.3. Formerly available at: <http://www.karimia.com/Islamisation%20curriculum.pdf>. This page is no longer active, but an archived copy of the document's landing page is viewable here: https://web.archive.org/web/20070219042212/www.karimia.fortnet.co.uk/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=245&Itemid=2. Document in authors' possession and reproduced in Appendix 3.
13. Mohammad Akram Khan-Cheema, "Learning to Teach, Teaching to Learn", AMS-UK Annual Conference 2013 presentation, previously available at <http://ams-uk.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/LEARNING-TO-TEACH-Teaching-to-Learn-MAK-C-Feb-2013.pptx>, currently available at <https://vdocument.in/learning-to-teach-teaching-to-learn-56cd16a9392f4.html>.
14. Ghulam Sarwar, *Islamic Education: Its Meaning, Problems and Prospects*, London: Muslim Educational Trust, 2001, p.30.
15. House of Commons Education Committee, "Extremism in schools: the Trojan Horse affair", Seventh Report of Session 2014–15, House of Commons, March 11, 2015, para.8, p.6. Available at: <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201415/cmselect/cmeduc/473/473.pdf>. Hereafter referred to as "Education Committee Report".
16. Education Committee Report, para.80, p.29.
17. John Ware, "MPs have failed us over the Trojan school affair", *The Jewish Chronicle*, March 19, 2015. <https://www.thejc.com/lets-talk/all/mps-have-failed-us-over-the-trojan-school-affair-1.65689>.
18. Clarke Report, para.11.1, p.95.
19. "Extremism is vocal or active opposition to fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs. We also include in our definition of extremism calls for the deaths of members of our armed forces, whether in this country or overseas." See Home Office, "Prevent Strategy", Cm 8092, June 2011. Available at: www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/97976/prevent-strategy-review.pdf.
20. Clarke Report, para.11.1, p.95.
21. Home Office, "Revised Prevent duty guidance: for England and Wales", UK Government website, April 1, 2021, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/prevent-duty-guidance/revised-prevent-duty-guidance-for-england-and-wales>.

letter at the close of 2013. And, moreover, concerns about radicalisation – not just in schools but in other public institutions too – had also been raised prior to this event: The key catalyst for the Prevent duty was the killing of Fusilier Lee Rigby in May 2013. In response to this, in June 2013, the then Prime Minister David Cameron set up the Task Force on Tackling Radicalisation and Extremism. In the same month, he said in Parliament: “We need to dismantle this process [of radicalisation] at every stage - in schools, colleges, universities, on the internet, in our prisons, wherever it is taking place”.²²

Chapter eight of the report highlights some of the views advanced in two books that are sympathetic to Alam and the teachers involved in the misconduct trials. In his recent book, *The Fate of Abraham: Why the West is Wrong about Islam*, journalist Peter Osborne describes the Trojan Horse affair in unsubstantiated, hyperbolic terms as a “state-sanctioned attack on Muslims in east Birmingham”.²³ His portrayal of the events in the city omits or underplays important elements of the story, such as the “Park View Brotherhood” WhatsApp group comprised of teachers, governors and activists, where intolerant and homophobic remarks were made or not challenged, and the “Educational Activists” WhatsApp group, where Razwan Faraz spoke of advancing an “Islamising agenda” in a Birmingham school.²⁴ John Holmwood and Therese O’Toole’s 2018 book, *Countering Extremism in British Schools? The Truth about the Birmingham Trojan Horse Affair*, presents a more detailed look at the controversy. It likewise sees no fault in the actions of Alam, the governors or teachers involved in what Clarke referred to as “a determined effort to gain control of governing bodies at a small number of schools”²⁵ and introduce within them “an intolerant and aggressive Islamic ethos”.²⁶ Holmwood and O’Toole argue that there was no attempt to Islamify or impose “undue religious influence” within schools, since the non-faith schools could not be considered “secular” (due to a legal requirement for all state schools to hold collective worship) and were merely following guidance “to reflect the religious identities of their pupils”.²⁷ But this wrongly assumes that the requirement for worship in non-faith schools, and guidance to respect the religious sensitivities of the local communities justify the imposition of a “restricted and unbalanced curriculum”,²⁸ the teaching of belief (e.g., creationism) as fact in science lessons;²⁹ the organisation of school trips to Mecca exclusively for Muslim pupils;³⁰ and the disparagement of pupils and staff who do not pray as “kaffirs”.³¹

One effect of the NYT/Serial podcast – in addition to renewed interest in the Trojan Horse affair – was a narrowing of focus on the issue of the authorship of the anonymous letter to the exclusion of widely acknowledged and long-standing problems in the schools in question. The “forgotten findings” of the reports of the Education Funding Agency, Ofsted, Peter Clarke and Ian Kershaw are the subject of chapter nine of the report. This chapter includes, for the first time, a table merging a summary of Clarke and Kershaw’s findings in the relevant schools. It should be remembered that – whilst Kershaw denied the existence of “a

22. BBC News, “Woolwich killing a betrayal of Islam, says Cameron”, June 3, 2013, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-22756225>.

23. Peter Osborne, *The Fate of Abraham: Why the West is Wrong about Islam*, London: Simon & Schuster UK, 2022, p.315.

24. Andrew Gilligan, “Muslim extremists, and a worrying lesson for us all”, *The Telegraph*, March 16, 2014, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/educationopinion/10700041/Muslim-extremists-and-a-worrying-lesson-for-us-all.html>.

25. Clarke Report, para.10.

26. *Ibid.*, p.14.

27. John Holmwood and Therese O’Toole, *Countering Extremism in British Schools? The Truth about the Birmingham Trojan Horse Affair*, Bristol: Policy Press, 2018, p.235.

28. Clarke Report, para.4.11, p.36.

29. *Ibid.*, para.4.24, p.39.

30. *Ibid.*, paras.4.21-23, pp.38-39

31. *Ibid.*, para.4.25, p.39.

systematic plot or co-ordinated plan to take over schools”³² – he did find evidence within some schools of all five steps outlined in the anonymous Trojan Horse letter towards a take-over. This included efforts to turn “Salafi” parents against headteachers, to install governors “to ‘drip feed’ ideals for an Islamic school”, and to encourage school staff to help oust headteachers. These findings were consistent with those of the Clarke report, which noted a “disconcerting pattern” across schools, including “the effective take-over of the governing body by like-minded people”, “interference by the governing body in the curriculum and the day-to-day running of the school”, “bullying and intimidation of senior teaching staff, and in particular headteachers”, strategies “of harassment to oust the headteacher”, and “the reinforcement of Muslim identity to the exclusion or disparagement of others”.³³

It is important to note that in 2014, when the Trojan Horse story first broke, even some opponents of the coalition government and the then Education Secretary Michael Gove, had expressed concerns about what was happening in some Birmingham schools. Problems within the schools were being reported in depth, and few could ignore them all without potentially risking their own credibility.

For example, in July 2014, MEND criticised Peter Clarke’s report, as well as the newspaper coverage of the report, but acknowledged that the report detailed “a number of serious shortcomings”.³⁴ The Labour MP for Birmingham Ladywood, Shabana Mahmood – while voicing her objections to the appointment of Clarke, a former counter-terrorism officer, by the Department for Education – acknowledged serious issues had existed. She said, “There is no doubt that a small group of people in our city went on a massive power trip and behaved completely inappropriately – going way beyond the remit and the parameter for governors”.³⁵ In a June 2014 interview with BBC Midlands Today, former Respect Party leader Salma Yaqoob acknowledged that “There have been issues around bullying, governance issues and that’s why it’s important that those issues are fixed, and fixed fast.”³⁶ The journalist and academic Myriam Francois-Cerrah took a similar approach in an Al-Jazeera discussion. Whilst similarly rejecting the notion of an extremist plot, she acknowledged:

*There are issues of concern within these schools. There are issues to do with how the governing body appears to be intruding into areas they shouldn’t, there are issues absolutely to do with staff feeling uncomfortable with there being a certain agenda pushed by elements within it.*³⁷

She also stated that “There absolutely are conservative views being pushed within some of these schools that I myself would not be happy with.” Academic Chris Allen, in a 2017 overview of Trojan Horse, expressed the fear that the controversy may make it harder for Birmingham Muslims to get involved in schooling, but also acknowledged “the OFSTED investigation did uncover a handful of incidents in a small number of schools that were problematic as regards school governance”.³⁸ By the time of the NYT/Serial podcast in February 2022, however, Allen had decided

32. Ian Kershaw, “Investigation Report: Trojan Horse Letter”, Northern Education, July 2014, para.6, p.4. Available at: https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/downloads/file/1579/investigation_report_trojan_horse_letter_the_kershaw_report. Hereafter referred to as “Kershaw Report”.

33. Clarke Report, p.10.

34. Muslim Engagement and Development, “Report by Birmingham Education Commissioner, Peter Clarke, into ‘Trojan Horse’ allegations”, July 24, 2014, <https://www.mend.org.uk/report-by-birmingham-education-commissioner-peter-clarke-in-to-trojan-horse-allegations/>.

35. Samira Shackle, “Schools for scandal”, New Humanist, August 26, 2014, <https://newhumanist.org.uk/articles/4731/schools-for-scandal>.

36. PeaceNikUK, “Salma Yaqoob calls ‘Trojan Horse’ school scandal meeting | BBC Midlands Today”, YouTube, June 27, 2014, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HLS8wuYE0A&ab_channel=PeaceNikUK.

37. Al Jazeera English, “Inside Story - Extremism in British schools?”, YouTube, June 10, 2014, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ea-GnTHSimo&ab_channel=AlJazeeraEnglish.

38. Chris Allen, “Operation Trojan Horse: An Overview”, University of Birmingham, 2017. Available at: <https://wallscometumblingdown.files.wordpress.com/2018/01/paper-4-operation-trojan-horse-an-overview-june-2017-chrisallen1.pdf>.

not to dwell further on governance issues, and in an analysis of the series for *The Conversation*, he warned that Trojan Horse risked “stigmatising a whole generation of Birmingham’s Muslims”.³⁹ Here is perhaps one of the paradoxes of this story: To act would be to “stigmatise Muslims”, yet to do nothing would be to ignore the governance problems that Allen himself acknowledged, which of course affected Muslim pupils. The MCB itself agreed there were issues of poor governance, and considered the evidence of the WhatsApp conversations “exhibiting inappropriate behaviour” as “indeed very disturbing”.⁴⁰

Another admission – and what even appeared to be an endorsement – of what happened in Birmingham was expressed in March 2015 by Labour Councillor for the Holyhead ward on Birmingham City Council, Paulette Hamilton.⁴¹ She was elected as the Labour MP for Birmingham Erdington on March 4, 2022.⁴² Seven years prior, Hamilton spoke at an event titled “The Ballot or the Bullet? Does Your Vote Count?”, hosted by the Organisation of Black Unity at Birmingham City University.⁴³ The BBC reported that at this event she stated:

*“We have a Trojan horse in the council” and said “our Muslim brothers and sisters” had “made a plan” to “ensure that their teachings and what have you got into the system”. She added: “What then happened was many of the schools, inner-city schools in Birmingham, the Muslim families they filled schools, they then made sure they took over the governorships, as they took over the governorships they made sure that the heads of those schools were people they wanted to represent their cause. What they then did with doing all of this was made sure that their religious views and their beliefs were taken through the education system, it was also then taken into politics”.*⁴⁴

These examples show that even critics of the government have, in the past, acknowledged inappropriate practices in the schools in question. Since the release of the NYT/Serial podcast, such voices have been silent. It is notable that even Ian Kershaw, whose report for BCC highlighted many problems in Trojan Horse schools, remarked in a recent book on the Trojan Horse affair on

*the damage wreaked upon the reputation of a city and part of its community by some politicians and a section of the press determined to find radicalised violent extremism where there was none.*⁴⁵

It is curious that he chose to focus on the alleged but unspecified “damage” to part of Birmingham’s presumably Muslim community (it is unclear if he meant the teachers whose cases folded), rather than the damage he and Clarke found evidence for – and which was endured by ousted, bullied or manipulated headteachers⁴⁶ and by schoolchildren whose outlooks had been restricted due to an excessive narrowing of the curriculum.

Chapter ten of the report documents how the Trojan Horse affair has featured in the broadcast media and arts. BBC Radio 4, for example, broadcast several programmes dedicated to the topic in 2017 and 2020. More influential, perhaps, was the play, “Trojan Horse”, by LUNG

39. Chris Allen, “The Trojan Horse affair: Islamophobia scholar on the long shadow cast by the scandal”, *The Conversation*, February 11, 2022, <https://theconversation.com/the-trojan-horse-affair-islamophobia-scholar-on-the-long-shadow-cast-by-the-scandal-176281>.
40. Muslim Council of Britain, “The Muslim Council of Britain Responds to Peter Clarke’s ‘Trojan Horse’ Letter Report”, MCB Press Release, July 23, 2014, <https://mcb.org.uk/press-releases/the-muslim-council-of-britain-responds-to-peter-clarkes-trojan-horse-letter-report/>.
41. “Councillor Paulette Hamilton”, Birmingham City Council website, web page captured on May 3, 2020, <https://web.archive.org/web/20200503105552/https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/councillors/49/paulette-hamilton>.
42. “Mrs Paulette Hamilton”, UK Parliament website, web page captured on June 17, 2022, <https://web.archive.org/web/20220617200548/https://members.parliament.uk/member/4938/electionresult>.
43. Organisation of Black Unity, “The Ballot or the Bullet?: Does Your Vote Count?”, event listing, OBU Facebook page, undated (event listed for March 12, 2015), <https://www.facebook.com/events/1595308454039126/?ref=newsfeed>.
44. BBC News, “Row over by-election Labour candidate’s comments”, March 2, 2022, <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-60592484>. See also: Guido Fawkes, “Labour By-Election Candidate Considered Malcolm X Inspired ‘Uprising’”, YouTube, March 2, 2022, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zF1GZd_X5ao&ab_channel=GuidoFawkes, from 2:14 onwards.
45. Colin Diamond (ed.), *The Birmingham Book: Lessons in urban education leadership and policy from the Trojan Horse affair*, Camarthen: Crown House, 2022, unnumbered page facing inner cover.
46. Kershaw Report, para.28, p.9.

Productions, which debuted at the Edinburgh Festival in 2018. The project began in 2016, when the two playwrights met Tahir Alam and a former headteacher of one of the schools. Further belying a partisan approach to the affair, the play's second run in 2020 was supported by the activist group MEND, whose staff played an active role in panel discussions held after performances in Manchester, Exeter, and Oxford.

The *New York Times*/Serial podcast – which re-ignited interest in the Trojan Horse affair – is the topic of chapters eleven and twelve of this report. Chapter eleven covers the initial media coverage of the podcast, noting a distinct lack of viewpoint diversity on the topic. This may be put down to the fact that the podcast was mainly embraced by activists and their allies already sympathetic to Alam and the teachers involved in the affair, rather than the mainstream media. This coverage included further interviews with Alam and several former teachers. It is notable that of the 143 tweets about the podcast that received five or more re-tweets between January 27 and February 22, only six were critical of the podcast. Significantly, academics often working in “critical” studies relating to racism, Islamophobia, and de-colonisation, were among the majority of those tweeting in favour of the podcast. Although political support for the podcast was generally lacking, the dearth of viewpoint diversity on Trojan Horse in universities risks placing a highly partisan and erroneous account of the affair on the historical record. Chapter twelve of the report provides an analysis of the podcast, noting the self-confessed prejudices of Hamza Syed,⁴⁷ one of the podcast's producers; the almost obsessive focus on the authenticity of the Trojan Horse letter – the authorship of which they failed to establish – to the exclusion of finding out what happened in the schools; and the accusation of Syed and his colleague Brian Reed harassing potential interviewees.

The report's critical comments on the NYT/Serial podcast serve to address the imbalance of perspectives in the public domain, which has been tilted by the predominance of activist voices, including those of some of the central protagonists in the Trojan Horse affair. Such voices have proclaimed, without reference to the full facts in this affair, that there was a government-driven “Islamophobic” “witch-hunt”. It is only by ignoring the full facts – or an unwillingness to see their significance – that such claims can have any credibility. For this reason, this report lets the facts speak for themselves, in providing chronologies of key events, and reminders of the findings of the various inquiries. The history of the Trojan Horse affair ought not be determined by activist voices, conspiracy theories, or unfounded denials of what actually happened. Of course, the truth is likely to remain contested, but if this report can help paint a fuller and more accurate picture of events, then it will have served its purpose.

47. *The New York Times*/Serial Productions, “The Trojan Horse Affair” Part 6 (“Cucumbers and Cooker Bombs”), 03:23, <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2022/podcasts/trojan-horse-affair.html#listen>.

Chapter 1: Chronology 1: the main events – the schools, Ofsted and the DfE

2010

Post-May 2010

A Birmingham headteacher, Tim Boyes, met twice with the DfE to warn of “the challenges that political Islam posed for schools in Birmingham”.⁴⁸ The issues raised were similar to those in the Trojan Horse letter. A suggestion was made in the second meeting that a further discussion with a wider group of headteachers should be held, but this meeting never took place.⁴⁹ Boyes reportedly gave a presentation to Lord Hill, then a schools’ minister in the DfE and described a “bloodless coup” at one Birmingham school and “an alliance to destabilise the head” at another.⁵⁰ During the meeting, Boyes also raised fears that some pupils were showing potential for extremism in their artwork and also highlighted claims of “racist, aggressive and disrespectful behaviour” by staff and students.

2012

February 2012

Ofsted rated Park View School “outstanding” in all four categories.

April 2012

Park View School was converted to academy status, and Park View Educational Trust (PVET) was approved as the academy sponsor.

October 1, 2012

Nansen Primary School was converted to an academy as part of the PVET, after DfE approval.

2013

February 2013

Oldknow Academy was rated “outstanding” by Ofsted.

A governor at Golden Hillock wrote to Birmingham City Council setting out significant concerns about a group

48. Wormald Review, p.7.

49. Judith Burns, “Trojan Horse review: DfE ‘lacked inquisitiveness’”, BBC News, January 16, 2015, <https://www.bbc.com/news/education-30847474/>; Edward Malnick, “Trojan Horse ‘plot’: ministers failed to intervene amid warnings 20 years ago”, *The Telegraph*, January 16, 2015, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/education-news/11350961/Trojan-Horse-plot-ministers-failed-to-intervene-amid-warnings-20-years-ago.html>.

50. Jeanette Oldham, “Trojan Horse investigation: School head warned over signs of extremism four years ago”, *The Birmingham Mail*, May 31, 2014, <https://www.birminghammail.co.uk/news/midlands-news/trojan-horse-exclusive-birmingham-school-7196892>.

51. A compromise agreement is a legally binding agreement between a business and an employee under which the employee agrees to settle their potential claims and in return the employer will agree to pay financial compensation. Birmingham City Council (BCC) used them to secure the removal of headteachers who were being put under pressure by governors and school staff, rather than address the real issues. See Clarke Report, p.77 *et seq.* In the case of Balwant Bains, BCC pursued his departure via a compromise agreement even after the publication of the Trojan Horse letter, which suggested there had been a successful effort to oust him. BCC did not pause to consider whether a compromise agreement was appropriate in Bains's case, even though such an agreement effectively prevented Bains from speaking publicly about the bullying he had previously reported to BCC. Compromise agreements usually carry a confidentiality clause. In April 2014, Labour Perry Barr MP Khalid Mahmood urged BCC leader Sir Albert Bore and Secretary of State for Education, Michael Gove, to release former teachers from compromise agreements which prevented them speaking publicly about their concerns. Clarke's sixth recommendation was that BCC should review all compromise agreements reached in the preceding five years.

52. Clarke Report, para.8.6, p.75.

53. Park View School, Parent Newsletter, Autumn 2013, p.17, captured on May 14, 2014, https://web.archive.org/web/20140514030550/http://www.parkview.bham.sch.uk/ckeditor_image/Autumn-Term-Newsletter-2013.pdf.

54. Islamic Media, "What Islam Says About Zina (Adultery) - By Sheikh Shady Al-Suleiman", YouTube, March 28, 2010, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A-JuSwwsAVHo&ab_channel=IslamicMedia.

55. Andrew Gilligan, "Extremists and the 'Trojan Horse' approach in state schools", *The Telegraph*, March 9, 2014, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/terrorism-in-the-uk/10685418/Extremists-and-the-Trojan-Horse-approach-in-state-schools.html>.

56. Rick Morton, "Muslim men have right to demand sex from wives: sheik", *The Australian*, April 15, 2017, <https://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/nation/muslim-men-have-right-to-demand-sex-from-wives-sheik/news-story/775edec243aac439fb6481ff5cdfa697>.

57. Andrew Prentice, "President of the Australian National Imams Council is mysteriously BANNED from entering Denmark – and officials refuse to say why", *Daily Mail Australia*, September 6, 2018, <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-6136639/Australian-National-Imams-Council-president-Sheik-Shady-Alsuleiman-banned-entering-Denmark.html>.

58. Clarke Report, para.2.1. p.19.

59. *Ibid.*, Annex 3, p.113.

60. *Ibid.*, para.2.3, p.19; Annex 3, p.113.

of named governors but received no response. The headteacher, Matthew Scarrott, signed a compromise agreement in April.⁵¹

June 2013

Golden Hillock School was approved for academy conversion as part of Park View Educational Trust.

July 19, 2013

A letter from a senior Birmingham City Council officer to elected members and other officials noted

growing concerns amongst head teachers that some governing bodies of schools with large numbers of pupils from an Islamic background, or at least groups of influential governors within governing bodies, were putting unreasonable pressure on head teachers to raise standards and/or address other issues of concern. There was, and is, a view that some head teachers had been hounded out and this was as a result of organised community action focussed on a group of Muslim governors.⁵²

Thus, Birmingham City Council had received information matching what was in the Trojan Horse letter many months before the letter itself appeared.

November 2013

The Australian Imam Shady al-Suleiman addressed pupils at Park View Academy.⁵³ Prior to his visit, in 2010, Al-Suleiman was recorded preaching against adultery, describing the penalty for it in an Islamic state as 100 lashes if the person has never been married, and death by stoning if they have been married.⁵⁴ According to a 2014 article in *The Telegraph*, Al-Suleiman had elsewhere "called on God to 'destroy the enemies of Islam' ... [and] asked God to 'give victory to the Muslims in Afghanistan and Chechnya,' to 'give victory to all the Mujahideen all over the world' and to 'prepare us for the jihad'".⁵⁵ He is also reported to have "preached men have the right to demand sex from their wives and to control them when they leave the house".⁵⁶ Al-Suleiman was banned from entry to Denmark in 2018.⁵⁷

November 27, 2013

A document that has now become known as the "Trojan Horse" letter was sent to Sir Albert Bore at Birmingham City Council, and was date stamped as received in the Leader's Office.⁵⁸

November 28, 2013

The *Birmingham Mail* ran a small advert requesting the author of a "confidential document" to get in touch – possibly indicating that they were in receipt of the Trojan Horse letter at this time.

December 6, 2013

Birmingham City Council claimed that the Trojan Horse letter arrived with Sir Albert Bore. The letter was copied to Cllr Brigid Jones, Cabinet Member for Children and Family Services, Chief Executive and other Birmingham City Council staff. An internal review began.⁵⁹

December 12, 2013

Birmingham City Council Chief Executive copied the Trojan Horse letter to the West Midlands Police.⁶⁰

- December 13, 2013** The West Midlands Police passed the Trojan Horse letter to the Home Office, who forwarded it to the Department for Education (DfE).⁶¹
- December 16, 2013** Birmingham City Council chaired a meeting, including the West Midlands Police, and concluded there was a “credibility gap” with the document.⁶²
- December 18, 2013** A Birmingham City Council meeting concluded there was no basis to allegations against Birmingham City Council staff.⁶³
- Until January 2014** DfE officials and Birmingham City Council officers were in communication about the progress of the enquiry – Birmingham City Council confirmed an ongoing internal audit of the issue.⁶⁴

2014

- January 2, 2014** A compromise agreement was signed between Birmingham City Council and Balwant Bains, the former headteacher of Saltley School.⁶⁵
- January 31, 2014** The National Association of Head Teachers contacted the DfE to inform officials that members have received copies of the Trojan Horse letter.⁶⁶
- The British Humanist Association contacted the DfE and said that they have received allegations about “inappropriate teaching and leadership behaviour” at Park View School from former members of staff.⁶⁷
- February 3, 2014** Birmingham City Council received copies of the Trojan Horse letter that was sent to headteachers in Birmingham.⁶⁸
- The British Humanist Association complaint about Park View School was forwarded to Ofsted by the DfE.
- February 4, 2014** Further schools received copies of the Trojan Horse letter.⁶⁹
- February 5, 2014** A DfE official talked directly to the whistleblower about concerns that they raised via the British Humanist Association about Park View School.⁷⁰
- February 6, 2014** The Trojan Horse letter was reviewed in a Birmingham City Council Cabinet Member briefing. A meeting was arranged between the Secretary of State for Education, Michael Gove, and the then leader of Birmingham City Council, Sir Albert Bore.⁷¹
- February 7, 2014** A letter was received by Michael Gove from Sir Albert Bore, enclosing a briefing on chronology, context and current plan.⁷²

61. *Ibid.*, para 2.5, p.19 and Annex 3 p.113.

62. *Ibid.*, Annex 3, p.113. See also: Hamza M Syed/@HamzaMSyed, Twitter post, February 25, 2022, <https://twitter.com/HamzaMSyed/status/1497281140805316620>.

63. Clarke Report, Annex 3, p.113.

64. *Ibid.*, Annex 3, p.113.

65. *Ibid.*, para.3.49, p.32; para.8.30, p.80, et seq.

66. *Ibid.*, Annex 3, p.113.

67. *Ibid.*, Annex 3, p.113; p.6.

68. *Ibid.*, Annex 3, p.113.

69. *Ibid.*

70. *Ibid.*

71. *Ibid.*

72. *Ibid.*, Annex 3, p.114.

- February 10, 2014** Detailed allegations from former Park View staff were sent to Ofsted for consideration by DfE.⁷³
- February 12, 2014** A meeting between Michael Gove, Sir Albert Bore, Sally Taylor, Lord Nash and officials took place in London.
- February 23, 2014** The *Sunday Times* published the first story on the Trojan Horse letter.⁷⁴ The article stated:
- A former employee of Park View Academy in the inner-city Alum Rock area of Birmingham is understood to have claimed that non-Muslim staff were being treated unfairly. The employee also alleged that the academy, which has been approved to oversee two other schools in Birmingham, has been attempting to teach Islamic studies despite not being a faith-based state school.
- The article also reported that a spokesperson for the DfE said:
- We are aware of concerns around this school and are looking into the issues raised. All state schools must comply with the statutory public sector equality duty.
- March 2, 2014** The *Sunday Times* published a story on Park View School and Trojan Horse allegations with the heading, “Islamist plot to take over schools”.⁷⁵ It said:
- An apparent plot by Muslim fundamentalists to destabilise and take over state schools in England is being investigated by council officials and monitored by police.
- It quoted Birmingham City Council as saying:
- We are investigating allegations in relation to some schools in the Birmingham area and have passed any relevant information to West Midlands police to investigate.
- It also cited West Midlands Police as saying: “The matter is being dealt with by Birmingham City Council and they’re keeping us informed.”
- March 5-6, 2014** Ofsted conducted a no notice section 8 inspection at Park View School.⁷⁶
- March 6, 2014** The National Association of Head Teachers indicated to the DfE that its members have raised issues of concern with the association akin to the Trojan Horse allegations.⁷⁷
- March 7, 2014** The *Birmingham Mail* ran a five page story on the Trojan Horse letter.⁷⁸ The BBC ran a story confirming that they have seen the Trojan Horse letter.
- The DfE heard concerns from a former governor at Golden Hillock School.⁷⁹

73. *Ibid.*

74. Richard Kerbaj and Sian Griffiths, “Top academy investigated for ‘sidelining’ non Muslim staff”, *The Sunday Times*, February 23, 2014, <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/top-academy-investigated-for-sidelining-non-muslim-staff-xdgxw66qk62>.

75. Richard Kerbaj and Sian Griffiths, “Islamist plot to take over schools”, *The Sunday Times*, March 2 2014, <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/islamist-plot-to-take-over-schools-655mhbw0vtc>.

76. Clarke Report, Annex 3, p.114.

77. *Ibid.*

78. Jeanette Oldham, “Trojan Horse Jihadist plot to take over Birmingham schools”, *The Birmingham Mail*, June 9, 2014, <https://www.birminghammail.co.uk/news/midlands-news/trojan-horse-jihadist-plot-take-6782881>.

79. Clarke Report, Annex 3, p.114.

The DfE, the Education Funding Agency, and Birmingham City Council confirmed they are investigating the claims made in the Trojan Horse letter.⁸⁰

- March 9, 2014** The *Telegraph* reported: “According to former staff interviewed by this newspaper, a senior teacher at the [Park View] academy repeatedly endorsed the terrorist ideologue Anwar al-Awlaki at school assemblies.”⁸¹
- March 17- 18, 2014** Ofsted conducted a full section 5 inspection at Park View School, prompted by concerns about what they saw on their section 8 inspection.
- March 19, 2014** Michael Gove chaired a meeting with other government departments, West Midlands Police, and officials.⁸²
- March 20, 2014** Michael Gove met with two Birmingham MPs.⁸³
- The National Association of Head Teachers raised concerns about Nansen Primary School and Oldknow academies with the DfE.⁸⁴
- March 21, 24-25, 2014** The Education Funding Agency visited academies within the Park View Educational Trust: Park View School, Golden Hillock and Nansen Primary to monitor compliance with Funding Agreement and Independent School Standards. EFA found serious evidence of funding agreement breaches.⁸⁵
- March 24, 2014** Michael Gove chaired a meeting with three Birmingham MPs plus the MP’s researcher.⁸⁶
- March 27, 2014** Michael Gove wrote to Ofsted and commissioned it to conduct a batch inspection of 15 named schools.⁸⁷
- March 31, 2014** The DfE said it is looking into claims that the Trojan Horse plot targeted 12 schools.⁸⁸
- April 2-10, 2014** Ofsted conducted batch inspections of 15 schools (a mixture of section 8 and section 5 inspections depending on school circumstances).⁸⁹
- April 8, 2014** The ten Birmingham MPs wrote to Michael Gove.⁹⁰
- April 9, 2014** The governors of Park View Educational Trust described the ongoing investigations as a “witch-hunt”.⁹¹
- April 10- 11, 2014** The DfE and the Education Funding Agency visited Oldknow Academy. They discovered significant expenditure on annual school trips to Saudi Arabia dating back to 2012, including subsidies for parents, which could only be accessed by Muslim pupils and staff.⁹²
- April 14, 2014** Birmingham City Council announced that Ian Kershaw would lead a widened investigation, with Stephen Rimmer providing oversight through a new Birmingham City Council Review Group.
- Birmingham City Council said it is looking into allegations involving 25 schools in the city, including primaries, secondaries and academies. Council leader Sir Albert Bore

80. Education Committee Report, p.8.

81. Gilligan, “Extremists and the ‘Trojan Horse’ approach in state schools”, *The Telegraph*, March 9, 2014.

82. Clarke Report, Annex 3, p.114.

83. *Ibid.*

84. *Ibid.*

85. *Ibid.*

86. *Ibid.*

87. Education Committee Report, p.8.

88. *Ibid.*

89. Clarke Report, Annex 3, p.114.

90. *Ibid.*

91. Education Committee Report, p.8.

92. Clarke Report, Annex 3, p.114; para.10.8, p.92.

said he did not believe there is a “plot”.⁹³

April 15, 2014

Peter Clarke was appointed by Michael Gove as Education Commissioner to take an overview of evidence in relation to Birmingham schools and the allegations relating to the Trojan Horse letter.

April 20, 2014

Ofsted chief Sir Michael Wilshaw took personal charge of Ofsted’s Trojan Horse investigations.

April 24, 2014

Newsnight interviewed two teachers from Park View School, on the condition of anonymity.⁹⁴ One said:

In a boys’ sex education lesson, a worksheet was given out to them which says that a woman has to obey her husband. Questions were asked: “Does that mean a woman can’t say ‘no’? We can demand sex?”

The teacher said the boys were answered affirmatively, i.e., that they could demand sex from their wives. The other teacher said that creationism and “intelligent design” was being taught to pupils in science classes who were preparing for their GCSEs.⁹⁵

April, 2014

The Executive Headteacher at PVET, Linsey Clarke, retired.

May 3, 2014

Sir Michael said Ofsted had inspected 21 schools.⁹⁶

The general secretary of the National Association of Head Teachers told the union’s conference in Birmingham:

A tight network of religious leaders of the Islamic faith has made a concerted effort to get involved in the running of schools and to strengthen the power of governing bodies to have a dominant influence in shaping the character of local schools.⁹⁷

He said the union believed the “Trojan Horse” letter was fake but members had raised concerns about school governance in Birmingham.

May 20, 2014

The 21 schools recently inspected received Ofsted’s draft reports for quality assurance.

June 3, 2014

Three of the schools under investigation published their Ofsted reports. Ninestiles and Small Heath were rated as “outstanding” and Washwood Heath as “good”.⁹⁸

Home Secretary Theresa May wrote to the Secretary of State 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 2008.⁹⁹

June 9, 2014

Ofsted published inspection reports on the 21 schools. Five schools, including four academies, were placed in special measures. Eleven schools were judged to require improvement. The five schools were: Park View Academy, Nansen Primary School, Golden Hillock School (together

93. Education Committee Report, p.8.

94. Chris Cook, “Inside the Trojan Horse”, BBC News, April 28, 2014, <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-27188055>.

95. The website of a Turkish creationist, Harun Yahya, also known as Adnan Oktar (www.harunyahya.com) is listed under “useful websites” in the Muslim Council of Britain’s guidance for schools, “Meeting the needs of Muslim pupils in state schools”, demonstrating an ideological connection between the science taught at Park View School and the MCB. See Muslim Council of Britain, “Meeting the Needs of Muslim Pupils in State Schools: Information and Guidance for Schools”, 2007, p.64. Available at <http://image.guardian.co.uk/sys-files/Education/documents/2007/02/20/Schoolinfo guidance.pdf>.

96. Education Committee Report, p.9.

97. Richard Adams, “Headteachers’ union raises serious concerns over ‘Trojan Horse’ schools”, *The Guardian*, May 2, 2014, <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2014/may/02/headteachers-union-trojan-horse-schools-birmingham>.

98. Education Committee Report, p.9.

99. *Ibid.*

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.¹⁰⁰

The DfE published Education Funding Agency reports on Park View Educational Trust and Oldknow Academy Trust.

Lord Nash wrote to the four academies – Park View, Oldknow, Golden Hillock and Nansen – giving notice of intention to terminate Funding Agreements, and requesting action plans. The letters set out the steps which needed to be taken by July 4 to address breaches of the Funding Agreement, the Academies Financial Handbook and the Independent Schools Standards.

The head of Ofsted, Sir Michael Wilshaw, wrote to the Secretary of State, Michael Gove, and presented him with a summary of findings from the 21 school inspections. He stated:

A culture of fear and intimidation has developed in some of the schools since their previous inspection. Some headteachers, including those with a proud record of raising standards, said that they have been marginalised or forced out of their jobs. ... Some headteachers reported that there has been an organised campaign to target certain schools in Birmingham in order to alter their character and ethos. ... [G]overnors have recently exerted inappropriate influence on policy and the day-to-day running of several schools in Birmingham ... In several of the schools inspected, children are being badly prepared for life in modern Britain.¹⁰¹

This echoed the content of the Trojan Horse letter. Thus, regardless of the question of the authenticity of the letter – as Sir Michael acknowledged in interviews with teachers during inspections of the 21 schools – concerns were raised regarding “an organised campaign” to influence the “character and ethos” of schools, coinciding with the intimidation of some teachers and the ousting of some headteachers.

Park View Educational Trust rejected Ofsted’s findings of failure and insisted schools did not tolerate Islamic extremism. Khalid Mahmood, the MP for Birmingham Perry Barr and the Labour politician most active in warning about potential extremism, supported a plan for snap inspections. He said:

If schools are doing what they should be doing in the first instance, there shouldn’t be any difficulty with that and I think the whole idea is to get a true reflection of what the schools are doing. By giving these traditional notices, people can adjust certain things and do things that they perhaps wouldn’t do normally – and certainly in these schools, that’s the case. When I’ve spoken to

100. *Ibid.*

101. “Advice note provided on academies and maintained schools in Birmingham [from Sir Michael Wilshaw, Her Majesty’s Chief Inspector] to the Secretary of State for Education, Rt Hon Michael Gove MP, as commissioned by letter dated 27 March 2014”, UK Government website, June 9, 2014, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/415115/Advice_note_on_academies_and_maintained_schools_Birmingham_toSoS_Education.pdf.

parents and I've spoken to some of the governors who have been ousted and some of the teachers existing in some of these schools, that's exactly what they've said, that they were able to change some of these things in order to show that they were actually operating in a different way to what they were.¹⁰²

June 19, 2014

Saltley School governors resigned *en masse*.¹⁰³

June 27, 2014

The Permanent Secretary of the DfE formally commenced an internal review for evidence from DfE colleagues into when allegations were first known to the department.

July 15, 2014

The Chair of Governors, Tahir Alam, and board of trustees at Park View Educational Trust resigned.¹⁰⁴

Michael Gove was replaced by Nicky Morgan as Secretary of State for Education.

July 18, 2014

An unauthorised draft of the Education Commissioner's report was published online in *The Guardian* on July 17.¹⁰⁵ This prompted Birmingham City Council to release Ian Kershaw's redacted report in full on July 18, rather than the executive summary as had been planned.

July 22, 2014

Education Commissioner Peter Clarke's report was released. It concluded:

There has been co-ordinated, deliberate and sustained action, carried out by a number of associated individuals, to introduce an intolerant and aggressive Islamic ethos into a few schools in Birmingham. This has been achieved by gaining influence on the governing bodies, installing sympathetic headteachers or senior members of staff, appointing like-minded people to key positions, and seeking to remove headteachers they do not feel to be sufficiently compliant.¹⁰⁶

Clarke identified a "disconcerting pattern" across a number of schools. This included, in the report's exact words:

- the effective take-over of the governing body by like-minded people;
- nepotism in staff appointments and appointments to the governing body;
- individuals associated with each other holding teaching posts or being members of the governing body (or both) at a small number of local schools;
- rapid advancement of new or inexperienced governors to the role of chair;
- bullying and intimidation of senior teaching staff, and in particular headteachers;
- previously highly regarded headteachers made subject to criticism and complaint by governing

102. Steven Morris and Patrick Wintour, "'Trojan horse' row: Birmingham schools placed in special measures", *The Guardian*, June 9, 2014, <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2014/jun/09/trojan-horse-row-birmingham-schools-special-measures-ofsted>.

103. Education Committee Report, p.9.

104. *Ibid.*

105. Patrick Wintour, "Leaked report reveals 'aggressive Islamist agenda' in Birmingham schools", *The Guardian*, July 18, 2014, <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2014/jul/17/leaked-report-aggressive-islamist-agenda-birmingham-schools>.

106. Clarke Report, p.14.

bodies;

- interference by the governing body in the curriculum and the day-to-day running of the school;
- the reinforcement of Muslim identity to the exclusion or disparagement of others;
- the introduction of conservative Islamic practices into school life;
- a strategy of harassment to oust the headteacher;
- financial mismanagement; and
- inappropriate recruitment and promotion procedures for favoured staff.¹⁰⁷

Clarke added: “Not all of these features were present at every school, but they occurred with sufficient regularity to warrant a detailed examination”.

On the day of its release, the Clarke report was presented to Parliament by the Secretary of State, Nicky Morgan, as an Unopposed Return to an Address.¹⁰⁸ She stated:

There has been no evidence of direct radicalisation or violent extremism.¹⁰⁹

Radicalisation and violent extremism were not, however, part of Clarke’s brief, as he stated in his report. He said: “I most definitely was not approaching my role from the perspective of looking for evidence of terrorist activity, radicalisation or violent extremism”.¹¹⁰ Morgan continued her speech in Parliament, stating:

But there is a clear account in the report of people in positions of influence in these schools, with a restricted and narrow interpretation of their faith, who have not promoted fundamental British values and who have failed to challenge the extremist views of others.¹¹¹

Education Secretary Nicky Morgan also announced that a new Education Commissioner for Birmingham would be appointed to oversee schools in Birmingham.

August 19, 2014

Oldknow Academy Trust governors resigned and new members were appointed, led by Dr Barry Henley, a Birmingham City Councillor. Bhupinder Kondal withdrew her resignation as head of Oldknow and took up her post again.

September 2, 2014

Peter Clarke and Ian Kershaw gave evidence to the Education Select Committee.¹¹²

The BBC reported that Clarke was asked whether there had been evidence of extremism. Much of the questioning “revolved around how ‘extremism’ was interpreted”. Clarke told the committee that although he had not found

107. *Ibid.*, p.10.

108. An Unopposed Return to an Address is a parliamentary process which ensures that the contents of the report are covered by Parliamentary Privilege.

109. “Oral statement by Nicky Morgan on the ‘Trojan Horse’ letter”, UK Government website, July 22, 2014, <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/oral-statement-by-nicky-morgan-on-the-trojan-horse-letter>.

110. Clarke Report, p.7.

111. “Oral statement by Nicky Morgan on the ‘Trojan Horse’ letter”, UK Government website, July 22, 2014.

112. Sean Coughlan, “Extremist video shown in Trojan school, MPs told”, BBC News, September 2, 2014, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-29028960>.

“violent extremism” or “direct radicalisation” in the schools – which he was not tasked to look for – there had been a “culture that had failed to challenge intolerance”. He said: “I believe I found very clear evidence of people who espouse, are sympathetic to, or do not challenge extremist views”.

Ian Kershaw, who headed an inquiry into Trojan Horse for Birmingham City Council, told the Education Select Committee that a violent extremist video that was “completely unacceptable” was shown to pupils in a Birmingham state school. Asked by MPs whether this was a type of “violent jihadist promotional video”, he indicated it was.

He said there was no evidence of widespread extremism in the schools but said there had been groups of people who had “learnt to manipulate” the school system, getting sympathetic governors to replace other governors and then to improperly manipulate staff appointments.

In relation to “the disparity between the outcomes in the Ofsted reports” for some of the schools including Park View – i.e., prior to and after the emergence of the Trojan Horse letter – Kershaw told the Select Committee:

It is very hard for me to understand, because the behaviours were being exhibited at the times of the earlier inspections. The unacceptable practices were there. I know from the evidence that I received that that was reported to Ofsted, both by some governors who were concerned about the behaviour of other governors and also by head teachers, yet it did not appear in the Ofsted reports.¹¹³

Ofsted chief Sir Michael Wilshaw said there had been a “culture of fear and intimidation” in which headteachers had been bullied and undermined by governing bodies.¹¹⁴

September 21, 2014

113. Education Committee, “Oral evidence: Extremism in schools”, HC 473, September 2, 2014, Q.217, <https://data.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/committeeevidence.svc/evidencedocument/education-committee/extremism-in-schools/oral/14299.html>.
114. Coughlan, “Extremist video shown in Trojan school, MPs told”, BBC News, September 2, 2022.
115. Jamie Martin, “Quivering Sir Humphrey leaves it to parents to fight Islamism in schools”, *The Sunday Times*, September 21 2014, <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/quivering-sir-humphrey-leaves-it-to-parents-to-fight-islamism-in-schools-fznpbf0jg2>.
116. BBC News, “Trojan Horse: Sir Mike Tomlinson appointed Birmingham education commissioner”, September 24, 2014, <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-birmingham-29350030>.

Jamie Martin – a special adviser to the then Education Secretary Michael Gove – wrote in *The Times* that after the Clarke and Kershaw reports were submitted, there was “recalcitrance” in Whitehall towards the Government’s response. He said:

Across Britain, schools are threatened by Islamists, and government is too cowed by political correctness to respond. Whitehall and local government still adopt the bizarre practice of funding groups and individuals who oppose British values.¹¹⁵

September 24, 2014

Sir Mike Tomlinson was appointed Education Commissioner for Birmingham by the Government.¹¹⁶ Sir Mike had been involved in education for almost 50 years, most notably as Chief Inspector of Schools between 2000 and 2002. He was also the Chief Adviser to the London

Challenge and the Chair of the Hackney Learning Trust, which helped transform poor performing education services in Hackney.

October 7, 2014

Rob Kelsall, from the National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT), called for a “thorough investigation” after a confrontation between parents and Jamie Barry, the headteacher of Welford Primary School – one of the Trojan Horse schools.¹¹⁷ The confrontation occurred after the introduction of an anti-homophobia programme. About 100 people went to a forum and confronted Barry, and West Midlands Police officers were called to assist. Barry had to be escorted from the building “for his own safety”. Kelsall said that as a result of Peter Clarke’s findings, Welford was one of several primary schools to introduce a programme challenging homophobia. The council said parents could not “pick and choose” the curriculum.

October 9, 2014

Ofsted said schools in England would face more frequent, shorter inspections, but unannounced inspections would not become standard. Chief inspector Sir Michael Wilshaw said schools rated good would be inspected at least every three years, rather than up to seven. Sir Michael also indicated that he was “winning the argument” for Ofsted to be allowed to inspect academy trusts, in the same way the watchdog can inspect local authority services.¹¹⁸

October 14, 2014

Ofsted said the five schools placed in special measures in June had not improved by the time inspections were carried out in September. Four of the schools were independent academies (Oldknow Academy; Park View Academy; Golden Hillock School; and Nansen Primary School), and one was under local authority control (Saltley School).¹¹⁹

2015

January 2015

The DfE published the “Review into possible warnings to DfE relating to extremism in Birmingham schools”, authored by Chris Wormald.¹²⁰ It found that although there were no instances where specific “warnings” were ignored by the Department, “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”. Wormald noted that there were six different warnings about potential extremism in Birmingham schools between 1994 and 2013. He concluded that “the Department needs to be more vigilant, more inquisitive and have more robust systems in place than it has in the past”.

January 8, 2015

Ofsted said concerns remained at Park View Academy following a monitoring inspection.¹²¹

January 29, 2015

The Secretary of State, Nicky Morgan, made an announcement to Parliament on progress in implementing the Clarke report recommendations. She said that the

117. BBC News, “Anti-homophobia classes sparked row at Trojan school, union says”, October 7, 2014, <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-birmingham-29517252>.

118. Sean Coughlan, “Ofsted inspections: More frequent but shorter”, BBC News, October 9, 2014, <https://www.bbc.com/news/education-29553000>.

119. BBC News, “Trojan Horse: Five schools in special measures criticised”, October 14, 2014, <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-birmingham-29616692>.

120. Wormald Review; see footnote 3 for full reference.

121. BBC News, “Trojan Horse: ‘Serious concerns’ at Park View School”, January 8, 2015, <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-birmingham-30729354>.

government had “accepted every one” of them.¹²² A note on the implementation of the recommendations was deposited in the House of Commons.¹²³ She also said tackling the threat of extremism in schools would be made a higher priority, and there would be a separate counter-extremism steering group and a stronger role in checking against such risks.¹²⁴

February 10, 2015

The NAHT leader Russell Hobby said the lack of a register held by the Department for Education of state school governors in England was a “worrying gap”. The National Governors Association suggested that a more worrying gap was the lack of mandatory training for governors.¹²⁵ David Simmonds, chairman of the Local Government Association’s children and young people board, said the Trojan Horse problems showed there was a need for a “high degree of transparency” over who was on governing bodies, and sufficient oversight was needed to protect against people with “ill intentions” from joining. He warned that without oversight or records beyond individual schools it was difficult to see patterns of whether individuals had become governors in a number of different places.

March 2015

Park View Educational Trust was rebranded as the Core Education Trust.

March 17, 2015

The Education Select Committee published its report, “Extremism in schools: the Trojan Horse affair”¹²⁶ (see Chapter 6 for more on this report).

March 24, 2015

Ofsted said three out of the five schools placed in special measures were making “reasonable progress”.¹²⁷

May 3, 2015

The NAHT annual conference in Liverpool heard warnings that problems over extremism remained unresolved and schools could still face pressure on issues such as tackling homophobia. Headteachers at the conference complained that no governors had been barred as a result of the inquiries, and called for a database which would identify individuals removed from governing bodies.

Sarah Hewitt-Clarkson, head of Anderton Park School, said:

Trojan Horse has not gone away. Those of us who were involved, we knew it was the tip of the iceberg. We still have dead animals hung on the gates of schools, dismembered cats on playgrounds. We have petitions outside schools, objecting to teachers teaching against homophobia.

There were also threats on social media, she said, such as “Any head teacher who teaches my children it’s alright to be gay will be at the end of my shotgun.”¹²⁸

June 27, 2015

The DfE criticised the Education Select Committee for “downplaying the seriousness of events in Birmingham

122. Hansard, “Birmingham Schools”, Volume 591, January 29, 2015, <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2015-01-29/debates/1501294900002/Birmingham-Schools>.

123. “Implementation of recommendations from ‘Report into allegations concerning Birmingham schools ...’”, DEP2015-0126, House of Commons, January 29, 2015, <https://depositedpapers.parliament.uk/depositedpaper/2275513/files>.

124. Sean Coughlan, “Counter-extremism boost in schools”, BBC News, January 29, 2015, <https://www.bbc.com/news/education-31041411>.

125. Sean Coughlan, “Gap in school governor records”, BBC News, February 10, 2015, <https://www.bbc.com/news/education-31301922>.

126. Education Committee Report; see footnote 6 for full reference.

127. BBC News, “‘Trojan Horse’ schools improving, Ofsted says”, March 24, 2015, <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-birmingham-32030361>.

128. Sean Coughlan, “Heads warn Trojan Horse ‘not gone away’”, BBC News, May 3, 2015, <https://www.bbc.com/news/education-32573643>.

and “undermining” efforts to tackle extremism.¹²⁹ This perspective is often lacking from activists’ citation of the Education Select Committee report to support their argument that there was “no evidence of extremism” in the Birmingham schools (see Chapter 6).

June 30, 2015

The government announced that a national database of school governors in England would be set up.¹³⁰

July 2015

The “Government Response to the Education Select Committee Report in schools: the Trojan Horse affair” was published.¹³¹ It said:

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”.

July 14, 2015

Ofsted chief Sir Michael Wilshaw warned of “potentially high numbers of pupils” disappearing from school registers in Birmingham and Tower Hamlets in east London; and there was a lack of robustness in identifying why pupils had been taken off school registers or their next destination. This is important since by law, all children of school age, that is aged 5-16, must receive a full-time education and parents are required by law to ensure their children attend school. Hence it was difficult to know if they could be at risk from “extremist ideologies”. In some cases, he said there were “generic” descriptions, such as “moved abroad” or “gone to live with grandparents” -- or in one case “gone back to Libya”. Some pupils may have been moved to unregistered schools.

Sir Michael also highlighted his concerns about a lack of a clear legal requirement for schools to establish where pupils move if they leave a school, warning that current practices are “inconsistent” and “inadequate”. Between September 2013 and June 2015, more than a thousand pupils moved from 14 schools being monitored, and in more than 350 cases, their intended destination was not clearly recorded.¹³²

July 15, 2015

Birmingham’s Education Commissioner Sir Mike Tomlinson said the anonymous Trojan Horse letter was “no hoax”. Speaking to BBC Midlands Today, he said he

129. BBC News, “Trojan Horse: Government criticises education select committee”, June 27, 2015, <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-birmingham-33296268>.

130. Sean Coughlan, “School governors to be named on national database”, BBC News, June 30, 2015, <https://www.bbc.com/news/education-33310734>.

131. “Government Response to the Education Select Committee Report in schools: the Trojan Horse affair”, Cm 9094, July 2015, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/438887/50288_Trojan_Horse_affair_Accessible_v3.pdf.

132. Sean Coughlan, “Ofsted Trojan Horse warning on pupils taken out of school”, BBC News, July 14, 2015, <https://www.bbc.com/news/education-33520643>.

believed the letter was genuine, and its contents mirrored what was found by Peter Clarke and by the Ofsted report.¹³³

October 28, 2015

A former vice principal, Stephen Packer, said former heads of Park View Academy did not act on the comment by a teacher named Abid Ali, who said he “wanted an Islamic state”. Hardeep Saini and Monzoor (Moz) Hussain did not recall Packer telling them about the remark. The NCTL panel agreed that the alleged comment did not refer to terrorist group Islamic State. Abid Ali also failed to act when told of pupils refusing to be taught by a gay teacher, allegedly responding “well as Muslims, that’s what we believe”.¹³⁴

November 25, 2015

The Times reported that Sir Michael Wilshaw urged the re-inspection of all schools previously monitored by the Bridge Schools Inspectorate (BSI), an agency abolished in 2015, which had been responsible for monitoring some independent Christian and Muslim schools.¹³⁵ The BSI assessed schools affiliated to the Association of Muslim Schools and the Christian Schools’ Trust. Tahir Alam “was said to be involved with the Association of Muslim Schools”.

Ofsted found that a female governor at Darul Uloom Islamic high school in Birmingham was forced to sit in a separate room during meetings and had to talk through an open doorway. The governors said that this was their usual arrangement. Another school’s library contained literature with extremist and sexist views, including a book that said that women made unreliable witnesses. At Al-Ameen primary school in Birmingham, pupils had only a superficial understanding of other faiths and little knowledge of British institutions. Older pupils did not understand the term ‘government’ or its role in democracy.

December 15, 2015

The Birmingham Post reported that Rizvana Darr, the headteacher of Adderley Primary School in Saltley, claimed at a tribunal that four teaching assistants at her school - Hilary Owens, Rehana Khanom, Yasmin Akhtar, and Shahnaz Bibi – were part of a conspiracy to convert the school to one “run on strict Muslim principles”.¹³⁶ The school said they had submitted resignation letters, but the teaching assistants claimed the letters were forgeries. Darr said that such claims were part of an effort to oust her, plans of which she had heard about from parents since 2010. Darr said that Tahir Alam was once a governor at the school at a time when Khanom, Akhtar, and Bibi worked there. Darr said she believed their plan was to have the school taken over by the Park View Educational Trust, which was chaired by Alam. The Birmingham Post noted that the police had arrested the four teaching assistants over their resignation letters, but the women were never charged. They all vehemently denied any association with Trojan Horse.

133. BBC News, “Birmingham Trojan Horse letter ‘no hoax’”, July 16, 2015. <https://www.bbc.com/news/av/uk-england-birmingham-33539685>.

134. BBC News, “Birmingham Trojan Horse teacher ‘wanted Islamic state’”, October 28, 2015, <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-birmingham-34660620>.

135. Nicola Woolcock, “Muslim school blocked female governor”, *The Times*, November 25, 2015, <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/muslim-school-blocked-female-governor-222bn7gn2>.

136. Emma McKinney, “Headteacher in Trojan Horse claims says four of her staff were part of a conspiracy”, *The Birmingham Mail*, December 21, 2015, <https://www.birminghammail.co.uk/news/midlands-news/headteacher-trojan-horse-claims-says-10630402>.

2016

March 12, 2016

Birmingham's education commissioner Sir Mike Tomlinson banned the use of the term 'Trojan Horse' to describe alleged attempts by groups to take over schools and covertly impose a Muslim ethos. He said the phrase was "not helpful" to attempts to improve Birmingham's schools, and it could have an adverse impact on teacher recruitment.¹³⁷

137. Sean Coughlan, "School chief bans use of the term 'Trojan horse'", BBC News, March 12, 2016, <https://www.bbc.com/news/education-35794359>.

Chapter 2: Chronology 2: activist agitation – articles, tweets, interviews, and events

2014

April 7, 2014

Journalist Assed Baig – then a correspondent for Al-Jazeera English who was to leave Channel 4 in 2017 after promoting a terror-supporting Islamist¹³⁸ – wrote a column about Trojan Horse, titled “The Muslim Plot That Wasn’t”.¹³⁹ Baig wrote:

How many Muslims do you need for a plot? Two? Three? Or more? What constitutes a plot? There is a very sinister Islamophobic narrative taking place here, one that, for all intents and purposes, accuses an entire minority community of surreptitiously plotting away to infiltrate the country’s institutions and changing its very values, or so we are led to believe.

He went on: “There is extremism in schools, I agree and accept this.” But he appeared to be referring to private schools where the pupils are predominantly white boys:

Extremism exists in schools where [sic.] parents pay tens of thousands a year to have their boys segregated from girls. Where an ideology of superiority is taught, where young rich boys are taught that it is their God given right to rule over the commoners. Where a skewed version of history is taught, colonialism was a good thing and the empire brought good to the world and civilized the savages. In these schools boys are forced to learn Latin, not Arabic. But we won’t see or hear politicians talking of that kind of extremism or segregation, we won’t see journalists peering through windows there, because it is not Muslims involved. Extremism of the rich is applauded, not questioned.

Ramadhan Foundation CEO Mohammed Shafiq said: “The allegations of alleged extremist takeover of schools in Birmingham are very serious however there is a wider concern that this is a witch-hunt against the Muslim

138. Media Guido, “Channel 4’s Assed Baig Out Amid Promoting Terror-Supporting Islamist”, August 29, 2017, <https://order-order.com/2017/08/29/channel-4s-assed-baig-out-after-promoting-terror-supporting-islamist/>

139. Assed Baig, “The Muslim Plot That Wasn’t”, *HuffPost*, April 7, 2014, https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/assed-baig/muslim-plot_b_5103347.html.

April 14, 2014

community.”¹⁴⁰

April 17, 2014

In a blog post titled “Education and Muslims: End this Witch-Hunt of British Muslims”,¹⁴¹ the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB) called for an end to “speculation that smears British Muslims involved in schools and the education system”. The MCB complained that British Muslims had borne the “brunt of allegations that state schools are the target of a ‘Muslim takeover’, where supposedly conservative Muslim views and mores are imposed, and where non-compliant teachers are forced out. These allegations have thus far been unfounded in any real, substantial evidence.”

April 25, 2014

Assed Baig wrote a column titled “An ideological war against UK Muslims in schools?” for the Anadolu Agency, a state-run news agency headquartered in Ankara, Turkey.¹⁴² The article criticised Michael Gove and his connection with Policy Exchange, as well as one of the school inspectors sent to inspect the Trojan Horse schools, Ishtiaq Hussain, and claimed that the “narrative and accusations” of the Trojan Horse letter “have fuelled the language of Islamophobia against the U.K.’s Muslim community”.

April 27, 2014

Massoud Shadjareh, Chairman of the Islamic Human Rights Commission (IHRC) was a panellist in a Channel 4 News debate on Trojan Horse. Labour MP Khalid Mahmood, also a panellist, said that “you have got to keep education secular”, but Shadjareh said that if state schools were all secular, then “you are not going to give a whole section of the community parental choice”.¹⁴³

May 6, 2014

Muhammad Abdul Bari – the MCB’s Secretary General during 2006-10 – wrote a column for *The Huffington Post* titled “Politicisation of Alleged ‘Islamist Plot’ to Take Over British Schools Is Dangerous”. In this piece he asserted that “No community should be above criticism, but continuation of this relentless witch hunt that has increased significantly after the Lee Rigby murder last year, has the potential of reversing the good progress made by Muslims in public sphere.”¹⁴⁴ The same column was republished in November 2014 on the MCB website.¹⁴⁵ In this piece, Abdul Bari said:

In recent weeks and months the breathtaking ‘Trojan Horse’ news that ‘Islamic extremists’ in Birmingham and a few other cities are ‘taking over’ British schools is all over the place. Many call this a hoax. Being a well-informed member of the British Muslim community (in fact, community of communities) and quite aware of its dynamics and weaknesses, I find this mind-boggling. Fertile ideas and accusations are now flying around as Muslim-bashing has become a popular trend in sections of our post-7/7 and post-Woolwich media. Muslims are being seen as

140. Helen Pidd, “Twenty-five Birmingham schools inspected over Islamist ‘takeover plot’”, *The Guardian*, April 14, 2014, <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2014/apr/14/birmingham-schools-investigated-over-islamist-takeover-allegations>.

141. Muslim Council of Britain, “Education and Muslims: End this Witch-Hunt of British Muslims”, MCB Press Release, April 17 2014, <https://mcb.org.uk/press-releases/education-and-muslims-end-this-witch-hunt-of-british-muslims/>.

142. Assed Baig, “An ideological war against UK Muslims in schools?”, Anadolu Agency, April 25, 2014. <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/world/ideological-war-against-uk-muslims-in-schools/164445>.

143. Channel 4 News, “Should religion and state education be kept separate?”, April 27, 2014, <https://www.channel4.com/news/education-religion-trojan-horse-muslim-birmingham-survey>.

144. Dr Muhammad Abdul Bari, “Politicisation of Alleged ‘Islamist Plot’ to Take Over British Schools Is Dangerous”, *HuffPost*, May 6, 2014, https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/muhammad-abdul-bari/politicisation-of-alleged-islamist-plot-to-take-over-british-schools-is-dangerous_b_5272180.html.

145. Dr Muhammad Abdul Bari, “Politicisation of Alleged ‘Islamist Plot’ to Take Over British Schools Is Dangerous”, MCB website, November 21, 2014, <https://mcb.org.uk/mcb-updates/politicisation-alleged-islamist-plot-take-british-schools-dangerous/>.

a suspect community and subjected to unabashed McCarthyism by some media inquisitors at every opportunity. No community should be above criticism, but continuation of this relentless witch hunt that has increased significantly after the Lee Rigby murder last year, has the potential of reversing the good progress made by Muslims in public sphere.

He then referenced the MCB handbook on the needs of Muslim pupils, which he co-authored with Tahir Alam:

A wild idea has now been thrown out by right wing broadsheets, such as *The Telegraph* and *The Sunday Telegraph*, that a handbook (“Towards Greater Understanding: Meeting the needs of Muslim pupils in state schools”) published by the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB) in 2007 could be behind this alleged ‘Trojan Horse’ plot. This is extremely inaccurate and misleading. I was at the helm of MCB in 2007 and I do not recognise this. I cannot recall anyone from the MCB that would prepare a ‘Communist Manifesto’ type agenda for some future ‘Islamists’ to take over British schools after seven years! The idea that MCB document was a Communist or Trotskyite-type plot to takeover all Birmingham/UK schools is laughable. This feeds into a wider ‘counter-jihadist’ (Breivik, EDL, etc) that Muslims want to “take over”.

He added of the MCB’s 2007 *Towards Greater Understanding* text:

The handbook was a very public document and summation of practices which had already been developed in schools and local authorities throughout Britain in the preceding two decades. It was compiled in close consultation with headteachers and other educationists (Muslims and others) from the mainstream education sector. It was launched by Professor Tim Brighouse, the then Schools Commissioner for London, and, although there was usual disparagement from right wing tabloids such as the *Daily Express*, it was welcomed as useful and helpful by many teachers and some LEAs. BBC’s Education Correspondent, Mike Baker, gave a balanced critic of the handbook and the National Association of Head Teachers posted a statement after its publication welcoming the document as «helpful and useful», although its leader expressed some concerns.

It is worth noting that in his 2007 report on the guidance, the BBC’s Mike Baker wrote:

Schools certainly need to know what is offensive or problematic for Muslim students. No-one wants to cause offence through ignorance.

But in the end schools also have the right to expect some willingness to conform, whether it is to school uniform codes, curriculum requirements, behaviour policies or parental co-operation.

Also, language will be very important in this: telling schools what they “should” do for one particular group, without necessarily considering the impact on others, may not be the most persuasive approach.¹⁴⁶

The leader of the National Association of Head Teachers, Mick Brookes, expressed his concerns as follows:

Schools are trying to create societies within their walls which are tolerant and celebratory. I just worry that the list of demands - if that is what it is - may be too much and will simply create a backlash.¹⁴⁷

It is also worth noting that in February 2007, under the then Labour Government, the Department for Education and Skills distanced itself from the MCB document, saying:

This is not official guidance and is not endorsed by the government, nor does it have any binding power whatsoever on schools.

The Department for Education and Skills has no involvement with the document produced by the MCB.

We have already provided schools with a wealth of official guidance, which makes clear they should take into account, and recognise, the needs and cultural diversity of all their pupils regardless of their background.¹⁴⁸

May 30, 2014

Ibrahim Hewitt, a Senior Editor for Middle East Monitor (MEMO), wrote a column for MEMO, titled “When lies sound truthful and murder is respectable”.¹⁴⁹ He wrote:

In Britain, the appointment of an ex-counterterrorism officer to investigate the so-called “Trojan Horse plot” to take over Birmingham schools is an attempt to use the “anti-extremism” narrative so beloved of politicians these days to take down Muslims who have been too successful in driving up educational standards. Even independent Muslim faith schools have been ensnared by Michael Gove’s ever-widening net as he seeks to settle old scores, using an Office of State to pursue an openly ideological agenda

146. Mike Baker, “Was Muslim guidance reasonable?”, BBC News, February 24, 2007, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/education/6391271.stm.

147. *Ibid.*

148. Press Association, “Government dismisses Muslim school guidance document”, *The Guardian*, February 21, 2007, <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2007/feb/21/schools.uk1>.

149. Ibrahim Hewitt, “When lies sound truthful and murder is respectable”, Middle East Monitor, May 30, 2014, <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20140530-when-lies-sound-truthful-and-murder-is-respectable/>.

against “Islamism”, “extremism” and, tellingly, anti-Zionism.”

He added that Michael Gove used the school inspection service, Ofsted, to push, but never define, “British values”:

The irony is that such values, which have to include fairness, justice and respect for others, are being swept aside by a wave of very un-British inspection procedures in the crusade to destroy 30 years’ of hard work by Muslims to get the community involved in the education of their children as teachers, managers and governors. To paraphrase George Orwell, “a fierce opponent of nationalism who nevertheless provided the English with their most convincing account of themselves”, invisible Muslims good, visible Muslims bad.

June 3, 2014

The IHRC issued a press release, which maintained that “Trojan Horse school row betrays anti-Muslim witchhunt”.¹⁵⁰ It claimed there was an “ongoing witchhunt against the Muslim community in Birmingham centred on the fictitious ‘Trojan Horse’ plot to take over some of the city’s schools”. It added:

The decision to investigate and the manner in which enquiries have been conducted has left Muslims feeling that it is a carefully orchestrated attack on the whole community, its religious freedoms and their place in British society as equal citizens. [...]

In the main the decision to investigate the schools appears to be driven by education secretary Michael Gove’s ideological hostility to Islam and the efforts of Muslim parents to educate their children in line with their shared values. Gove is the founder member of Policy Exchange, a right wing think tank which has claimed that British Islam is being hijacked by extremists ...

The investigations themselves betray the same Islamophobic tropes that gave rise to them. Pupils have been subjected to aggressive questioning about whether they are forced to wear the hijab or to sit separately from members of the opposite sex, and teachers asked if they were homophobic. The DfE’s appointment of former National Co-ordinator for Counter Terrorism Peter Clarke to head its investigation sent the message that the government is dealing with its Muslim citizens primarily as a ‘security’ problem. [...]

A preponderance of Muslim governors running the schools in line with the expectations of Muslim parents is being treated as a threat to the secular British education system, with Islamophobic

150. Islamic Human Rights Commission, “Press release: Trojan Horse school row betrays anti-Muslim witchhunt”, June 3, 2014, <https://www.ihrc.org.uk/press-releases/press-release-trojan-horse-school-row-betrays-anti-muslim-witchhunt/>.

tropes of misogyny and extremism trotted out as a pretext to attack the Muslim management of the schools.

On the same day, Islamist individuals and organisations, along with their supporters, wrote a letter to *The Guardian*, saying that Ofsted's credibility was at stake over the Trojan Horse schools inquiry.¹⁵¹ The letter is copied in full below:

Several major Ofsted reports are due to be published about the so-called “Trojan Horse” schools in Birmingham which are alleged to be at the centre of a plot to “Islamise” schools (Six schools criticised in Trojan Horse inquiry, 2 June).

The reports will be a landmark in British educational history and the history of Britain as a multi-ethnic and multi-religious society, for better or for worse.

First-hand accounts of the [Ofsted](#) inspections that have emerged are disturbing. They suggest that inspectors were poorly prepared and had an agenda that calls into question Ofsted's claim to be objective and professional in its appraisal of standards in schools serving predominantly Muslim pupils.

Numerous sensationalised leaks have reinforced the perception of a pre-set agenda. 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. In at least one instance, these conflicting judgments were made by the same lead inspector. This has damaged not only the reputation of the schools but the integrity of the inspections process.

This is uncharted territory, with Ofsted seemingly being guided by an ideology at odds with the traditional British values which schools are meant to espouse, particularly fairness, justice and respect for others. We, the undersigned, believe that such an approach compromises not only Ofsted's impartiality but also the British education system itself.

We call upon the government to reject such tarnished inspection reports and seek a more transparent process of inspections which truly places the education and wellbeing of the children of [Birmingham](#) foremost.

Signatories included: Farooq Murad of the MCB, Arzu Merali and Massoud Shadjareh of the IHRC, Ibrahim Hewitt,

151. “Ofsted credibility at stake over ‘Trojan Horse’ schools inquiry”, *The Guardian*, June 3, 2014, <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2014/jun/03/ofsted-credibility-at-stake-trojan-horse>.

Salman Sayyid of the University of Leeds, Abdoolkarim Vakil of King's College London. Both Hewitt¹⁵² and Vakil¹⁵³ have served as MCB officials, although in the letter Hewitt was listed as an "Education consultant".

June 5, 2014

CAGE published a press release titled: "Trojan Horse: Government Extremism Policy now affects every aspect of Muslim Life".¹⁵⁴ In this press release, Jahangir Mohammed, co-author of "PREVENT: a cradle to grave police state", said:

The recent media and political hysteria over the so called Trojan horse case in Birmingham simply confirms what our report has said: that Muslim life – from start to finish – is now being routinely regulated and intruded upon by the state.

Asim Qureshi, Director of Research at CAGE – who controversially described Mohammed Emwazi, the Islamic State executioner known as "Jihadi John", as a "beautiful young man"¹⁵⁵ – said that "school children are now being used as bait for the imposition of counter-terror policy", which is "yet another distressing episode in the criminalisation of Muslims in the UK". He added that the Government "has no agreed definition of what actually is extremism".

June 9, 2014

The MCB published a column titled "We Need Clarity and Consistency in our Education Standards: British Muslims Respond to the Ofsted Reports of schools in Birmingham". The MCB noted its "serious concern at the conduct and outcome of the Ofsted investigation into state schools in Birmingham", following the circulation of

what is widely believed to be a fake dossier titled 'Trojan Horse' outlining a plot of a 'Muslim takeover of schools'. These incendiary claims have not been proven, and there is widespread fear that the subsequent investigations have only deepened the problem, not resolved it at all. No extremism has been found, but the slur of extremism remains.

Among other factors, the MCB complained about "Arbitrary Assessment Criteria" and "Fuzzy Notions of Extremism", saying:

We understand that many of these schools are being downgraded because they are 'not doing enough to tackle extremism'. Yet, extremism will not be confronted if Muslims, and their religious practices are considered as, at best, contrary to the values of this country, and at worst, seen as 'the swamp' that feeds extremism. When, in supporting the Education Secretary, former Communities Secretary Hazel Blears says that a person going to the mosque five-times-a-day is a sign of extremism (Radio 5 Live, 5 June), then

152. Hewitt was a member of the MCB's Central Working Committee when its first General Assembly met on March 9, 1998 (see "First General Assembly Meets in London", MCB website, March 9, 1998, <http://archive.mcb.org.uk/first-general-assembly-meets-in-london/>) and served as its Assistant Secretary General from 2004-6 (see Muslim Council of Britain Weekly E-Newsletter, Issue 52, June 25, 2004, <http://archive.mcb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/issue52.pdf>).
153. Abdoolkarim Vakil was Chair of the MCB's Research and Documentation Committee from 2010 to 2014 (see "Abdoolkarim Vakil", Salaam website, undated, <http://www.salaam.co.uk/abdoolkarim-vakil/>).
154. CAGE, "PRESS RELEASE Trojan Horse: Government Extremism Policy now affects every aspect of Muslim Life", June 5, 2014, <https://www.cage.ngo/press-release-trojan-horse-government-extremism-policy-now-affects-every-aspect-muslim>.
155. BBC News, "IS 'Jihadi John' suspect 'a beautiful young man' – Cage", February 26, 2015, <https://www.bbc.com/news/av/uk-31650427>.

we have a problem. [...]

For the avoidance of any doubt, let us be clear on where the Muslim Council of Britain stands on education in our schools. We call for an inclusive education, and we call for fairness, not favours. We have suggested that accommodating the religious wishes of parents – so long as it conforms to the National Curriculum and where it is feasible – will help schools engage with them.¹⁵⁶

The IHRC issued a press release, saying that ‘Islamophobia runs rampant in “Trojan Horse’ conclusions”.¹⁵⁷ The press release attacked Michael Gove and Policy Exchange, stating:

In the main the decision to investigate the schools appears to be driven by education secretary Michael Gove’s ideological hostility to Islam and the efforts of Muslim parents to educate their children in line with their shared values. Gove is the founder member of Policy Exchange, a right wing think tank which has claimed that British Islam is being hijacked by extremists ... Gove’s 2007 book ‘Celsius 7/7’ was a plea for Europe to do more to confront what he calls ‘Islamism’.

The Ramadhan Foundation accused Michael Gove of a “deliberate attempt to whip up hatred against Muslims”. Its CEO, Mohammed Shafiq, said:

The Trojan horse campaign waged by Michael Gove and his supporters has been a deliberate attempt to whip up hatred towards Muslims. In report leaked by Ofsted to national newspapers it’s clear that there is no evidence of extremism or a plot to take over schools yet Ofsted saw fit to make up findings based on instructions from their political masters. In these schools we have Christian governors, Sikh teachers and Muslim staff, far from an Islamist takeover. What is also deplorable has been the timing of today’s announcements, coming during exam season for many pupils, Michael Gove doesn’t care about these pupils rather he is focused on his neocon agenda.¹⁵⁸

June 19, 2014

AbdoolKarim Vakil wrote a column titled “British Values and the British Muslims” for the IHRC saying that:

Not for the first time these past weeks, this year, this decade, this generation, Muslims have been made to feel that when it comes to civic life some citizens are less equal than others; that where it concerns Muslims, the rational critical faculties on which healthy public debate depends are put on hold and a willing suspension of disbelief sets

156. Muslim Council of Britain, “We Need Clarity and Consistency in our Education Standards: British Muslims Respond to the Ofsted Reports of schools in Birmingham”, MCB press release, June 2014, <https://mcb.org.uk/press-releases/we-need-clarity-and-consistency-in-our-education-standards-british-muslims-respond-to-the-ofsted-reports-of-schools-in-birmingham/>.

157. Islamic Human Rights Commission, “Press release: Islamophobia runs rampant in ‘Trojan Horse’ conclusions”, June 9, 2014, <https://www.ihrc.org.uk/press-releases/press-release-islamophobia-runs-rampant-in-trojan-horse-conclusions/>.

158. Andrew Sparrow and Ben Quinn, “Ofsted finds ‘culture of fear and intimidation’ in some schools”, *The Guardian*, June 9, 2014. <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/blog/2014/jun/09/ofsted-publishing-trojan-horse-plot-reports-and-michael-goves-statement-politics-live-blog>.

in. The fact is, Muslims are disproportionately the object of news coverage, and inversely proportionally able to inform and shape the public conversation. We are the most talked about, and least heard. We are, arguably, disproportionately the object of public policy, of academic research, and of surveillance, overwhelmingly framed in securitarian terms; yet the least positioned to influence, determine, contribute, and implement the policy cycle. [...]

I do believe we are at a defining moment where the future of this country is being decided, but it is not in our classrooms and our streets; it is in our Cabinet, in our Parliament, in our Department for Education and in our Home Office. Whether a generation of parent governors and parental aspirations and involvement in their schools and communities is to be undone; whether a generation of inspirational teachers and school children will be judged not by their outstanding educational effort and achievements but by their Prevent certification, this is what is at stake. [...]

I do share worries about curricula and schools that are not doing enough to educate children and the citizens of tomorrow in the dangers of extremism; I do worry about the conveyor belt of radicalisation – the radicalisation and extremisms that are nurtured, licensed and emboldened by the teaching of narrow, parochial and whitewashed versions of history and of British values. The point is, British Values are aspirational values. Muslims are happy to sign up to common values of justice, fairness, equality and democracy, but understood as values that all of us need to strive to live up to and make a reality, not as the already achieved preserve of some primordial British population that the not-quite-British-enough must be civilized into.¹⁵⁹

July 1, 2014

Shamim Miah, Senior Lecturer at the Department of Education and Community Studies, University of Huddersfield,¹⁶⁰ wrote an article titled “Trojan Horse, Ofsted and the ‘Prevent’ing of Education”, in which he claimed that the

severity of the Trojan Horse debate, as it aims to push through an assimilationist policy agenda, can be compared to the Stasi commission in 2003 and its enforcement of *laïcité* in French schools.

The article was based on a review of all the 21 Ofsted inspection reports linked with the Birmingham Trojan Horse. He argued that “the significance of the Ofsted reports” was that they redefined extremism “to equate with Muslim cultural conservatism, with the implicit

159. AbdoolKarim Vakil, “British Values and the British Muslims”, IHRC website, June 19, 2014, <https://www.ihrc.org.uk/british-values-and-the-british-muslims/>.

160. “Shamim Miah”, staff profile page, University of Huddersfield website, undated, <https://pure.hud.ac.uk/en/persons/shamim-miah>.

assumption that Muslims have sole monopoly over cultural conservatism”. He also claimed that Ofsted “is used by the state to embed the governments [sic] counter terrorism programme of Preventing violent extremism at the heart of inner city schooling”. According to Miah, the “securitisation of education is one of the crucial legacies arising from the Ofsted rulings”.¹⁶¹

July 23, 2014

In its response to Peter Clarke’s report, the MCB said it “unequivocally condemns all terrorism and extremism and we have not seen any evidence to date of such activities in Birmingham schools”.¹⁶² The MCB agreed there were issues of poor governance, as outlined by Peter Clarke and in previous reports by Ofsted and Ian Kershaw, who was commissioned by Birmingham City Council. The MCB called for stronger guidance from Ofsted.

Responding to accusations of extremism, the MCB said “the causes of terrorism are complex. But there is scant evidence that the education system or the Muslim community are the reasons for why people turn to terrorism”. The MCB considered the evidence of WhatsApp conversations to be very disturbing, but took issue with Clarke’s approach “that chooses to ascribe guilt by association, and by conflating conservative Muslim practises to a supposed ideology and agenda to ‘Islamise’ secular schools’.”

The MCB rejected Clarke’s description of the MCB as “part of a movement that aims ‘to increase the role of Islam in education’ and ‘Islamise’ the provision of educational services”. The MCB said that Clarke, “like many commentators hostile to the British Muslim community”, repeated this assertion due to the MCB document published in 2007 – “Meeting the Needs of Muslim Pupils in State Schools” - which was co-authored by the then chair of the MCB’s Education Committee, Tahir Alam.

The MCB said it “cannot comment on the allegations directed at Mr Alam of his role in Birmingham. However, the MCB document in question, which is undergoing a routine review, was always aimed at being advisory in nature, helping schools engage with Muslim parents.” The MCB agreed “with point 187 of Ian Kershaw’s report which states that the MCB guidance offers practical guidelines and should not be interpreted as a prescriptive code”.

The MCB expressed concern

about the phrase ‘particular strand of Sunni Islam’: given how diverse our Muslim communities are, it is unwise for any of us to pass judgement on the acceptability of certain strands of Islam over others. It is not for the state to define the theological boundaries of the Islamic faith and to create an ‘approved version of Islam’.

The MCB was also “troubled that Mr Clarke delves

161. Shamim Miah, “Trojan Horse, Ofsted and the ‘Prevent’ing of Education”, Discover Society, July 1, 2014, <https://archive.discover society.org/2014/07/01/trojan-horse-ofsted-and-the-preventing-of-education/?shared=email&msg=fall; https://web.archive.org/web/20151004122008/http://discover society.org/2014/07/01/trojan-horse-ofsted-and-the-preventing-of-education/>.

162. Muslim Council of Britain, “The Muslim Council of Britain Responds to Peter Clarke’s ‘Trojan Horse’ Letter Report”, MCB press release, July 23, 2014, <https://mcb.org.uk/press-releases/the-muslim-council-of-britain-responds-to-peter-clarkes-trojan-horse-letter-report/>.

July 24, 2014

into intricacies of Muslim theological debate raising serious allegations against a number of national Muslim organisations including the MCB”.

MEND responded to Peter Clarke’s report, and newspaper coverage of the report, of which it was critical.¹⁶³ MEND acknowledged that the report detailed “a number of serious shortcomings” – although it did not elaborate on what these were – but criticised *The Daily Star*, which incorrectly claimed “fanatic teachers were trying to brainwash kids by claiming Lee Rigby’s murder was a hoax”. Clarke noted that “scepticism about the truth of reports of the murder of Lee Rigby”, had been expressed in a staff WhatsApp group at Park View school,¹⁶⁴ but did not claim that such scepticism was taught in classrooms.

MEND concluded its piece criticising *The Daily Telegraph*’s reporting of Clarke’s findings:

The Daily Telegraph editorial makes a significant leap in its reading of the report to claim ‘This saga reinforces the need to arrest the spread of Islamist ideology through the schools, not least because it radicalises impressionable young men, some of whom have ended up fighting in Syria and Iraq and harbour a hatred of western values that may yet be turned back on their own country.’

Clarke referred to ‘real concerns’ about the vulnerability of pupils to radicalisation, not as the Daily Telegraph editorial suggests, a clear and verifiable causal relationship between extremist views and radicalisation. Salma Yaqoob, a former Birmingham City Councillor, in a comment published in *The Guardian* reiterates: ‘There is no natural spectrum that takes a person from observing a faith to extremism, to violent extremism’.

It is worth noting that MEND is a well-funded activist group responsible for promoting a “victimhood mentality”;¹⁶⁵ in 2018, for example, MEND’s head of policy and research stated that the conditions in which British Muslims live today “may already be close” to those that “allowed” the Holocaust.¹⁶⁶

Islamist individuals and organisations, along with their supporters elsewhere, wrote a letter to *The Guardian* about the “Rights and wrongs of the Trojan horse schools affair in Birmingham”.¹⁶⁷ The letter, which criticised Clarke’s report as “a biased mix of uncorroborated smear, anecdote, hoax and chatroom gossip” is copied in full below, with all the signatories:

The new secretary of state for education, Nicky Morgan, makes various pledges following the “Trojan horse” reports on Birmingham schools.

163. Muslim Engagement and Development, “Report by Birmingham Education Commissioner, Peter Clarke, into ‘Trojan Horse’ allegations”, July 24, 2014, <https://www.mend.org.uk/report-by-birmingham-education-commissioner-peter-clarke-into-trojan-horse-allegations/>.

164. Clarke Report, p.11.

165. Trevor Phillips, John Jenkins and Martyn Frampton, “On Islamophobia: The Problem of Definition”, Policy Exchange, 2019, pp.43, 62, 73, 82. Available at: <https://policyexchange.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/On-Islamophobia.pdf>.

166. Muslim Engagement and Development, “MEND Head of Policy speech in commemoration of Holocaust Memorial Day”, January 24, 2018, <https://mend.org.uk/news/mend-head-policy-speech-commemoration-holocaust-memorial-day/>.

167. “Rights and wrongs of the Trojan horse schools affair in Birmingham”, *The Guardian*, July 28, 2014, <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2014/jul/28/rights-and-wrongs-trojan-horse-birmingham>.

July 28, 2014

Several of her pledges are valuable. The basis for them, however, is unsound. Peter Clarke’s report is not “forensic”, as Nicky Morgan claims (Report, 22 July), but a biased mix of uncorroborated smear, anecdote, hoax and chatroom gossip.

It reflects neoconservative assumptions about the nature of extremism; ignores significant testimony and viewpoints; implies the essential problem in Birmingham is simply the influence of certain individuals; discusses governance but not curriculum; ignores the concerns and perceptions of parents and young people; and is unlikely to bear judicial scrutiny. The Trojan horse affair has done much damage in Birmingham, both to individuals and to community cohesion.

Political leaders have key roles in the urgent process of restoration and support for curriculum renewal. Alas, they will not be much helped by the official reports of Clarke, Ian Kershaw and Ofsted. They will, though, be helped by the unique strength and goodwill of people in Birmingham itself.

Signatories: Tim Brighouse, Gus John, Arun Kundnani, Sameena Choudry, Akram Khan-Cheema, Arzu Merali, Robin Richardson, Maurice Irfan Coles, Gill Cressey, Steph Green, Ashfaque Chowdhury, Ibrahim Hewitt, Baljeet Singh Gill, Arshad Ali, S Sayyid, Massoud Shadjareh, Abdool Karim Vakil and Tom Wylie.

Akram Khan-Cheema, Ashfaque Chowdhury and Ibrahim Hewitt have all served as officials of the Association of Muslims Schools UK (AMSUK) Shura Council, alongside Tahir Alam.¹⁶⁸ Ibrahim Hewitt and Abdool Karim Vakil have served as officials of the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB) – as did Tahir Alam.¹⁶⁹

November 21, 2014

Unite Against Fascism (UAF) and MEND held a joint event in Parliament to discuss ways to combat “the rise in Islamophobia”.¹⁷⁰ The event was part of MEND’s annual Islamophobia Awareness Month programme of events, and was hosted by Diane Abbott MP. Speakers included:

- Sufyan Ismail, CEO of MEND;
- Dr Omar Khan, Director Runnymede Trust;
- Mohammed Kozbar, Vice President of Muslim Association of Britain and Chair of Finsbury Park Mosque;
- Hugh Lanning, Vice Chair of Unite Against Fascism;
- Weyman Bennett, Joint National Secretary of Unite Against Fascism;
- Dr. Mark Walters, Senior Law Lecturer at Sussex University; and

168. Association of Muslim Schools UK, “AM-SUK Shura Council 2007-2008”, web page captured on December 12, 2007, https://web.archive.org/web/20071212010517/http://www.ams-uk.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=10&Itemid=26.

169. On Hewitt and Vakil see footnotes 152 and 153, respectively. Alam served as the Chair of the MCB’s Education Committee; see Muslim Council of Britain Weekly E-Newsletter, Issue 52, June 25, 2004, <http://archive.mcb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/issue52.pdf>.

170. Unite Against Fascism, “Report: Tackling Islamophobia – Roundtable event at Parliament”, November 21, 2014, <http://uaf.org.uk/2014/11/report-tackling-islamophobia-roundtable-event-at-parliament/>.

- Talha Ahmad, National Council member of the Muslim Council of Britain.

Walters said the impact of Islamophobic hate crimes had resulted in “a climate of intimidation where women remove their veils, men shave their beards and Muslims hide their religious beliefs”. According to the UAF’s coverage of the event, Talha Ahmad of the MCB

highlighted the example of the Trojan Horse hysteria that had been whipped up by the media, and demonstrated the importance of the Muslim community standing up to this in the political process, including calling on Birmingham MPs to represent their constituents by challenging the media frenzy. He criticised governments policies which have singled out and stigmatised the Muslim community, which can only have a negative impact against a backdrop of ongoing Islamophobia. He described how the MCB has faced demonisation for standing up on important issues for the community and called on politicians to ensure no one is excluded from the political process because of their faith.

December 8, 2014

Faisal Bodi wrote an article for the IHRC,¹⁷¹ republished two days later by 5Pillars,¹⁷² titled “Education: the new battleground for Muslim assimilation”. Bodi began the 5Pillars version by arguing that “The heavy crackdown against Muslim schools reveals much more about the government’s strategy for assimilating Britain’s Muslims than any genuine fears about radicalisation or extremism”. While acknowledging that Christian and Jewish schools have also faced problems - with a Jewish school being placed under special measures by Ofsted for failing to teach “British values” - Bodi was insistent that Muslims have it harder:

It would be wrong however to draw too much equivalence between the attacks on Christian and Jewish run schools and the campaign against Muslim-controlled schools. Although both have their roots in rising right wing cultural chauvinism the targeting of the latter is part of a systematic and much more pernicious campaign of forced assimilation via the agency of an anti-extremism agenda. Education, it seems, has become the latest battleground in the government’s relentless attempts to shape a brand of Islam it deems acceptable in modern Britain – liberal, secular and above all state-friendly.

171. Faisal Bodi, “Education: the new battleground for Muslim assimilation”, IHRC website, December 8, 2014. <https://www.ihrc.org.uk/education-the-new-battle-ground-for-muslim-assimilation/>

172. *Ibid.*

2015

January 29, 2015

In the course of a speech on “British values” to the 100 Group conference, the MCB Secretary General Shuja Shafi inserted a segment on Trojan Horse. The event was organised by Brighton College and Kingsford Community School:

To educate the next generation of British citizens, leaders and thinkers, we must put our utmost commitment to ensure they are proud of their own identity, confident about their place in wider society and equipped to understand the challenges and opportunities of life in modern Britain.

That is why we spoke out against the so-called Trojan Horse scandal in Birmingham. If there was wrong-doing, then of course, they needed to be confronted. But failures in governance and procedures do not equate to a ‘khalifate-takeover’.

In getting to the bottom of the Trojan Horse scandal, we missed an opportunity to rally wider society and indeed the Muslim community to define a common future, a vision for Britain in which people of different faiths and none races and class lives in harmony.

Instead, for too many Muslims, it was yet another episode where Muslims are once again made to question where they belong when they are as British as anyone else.

Parents, the local community and the teachers worked together to bring about dramatic change.

Children in these schools were achieving well, had promising futures and were learning to aspire, to aim high. The so-called Trojan Horse undermined that effort and destroyed their confidence.¹⁷³

March 21, 2015

MEND published an article criticising Andrew Gilligan – in order to reiterate its denials about extremism in Trojan Horse schools:

Gilligan’s form of non-violent extremism takes the curious shape of paradox peppered with paranoia. For example, in light of the Education select committee’s report this week on the so called ‘Trojan horse plot’ in Birmingham schools, it is useful to reflect on the number of articles Gilligan wrote elaborating on the ‘extremism’

173. “Speech by Dr Shuja Shafi on British and Islamic Values”, MCB website, January 29, 2015, <https://mcb.org.uk/mcb-updates/shuja-shafi-speech-british-values-290115/>

present in the schools, the actors involved and how the Sunday Telegraph “revealed the truth behind the plot”. Contrast this to the important finding by the select committee, and affirmed by the Education Secretary, Nicky Morgan, in an interview with The Muslim News last year, 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.” Have we seen a retraction of the specious allegations Gilligan made in relation to the schools? Of course not. Have we seen an apology from the Telegraph for allowing articles without substance to be published and thereby committing a “fraud” on its readers? Of course not.¹⁷⁴

April 10, 2015

Imran Awan, a Professor of Criminology at Birmingham City University,¹⁷⁵ promoted an event at the Bordesley Centre, featuring Tahir Alam speaking about Trojan Horse:

Prof Imran Awan, 10 April 2015: Don’t forget, tomorrow @TahirAlamUK (former Chair of Park View) will speak on the Trojan Horse affair at 5.45pm at the Bordesley Centre.¹⁷⁶

April 17, 2015

Imran Awan spoke at an event in Birmingham organised by Faith Matters, titled “The Trojan Horse Scandal and Possible Impacts of Anti-Muslim Hate”.¹⁷⁷ In the promotional material for the event, Faith Matters said the event “will primarily look at the possible fallout from the ‘Trojan horse’ scandal and the recent Islamophobic graffiti at the University of Birmingham”.¹⁷⁸

The Times reported that Awan told his audience in Birmingham that the city’s Muslims had been left “feeling like a suspect community fearful for their children’s future”.¹⁷⁹ He reportedly quoted a teacher at one of the implicated schools as saying that “the biggest losers here are the poor children who are going to be labelled as extremists and terrorists”. He said parents at three of the schools at the centre of the investigation, Park View, Oldknow and Golden Hillock, were concerned about the effects the furore would have on their children’s futures, and one parent told him that “employers would now think twice about employing anyone from Park View or the other schools associated with the Trojan horse scandal.”

174. Muslim Engagement and Development, “mend statement on Sunday Telegraph article by Andrew Gilligan”, March 21, 2015, <https://www.mend.org.uk/mend-statement-on-sunday-telegraph-article-by-andrew-gilligan/>.

175. “Professor Imran Awan”, staff profile page, Birmingham City School of Social Sciences, undated, <https://www.bcu.ac.uk/social-sciences/about-us/staff/criminology-and-sociology/imran-awan>.

176. Prof Imran Awan/@ProfImranAwan, Twitter post, April 10, 2015, <https://twitter.com/ProfImranAwan/status/586535245404631040>.

177. Prof Imran Awan/@ProfImranAwan, Twitter post, April 14, 2015, <https://twitter.com/ProfImranAwan/status/588012294489120768>; “The Trojan Horse Scandal and Possible Impacts of Anti-Muslim Hate”, eventbrite listing, April 17, 2015, <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/the-trojan-horse-scandal-and-possible-impacts-of-anti-muslim-hate-tickets-16499831440#>.

178. *Ibid.*

179. Faisal Hanif, “‘Trojan horse’ school pupils fear for jobs”, *The Times*, April 18, 2015, <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/trojan-horse-school-pupils-fear-for-jobs-6rpm-02htwvh>.

2017

January 3, 2017

Shamim Miah, a Senior Lecturer at the Department of Education and Community Studies in the University of Huddersfield, gave a lecture at Cardiff University’s Centre for the Study of Islam in the UK, with the title: “Trojan Horse and ‘Prevent’ing of Schooling”, echoing the article

he wrote with the same name in January 2014.¹⁸⁰

May 30, 2017

Imran Awan tweeted:

Prof Imran Awan:¹⁸¹ Lives destroyed and no apology! Trojan horse tribunal throws out case against five teachers. @LeeDonaghy
<https://www.theguardian.com/education/2017/may/30/trojan-horse-tribunal-five-birmingham-teachers-islam>

November 3, 2017

MEND announced an event at the Bordesley Centre in Birmingham.¹⁸²

Muslim Engagement & Development (MEND) invites you to an evening with academics, teachers and journalists to ask:

Has a hoax letter, a media scrum, a forceful education secretary and political motivations in education regulation lead to the stigmatisation of a community, discrimination against outstanding teachers/school leaders and exam failure for a generation of children? Can we ensure this doesn't happen again?

Speakers:

Salma Yaqoob, political activist

Peter Osborne, journalist, writer and broadcaster

Kevin Courtney, General Secretary of the National Union of Teachers

Dr Shamim Miah, senior lecturer and writer

John Holmwood, Professor of Sociology, University of Nottingham

Tahir Alam, former chair of governors Parkview school.

Birmingham City Council responded:

Birmingham City Council is aware that an event has been organised by MEND to debate the issues relating to the Trojan Horse events of a few years ago. It is unclear at this stage whether the event will go ahead this evening. However, we are concerned to ensure that there are no misleading messages given about what really happened during Trojan Horse, and to make it clear that the city council in no way endorses the planned event.

What happened in the schools caught up in Trojan Horse in 2014 is clearly established and

180. Islam UK, "2016 Dr Shamim Miah Trojan Horse and 'Prevent'ing of Schooling", YouTube, January 3, 2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k_D_vRYII0w&ab_channel=IslamUK.

181. Prof Imran Awan/@ProfImranAwan, Twitter post, May 30, 2017, <https://twitter.com/ProfImranAwan/status/869618702693650432>.

182. "Trojan Horse: The facts!", event listing, Islamophobia Awareness Month website, undated (event listed for November 3, 2017), <https://www.islamophobia-awareness.org/event/trojan-horse-the-facts/>.

we must not shy away from challenging those who seek to deny there was a serious problem at that time. There were a number of inquiries, including the council's own commissioned external investigation, and we have learnt the lessons of the past.¹⁸³

Significantly, Birmingham City Council went on to emphasise what they considered to be the key points of the Kershaw and Clarke reports, arguing that they “must not be forgotten”:

- Kershaw – “My investigation has found that elements of the five steps referred to in the Trojan Horse Letter are present in a large number of the schools considered as part of the investigation. There are also clear patterns of behaviour amongst groups of individuals which is so common that it is reasonable to infer that there are links between these various individuals.”
- Clarke - “I found clear evidence that there are a number of people associated with each other and in a position of influence in schools and governing bodies, who espouse, sympathise with or fail to challenge extremist views...

“There has been co-ordinated, deliberate and sustained action, carried out by a number of associated individuals, to introduce an intolerant and aggressive Islamic ethos into a few schools in Birmingham. This has been achieved in a number of schools through gaining influence on the governing bodies, installing sympathetic head teachers or senior members of staff, appointing like-minded people to key positions, and seeking to remove head teachers who they do not feel to be sufficiently compliant with their agenda. Their motivation may well be linked to a deeply held religious conviction, but the effect has been to limit the life chances of the young people in their care and to render them more vulnerable to pernicious influences in the future.”¹⁸⁴

Theresa May’s former chief of staff Nick Timothy accused MEND of trying to “mislead the local community”,¹⁸⁵ and the planned venue cancelled the event.¹⁸⁶ The meeting went ahead at another location. Salma Yaqoob began the meeting by saying, “Just being here is an act of resistance”. A motion passed that evening stated: “The high court has thrown out several cases against so-called Trojan Horse teachers. The affair has been used to silence Muslim voices”, and called for an independent investigation into the “abuse of power which took place”.¹⁸⁷

183. Birmingham City Council, “Statement in relation to an event organised by the Muslim Engagement and Development (MEND) campaigning group”, BCC website, November 3, 2017, https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/news/article/184/statement_in_relation_to_an_event_organised_by_the_muslim_engagement_and_development_mend_campaigning_group.

184. *Ibid.*

185. Nick Timothy, “The Trojan Horse is being dragged back into our schools: it must be stopped”, *The Telegraph*, November 1, 2017, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/11/01/trojan-horse-dragged-back-schools-must-stopped/>.

186. Jonathan Walker, “Anger Over Debate Asking Whether ‘Trojan Horse’ Plot to Take Over Birmingham Schools Really Happened”, *The Birmingham Mail*, November 2, 2017, <https://www.birminghammail.co.uk/news/midlands-news/anger-over-debate-asking-whether-13849408>.

187. “Meeting says no to Trojan Horse lies”, *Socialist Worker*, November 17, 2017, <https://socialistworker.co.uk/news/meeting-says-no-to-trojan-horse-lies/>.

MEND later said the event brought together “academics, teachers, politicians and media personalities which was attended by 300 people”.¹⁸⁸

2018

January 28, 2018

The MCB referred to “the widely debunked Trojan Horse scandal” in a blog.¹⁸⁹

September 24, 2018

MEND and the media campaign Hacked Off co-hosted a fringe event at the Labour Party Conference in Liverpool. The event was titled: “Media Manipulation of Minorities and Other Press Abuses”, and was chaired by the CEO of MEND, Shazad Amin. Speakers included Diane Abbott MP; Naz Shah MP; Steven Barnett, Professor of Communications at the University of Westminster; Kevin Courtney, joint General Secretary of the National Education Union; and Isobel Ingham-Barrow, Head of Policy at MEND.

Courtney spoke extensively about the Trojan Horse affair and “how the mainstream media has often distorted and sensationalised various incidents to falsely blame Muslim teachers. This is often in an effort to push a false narrative that British schools are being ‘Islamicised’.” MEND recommended a book titled *Countering Extremism in British Schools? The truth about the Birmingham Trojan Horse affair* by John Holmwood and Theresa O’Toole, for “a thorough and complete analysis of the topic”.¹⁹⁰

November 29, 2018

Stand up to Racism (SUTR) and MEND organised an event in Birmingham, “bringing together Professor John Holmwood, teachers, unionists and anti-racists to collectively put forward a call for an independent inquiry in to the trojan horse affair and its detrimental effect on the lives of real people, children, parents and teachers.” Speakers included “Professor John Holmwood (Professor of sociology, University of Nottingham); Nahila Ashraf (Stand up to Racism); Lung Theatre (Matt Woodhead and Helen Monks).”¹⁹¹

2019

March 12, 2019

The IHRC held an event at its London bookshop featuring a discussion between Arzu Merali and John Holmwood, then Professor at Nottingham University’s Faculty of Social Sciences.¹⁹² The event – “‘Countering Extremism in British Schools? The Truth about the Birmingham Trojan Horse Affair’ with John Holmwood” – was named after Holmwood and co-author Therese O’Toole’s book, which described the Trojan Horse Affair as “an injustice of the magnitude of Hillsborough, requiring urgent redress”.

188. Muslim Engagement and Development, “What we did at MEND in 2017”, January 16, 2018, <https://www.mend.org.uk/what-we-did-at-mend-in-2017/>.

189. Muslim Council of Britain, “The Sunday Times on the MCB: Getting the Facts Right”, January 28, 2018, <https://mcb.org.uk/general/the-sunday-times-on-mcb-the-facts/>.

190. Muslim Engagement and Development, “MEND co-hosts fringe event at Labour Party Conference: ‘Media Manipulation of Minorities and Other Press Abuses’”, September 27, 2018, <https://www.mend.org.uk/mend-co-hosts-fringe-event-labour-party-conference-media-manipulation-minorities-press-abuses/>.

191. Muslim Engagement and Development, “Trojan Horse, Islamophobia and the fight against racism”, event listing, undated (event listed for November 29, 2018), <https://www.mend.org.uk/event/trojan-horse-islamophobia-fight-racism/>.

192. Islamic Human Rights Commission, “Event Report: ‘Countering Extremism in British Schools? The Truth about the Birmingham Trojan Horse Affair’ with John Holmwood”, IHRC website, March 12, 2019, <https://www.ihr.org.uk/activities/event-reports/21473-author-evening-countering-extremism-in-british-schools-the-truth-about-the-birmingham-trojan-horse-affair-with-john-holmwood-2/>.

According to the IHRC's description of the discussion, "all the enquiries set up to investigate the matter exonerated all those involved". The affair was "used to justify a counter-extremism agenda that targets Muslims". It said:

The hysterical narrative reproduced by media and political circles alike promoted an idea of Muslim deviance in the actions of the governors, parents and teachers accused in the matter. Not only were all acting in a manner both legal and commensurate with the actions of the other parents, governors and teachers from different and no faith backgrounds, all the enquiries set up to investigate the matter exonerated all those involved. Nevertheless teachers were suspended and lost their jobs, parents and others banned from being governors and the school in questions had their entire leadership changed. Tribunals for teachers suspended or sacked found that there had been gross miscarriages of justice yet this has slipped public attention. This compounds the injustice of the situation. Despite those targeted being the victims of a witchhunt in its most basic sense, they were still perceived to be in the wrong. The affair was and continues to be used to justify a counter-extremism agenda that targets Muslims but impacts many forms of political dissent.

In its review of the book, the IHRC said that Holmwood and O'Toole "challenge the accepted narrative and draw on the potential parallel with the Hillsborough disaster to suggest a similar false narrative has taken hold of public debate". It concluded:

This important book highlights the major injustice inflicted on the teachers and shows how this affair was used to criticise multiculturalism, and justify the expansion of a broad and intrusive counter extremism agenda.

2020

September 12, 2020

MEND's Birmingham Working Group held a discussion event at which it launched its "MEND report Midlands".¹⁹³ The discussion focused on the question "Is Islamophobia prevalent in the West Midlands?".¹⁹⁴ MEND's project support officer, Haniya Aadam, hosted three speakers:

- Professor John Holmwood the expert witness for the defence in professional misconduct cases brought against senior teachers during the Trojan Horse Affair in Birmingham.
- Ali Naqvi from West Midlands Police an Intelligence Analyst, and Executive Member of

193. Muslim Engagement and Development, "MEND report Midlands: Is Islamophobia prevalent in the West Midlands?", October 14, 2020, <https://www.mend.org.uk/mend-report-midlands-is-islamophobia-prevalent-in-the-west-midlands/>.

194. Muslim Engagement and Development, "MEND report Midlands: Is Islamophobia prevalent in the West Midlands?", MEND Facebook page, September 12, 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/mendcommunity/videos/327955718284562>.

Association of Muslim Police.

- Huda Osman, Caseworker from MEND's Islamophobia Response Unit.

Holmwood claimed that when the teachers' tribunals collapsed in 2017, the "dominant narrative" of Trojan Horse had been in effect for three years. He also claimed that

journalists failed to report on the reasons for the collapse of the cases; there was misconduct by lawyers and that lawyerly misconduct was not subject to the same kind of scrutiny as the alleged misconduct against [sic.] the teachers.

Asked if Ofsted commented after the collapse of the cases, Holmwood stated that Policy Exchange and Nick Timothy mobilised the response. He said they claimed that the cases collapsed on a technicality and that there was plenty of evidence against the teachers. But, said Holmwood, "there wasn't much evidence against the teachers" and the evidence had been challenged during the tribunal. The press had only reported the case put forward by "the prosecution" during the tribunal, said Holmwood, but there was no verdict, and the press was "not at hand" to report the questioning and challenging of the evidence. The teachers did not really get a proper exoneration, he said.

October 14, 2020

MEND reported on the event it held on September 12. It said that the event "explored the Trojan Horse affair, Islamophobic hate crimes and their causes within the West Midlands, and discussed how to ensure that the Muslim community feel protected".¹⁹⁵ The report said:

The show started off with Professor John [Holmwood] exploring the Trojan Horse Affair case and how the allegations that were made during the case negatively impacted the Muslim Teachers, who were found innocent as they case [sic.] was dismissed. Not only did they lose their jobs and career but had to deal with the backlash from the media. He highlighted how media bias and negativity played a part in escalating the issue and critiqued legislative guidance in its failure to protect the victims.

December 17, 2020

Prevent Watch held an online event titled "The Trojan Horse Affair Exposed". According to Prevent Watch:

21 schools were investigated amid fears that they were trying to 'Islamicise' children. Despite the number of tabloid headlines and official inquiries the trails [sic.] of the teachers collapsed. Professor John Holmwood was an expert witness for the

195. Muslim Engagement and Development, "MEND report Midlands: Is Islamophobia prevalent in the West Midlands?", October 14, 2020, <https://www.mend.org.uk/mend-report-midlands-is-islamophobia-prevalent-in-the-west-midlands/>.

defence in these cases and will be sharing his findings in our webinar. Join Naeem Mian QC as he puts these hard questions that need answers. Third speaker was Prevent Watch Director Dr Layla Aitlhadj.¹⁹⁶

2021

November 2021

The Centre for Media Monitoring, a project of the MCB, published a report titled: “The British Media’s Coverage of Muslims and Islam (2018-2020)”. The report referred to the “so called ‘Trojan Horse’ plot”,¹⁹⁷ seven years after the episode.

After the New York Times/Serial podcast, which first aired on February 3, 2022, Islamist interest in Trojan Horse re-emerged:

2022

February 9, 2022

In a blog article titled “Journalism in the Time of Trojan Horse”, Arzu Merali, a co-founder of the IHRC, focused on the NYT/Serial podcast series, which “resulted in a societal sea change for the worse against Muslims”.¹⁹⁸ Merali referred to

the Trojan Horse / Hoax Affair, where a group of mainly Muslim governors and some teaching staff were accused of a concerted plot to take over schools in Birmingham and ‘Islamise’ them (whatever that means). Everyone accepted that there was no plot, but the things that those involved did do were maligned by ministers and media. Laws were enacted, educational and security policies beefed up. Individuals involved were banned from the education sector, careers destroyed, and the schools they had all been involved in turning around from failing to – by the government’s own admission – outstanding left to collapse silently into chaos.

Merali said the media reportage of Trojan Horse “has been not simply poor but part of the problem”, but praised Richard Adams in *The Guardian*, and a long column by Samira Shackleton. Merali also praised the Serial podcast, saying it “is excellent and everyone needs to listen to it”, and the fact that no one in authority sought out the writer of the anonymous letter was because “Islamophobia – the illogic of racism – always trumps truth”.

196. Prevent Watch, “The Trojan Horse Affair Exposed”, YouTube, January 6, 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aXm-Wodx5Gw&t=1122s>.

197. Centre for Media Monitoring/Muslim Council of Britain, “British Media’s Coverage of Muslims and Islam (2018-2020)”, CfMM website, November 30, 2021, <https://cfmm.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/CfMM-Annual-Report-2018-2020-digital.pdf>.

198. Arzu Merali, “Journalism in the Time of Trojan Horse”, IHRC website, February 9, 2022, <https://www.ihrc.org.uk/journalism-in-the-time-of-trojan-horse/>.

In a section headed “The rules of the game are not the same for the minoritised and the majoritised”, Merali said that:

John Holmwood and Therese O’Toole consider the affair to be an injustice of the magnitude of the Hillsborough disaster (one, for non-UK readers, that took 30 years for there to be a state acknowledgement of). We are still just shy of a decade into Trojan Horse. As with Hillsborough, perhaps more so, the media played an essential role in amplifying the social hysteria and short of actually picking up torches and pitchforks, let loose an angry mob of media, politicians, public intellectuals and a cacophony of civil society voices (often, but not always, lurching right) on those accused in the Trojan Horse letter.

February 10, 2022

5Pillars interviewed three Muslim teachers “who had their lives turned upside down by the Islamophobic witch-hunt in Birmingham”.¹⁹⁹ The video recording of the interview was described by 5Pillars as “the most detailed account any of them have given to the media”. In this interview, Jahangir Akbar, who was given a five-year ban from teaching,²⁰⁰ said that he was “shocked” that “one letter can rip an entire community apart”. Yet, it was not the letter that was used as evidence for his banning, nor did it form the basis for the findings of Clarke or Kershaw’s reports. Akbar argued that there has been “a lot of damage” – careers and lives damaged, and a community fractured – and that there needs to be an inquiry. Razwan Faraz said the NYT podcast was “the only real, thorough, investigative journalism into the whole subject itself of the Trojan Horse affair” because the mainstream media is Islamophobic.

The MCB issued a press release calling for an independent public inquiry into the Trojan Horse Affair, following supposedly “damning revelations in a New York Times podcast by investigative journalists Hamza Syed and Brian Reed”. In contrast with the July 2014 MCB statement,²⁰¹ when the MCB responded to the report by Peter Clarke, the February 2022 press release was markedly more strident. Extracts from the press release are copied below, and are followed by the even more forceful comments by the MCB Secretary General:

The New York Times/Serial podcast shines a light on the impact this letter has had on Muslim communities. It has fuelled false tropes about Muslims, re-enforced regressive counter-terror strategies and has denied a generation of young people access to quality education. [...]

199. 5Pillars, “The Muslim victims of Operation Trojan Horse”, YouTube, February 10, 2022, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q_CeajWw9H8.

200. Sean Coughlan, “Trojan head banned from teaching”, BBC News, January 4, 2016, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-35226482>.

201. Muslim Council of Britain, “The Muslim Council of Britain Responds to Peter Clarke’s ‘Trojan Horse’ Letter Report”, MCB press release, July 23, 2014, <https://mcb.org.uk/press-releases/the-muslim-council-of-britain-responds-to-peter-clarke-trojan-horse-letter-report/>.

The extraordinary actions taken by the government point to a pervasive extremism determined to see Muslims as suspect communities. [...]

There are also serious points of reflection for the British media which struggled to scrutinise the narrative put forward by government. The MCB's Centre for Media Monitoring, in its report 'British Media's Coverage of Muslims and Islam (2018-2020)' concluded that media commentators consistently cited the alleged "plot" as a "function within media reports as an index for 'Extremism' and 'religious intolerance'". This fuelled a pervasive narrative of Muslims which persists to this day; reflected in hate crime statistics and attitude surveys which show how negatively Muslims are perceived in society. The *New York Times/Serial* podcast reveals how the then Education Secretary, Michael Gove, and senior officials dismissed concerns that the letter was 'bogus'. The resulting action from this national hoax has been used to justify government policy and vilify Muslims, casting suspicion and aspersions on those who wish to participate in public life.

MCB Secretary General, Zara Mohammed, said:

This podcast reveals the deep-rooted nature of institutional Islamophobia in the UK. Each episode is a damning indictment of how narratives and tropes were perpetuated to feed a story of moral panic, in which Muslims are centre stage. The consequences of the 'Trojan Hoax' not only ruined the lives of those directly involved but punished a whole generation of Muslims across the UK. This series reflects the hostile political environment in which British Muslims still find themselves in today, suspect communities and not quite British enough.

The truth now needs to come out. Who was behind this hoax? Why did decision makers dismiss crucial evidence presented at every turn? We know who the victims of this hoax were, but who were the beneficiaries?²⁰²

February 11, 2022

The Centre for Media Monitoring published a number of tweets on the NYT/Serial podcast, including one supporting the MCB's "call for an inquiry into this [#trojanhoax](#)", although it did not point out that the Centre for Media Monitoring is a project of the MCB:²⁰³

Do you remember how the British Media covered [#TrojanHorseAffair](#)?

As [@nytimes](#) latest podcast shows, there was no

202. Muslim Council of Britain, "Who was behind the National Hoax? Muslim Council of Britain Calls for Independent Public Inquiry into 'Trojan Horse' Affair", MCB Press Release, February 10, 2022. <https://mcb.org.uk/press-releases/who-was-behind-the-national-hoax-muslim-council-of-britain-calls-for-independent-public-inquiry-into-trojan-horse-affair/>.

203. Centre for Media Monitoring (CfMM)/@cfmmuk, Twitter post, February 11, 2022, <https://twitter.com/cfmmuk/status/1492147151249584134>.

plot and the media failed to ask basic questions around the letter and its origins.

Lives ruined. Communities slurred. Will newspapers and broadcasters apologise?

As [@obornetweets](#) has argued; “With few exceptions, journalists failed to examine the underlying facts while repeating what turned out to be false allegations.”

<https://middleeasteye.net/opinion/trojan>

The investigation by [@SamiraShackle](#) in [@gdnlongread](#) states, “It is hard to imagine these kinds of stories garnering such levels of media attention had they not involved Muslim staff or pupils.”

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/sep/01/trojan-horse-the-real-story-behind-the-fake-islamic-plot-to-take-over-schools>

Reporting of [#trojanhorseaffair](#) is a case study into how the media is prepared to assist state sanctioned Islamophobia.

See more on this by [@WaqaTufail](#)

There were/are many who doubted the narrative of a “plot” or the “Islamisation” of schools under the guise of [#trojanhorseaffair](#). This is an example of how they were viewed by ‘journalists’, whilst being subject to “cancel-culture” by others.

Research [@cfmmuk](#) shows that from 2014 to 30 May 2017 there were 944 articles on “Trojan Horse and Birmingham.” Since [@educationgovuk](#) case collapsed there have been 135 mentions with no substantial exploration into why evidence was “deliberately withheld.”

bbc.co.uk/news/uk-englan

The co-author of a major investigation into the [#trojanhorseaffair](#) told [@cfmmuk](#) how basic questions such as how a school could actually be “taken over”, were not asked, whilst the community of Alum Rock, [#Birmingham](#) was pathologised.

<https://youtube.com/watch?v=UJRQEU>

Even when [@BBCRadio4](#) broadcast a 3 episode [#corrections](#) programme, it failed to put right “shocking falsehoods” in [#trojanhorseaffair](#). It was enough that someone made a claim about an alleged incident for it to be taken as a fact.

<https://middleeasteye.net/opinion/uk-bbc>

Framing operates as a shorthand. As [@cfmmuk](#) report on British Media's coverage of [#Muslims](#) showed, references to the [#trojanhorseaffair](#) function within media reports as an index for 'extremism' and 'religious intolerance'.
<https://cfmm.org.uk/wp-content/upl>

The media took the [#trojanhorseaffair](#) beyond [#Birmingham](#). In 2018, four right-wing British newspapers, were forced to pay damages to two [#Muslims](#) who they accused of enacting a "Trojan Horse" plot in a school in [#Oldham](#)
<https://pressgazette.co.uk/the-sun-pays-o>

So far reviews of the revelations by [@BriHReed](#) & [@HamzaMSyed](#) have mostly glossed over British Media falsehoods. A damning indictment of how narratives and tropes were perpetuated to feed a story of moral panic.

The [@MuslimCouncil](#) are right to call for an inquiry into this [#trojanhoax](#). The role of the British media and its willingness to accept and perpetuate the aims of anti-Muslim actors and officials should also be looked into. <https://twitter.com/MuslimCouncil/>

February 13, 2022

Salman Butt wrote a piece for Islam21c, of which he is Chief Editor, titled "MCB demands independent inquiry into Trojan Horse scandal after viral podcast series unearths devastating facts". He wrote:

A masterclass in the subtlety of British racism. A damning indictment of British journalism. An insight into the bigoted zealotry of a British secularism blind of its own religiosity.

These are some of the phrases knocking about my mind when listening to this grippingly viral series. Almost every Muslim knew that this entire saga was a racist witch-hunt based on a hoax, fuelled by millennium-old myths and stereotypes. However, this outstanding piece of investigating journalism has unearthed shocking revelations and taught us so much about the mechanics of the whole thing, packaged into a suspenseful, binge-worthy production.

It is a shame that it takes so long for some, but the truth always comes out. Everyone must listen to this series to understand and undo the global, culture-defining disaster that led to the destruction of education prospects of generations of under-privileged Muslim children in one English city,

all the way to fuelling global Islamophobia and racist attacks around the world.²⁰⁴

February 15, 2022

Striking academics at Goldsmiths University of London held a “teach-out activity”.²⁰⁵ This is when lecturers walk out from campus, but hold classes on subjects they wish to cover, to any audience that wishes to attend. Among the teaching materials is what is described as “A timeline of the denial of citizenship rights to Black and Asian British citizens in 20th Century”²⁰⁶ that included several events in the 21st century including Trojan Horse. The teaching material records:

2014 The Trojan Horse Affair in Birmingham places more than 20 schools under Islamophobic and racist attacks and surveillance, targeted by claims they were recruiting grounds for extremism, terrorism and erosion of ‘British values.’²⁰⁷

February 18, 2022

MEND stated: “As revealed in a recent *New York Times* podcast, the ‘Trojan Horse Affair’ heightened Islamophobia in the education sector and helped shape the Government’s counter-terrorism strategy, particularly through the introduction of the statutory PREVENT duty in 2015.”²⁰⁸

February–March 2022

Between February 17, 2022 and March 10, 2022, a University of Oxford lecturer in Contemporary Islamic Studies, Usaama al-Azami, held five sets of interviews and discussions on Trojan Horse via his YouTube channel, with the following headings:

- February 17 – “Moonrise at Daybreak: Islamophobic Literature in the Trojan Horse Affair”.²⁰⁹ In this video, Azami interviewed CAGE official Asim Qureshi – who he referred to as a “dear friend”. They discussed former Park View Academy teacher Stephen Packer’s “Islamophobic version of ‘Animal Farm’”.
- February 18 – “Tahir Alam: The Trojan Horse Affair after the NYT Serial Podcast”.²¹⁰ Al-Azami interviewed Tahir Alam about his “reflections on recent revelations”.
- February 25 – “The Curious Case of Park View Academy: Tahir Alam and the Trojan Horse Affair”.²¹¹ This was a discussion with Tahir Alam alongside lawyer and MCB official Talha Ahmad “about the legal case of the Park View Academy (Birmingham) and the UK government crackdown on Islam in British schools”. Talha Ahmad was Alam’s lawyer during the Trojan Horse affair. At the end of this interview, Alam said:

So, what is the really important message to take away from all of this? Of course, is that we should raise our children upon Islam unashamedly,

204. Shaheer Choudhury, “MCB demands independent inquiry into Trojan Horse scandal after viral podcast series unearths devastating facts”, *Islam21c*, February 13, 2022, <https://www.islam21c.com/news-views/mcb-demands-independent-inquiry-into-trojan-horse-scandal>.

205. This involves striking academics teaching to students, off campus, on a subject of their choosing. Often the subject matter relates either to the industrial dispute at hand, or another subject considered to be of pressing importance.

206. Dr Hannah Elias/@hannahelias, Twitter post, February 15, 2022, <https://twitter.com/hannahelias/status/1493618597868023815>.

207. *Ibid.* (see picture two of four: <https://twitter.com/hannahelias/status/1493618597868023815/photo/2>).

208. Muslim Engagement and Development, “Government Fails to Engage Adviser Appointed to Help Define Islamophobia”, February 18, 2022, <https://www.mend.org.uk/government-fails-to-engage-adviser-appointed-to-help-define-islamophobia/>

209. Usaama al-Azami, “1. Moonrise at Daybreak: Islamophobic Literature in the Trojan Horse Affair”, YouTube, February 17, 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OIVjv1rnM44&t=5s>.

210. Usaama al-Azami, “2. Tahir Alam: The Trojan Horse Affair after the NYT Serial Podcast”, YouTube, February 18, 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iAkETq9xTm4>.

211. Usaama al-Azami, “3. The Curious Case of Park View Academy: Tahir Alam and the Trojan Horse Affair”, YouTube, February 25, 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Buv6Qqyb4U>.

through our own institutions, whether they are mosques, within the home, environment and so on, and sending them to Islamic schools, establishing Muslim schools - and also I am not one to call for disengagement or anything. I think it is very important for Muslims also to go into the teaching profession, and to continue to participate as governors, to continue to participate - becoming directors, establishing educational institutions, and so on ...

- March 1 – “Trojan Horse Affair: A Review with Community Members and Academics (with spoilers)”.²¹² “Members of Birmingham’s Alum Rock community alongside academics from around Britain” held a discussion “reviewing the Trojan Horse Affair”.
- March 10 – “Language, Islamophobia, and the Trojan Horse Affair: A Conversations with Salman Al-Azami”.²¹³ In this video, Usaama Al-Azami interviewed his uncle, Salman Al-Azami, and discussed his recent publications on Islamophobia and the Trojan Horse Affair.

March 2, 2022

Mohammed Shafiq hosted a discussion with “guests Moazzam Begg, as he unravels his complicated journey in life to becoming a Cage outreach Director, former teacher Razwan Faraz discussing the scandal around Trojan Horse and lastly community activist & writer Dr Salman Butt speaking about taking a stance for Muslims”.²¹⁴

212. Usaama al-Azami, “4. Trojan Horse Affair: A Review with Community Members and Academics (with spoilers)”, YouTube, March 1, 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j-BEEFril4E>.

213. Usaama al-Azami, “5. Language, Islamophobia, and the Trojan Horse Affair: A Conversation with Salman Al-Azami”, YouTube, March 10, 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=57DA30019c>.

214. BritishMuslimTV, Facebook, February 28, 2022, <https://www.facebook.com/534371143336447/photos>

Fellow travellers: the far left follows suit

- Of all the relationships that Islamist organisations have nurtured in Western liberal democracies, it is perhaps that with sections of the far left which gives the best rate of return, for what can only be described as a minimal investment.²¹⁵ The revolutionary left in particular asks few if any hard questions of Islamist actors, whilst appearing happy to replicate arguments about “Islamophobia” in virtually every arena they are raised. *Socialist Worker*, the weekly newspaper of the Trotskyist Socialist Workers Party (SWP), insisted as far back as April 22, 2014, that concerns raised about Birmingham schools was “blatant racism”.²¹⁶ The SWP produced placards declaring “Gove is the real extremist” and “Say no to Islamophobia: Hands off Birmingham schools”. When disciplinary proceedings against five teachers collapsed, *Socialist Worker* proclaimed that Trojan Horse had “hit the rocks”.²¹⁷
- It was notable that discriminatory language towards women, homosexuals, and minorities, found for example in material such as the “Park View Brotherhood” WhatsApp group, and of a type which would normally be condemned by socialists, now appeared to be of no interest to the SWP. The militant atheists of the SWP and the fervently religious Islamists certainly make an odd couple – with little in common aside from their intense hostility to western democracies.
- Having declared the Trojan Horse affair dead in 2017, *Socialist Worker* needed little prompting once the NYT podcast was released to declare of the letter that

it was a fake—as a podcast series launched by the New York Times and Serial Production last week confirms in great detail. What’s more, it shows the Tories and education authorities knew this.²¹⁸

Here the SWP appeared to have raced ahead of themselves. The issue in Birmingham was less the letter, but what was going on in the schools. Those problems were not rebutted by Hamza Syed or Brian Reed. Secondly, as Hamza Syed acknowledged in one post broadcast interview, in failing to prove who wrote the letter, the investigation effectively petered out. “I felt like a failure,” admitted Syed, “I still feel a failure, I’m still very disappointed with where we took this podcast. But that’s OK.”²¹⁹

- *Socialist Worker* linked to the podcast, encouraged readers to listen to it in full, and argued that the Trojan Horse affair had led to racist attacks, saying “they wanted that to happen to divert attention from austerity and divide people who should have united against the Tories and imperialism”.²²⁰ No mention was made of Tahir Alam, despite him being a central figure in both the original controversy and the podcast. That the “Park View Brotherhood” potentially had an agenda other than uniting the working class, was ignored.

215. For an overview of this engagement, see John Jenkins, “Islamism and the Left”, Policy Exchange, July 23, 2021, <https://policyexchange.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Islamism-and-the-Left.pdf>.

216. Sadie Robinson, “Panic over ‘Islamists’ in Birmingham schools is blatant racism”, *Socialist Worker*, April 22, 2014, <https://socialistworker.co.uk/news/panic-over-islamists-in-birmingham-schools-is-blatant-racism/>.

217. *Socialist Worker*, “The racist ‘Trojan Horse’ lie hits the rocks after case is thrown out”, June 6, 2017, <https://socialistworker.co.uk/background-check/the-racist-trojan-horse-lie-hits-the-rocks-after-case-is-thrown-out/>.

218. Charlie Kimber, “How Michael Gove spread the racist ‘Trojan Horse’ conspiracy”, *Socialist Worker*, February 7, 2022, <https://socialistworker.co.uk/comment/how-michael-gove-spread-the-racist-trojan-horse-conspiracy/>.

219. Aymann Ismail, “Trojan Horse Affair podcast: Host Hamza Syed explains the Serial show’s controversial ending”, Slate, March 9, 2022, <https://slate.com/culture/2022/03/trojan-horse-affair-podcast-hamza-syed-interview-serial.html>.

220. Charlie Kimber, “How Michael Gove spread the racist ‘Trojan Horse’ conspiracy”, *Socialist Worker*, February 7, 2022.

Chapter 3: Chronology 3: teachers and legal action

2014

April 28, 2014

Labour Perry Barr MP Khalid Mahmood called on council leader Sir Albert Bore and Secretary of State for Education, Michael Gove, to release former teachers from gagging clauses. Mahmood said dozens of former heads and other senior staff, who alleged they were forced out of their posts as part of a takeover plot by “hardline Muslims” in Birmingham, were made to sign compromise agreements which prevented them speaking publicly about their concerns.²²¹

June 13, 2014

Chris Cook, BBC *Newsnight*'s Policy Editor, found teachers working at the schools harbouring concerns about extremism, and were able to give examples of worrying incidents. The BBC “encountered local people who feared to speak out in favour of reform in the schools”. Cook also stated that “Some people in the area are enraged”, and he described a meeting attended by 120 people, where “there was a lot of understandable concern about the conflation of Islam, extremism and terrorism”. It was chaired by a local National Union of Teachers and Socialist Workers Party organiser. “Neither organisation”, Cook wrote, “has a reputation for conciliation”.

Cook added that

Many Muslims are alarmed at the idea that hardline conservative Islam might be seen as a step from extremism.

Furthermore:

[T]here were hints that some members of staff have attitudes that might not be reconcilable to life within a secular state primary school. A male teacher at Oldknow told the meeting on Wednesday that an inspector from the DfE made him feel his personal integrity had been impugned. Why? She, a woman, had sought to shake his hand. He refused on account of her gender. And the audience reaction was not unsympathetic.²²²

The new Secretary of State for Education, Nicky Morgan,

221. BBC News, “‘Trojan Horse’: MP appeals for gagging clauses release”, April 28, 2014, <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-birmingham-27189222>.

222. Chris Cook, “‘Trojan Horse’: Reasons to be pessimistic”, BBC News, June 13, 2014, <https://www.bbc.com/news/education-27822273>.

July 22, 2014

presented the findings of the Clarke report and said that teachers involved in allowing extremism in Birmingham schools will face misconduct hearings.²²³

July 26, 2014

Monzoor Hussain, the acting head of Park View School, and Razwan Faraz, the deputy head at Nansen Primary School, were suspended from their jobs by the new board of trustees at Park View Educational Trust.²²⁴ The DfE said:

The National College for Teaching and Leadership will also take the extensive evidence provided by Mr Clarke so its misconduct panel can consider whether any teachers involved should be barred from the profession.

2015

January 29, 2015

Nicky Morgan made an announcement to Parliament on progress in implementing Clarke report recommendations. She said:

I can confirm that the National College for Teaching and Leadership is investigating a number of teachers and that officials are considering formal action against other individuals involved ... [A]ll cases will be judged against the strengthened advice that I have issued to the NCTL.²²⁵

July, 2015

“The Government’s Response to the Education Select Committee Report: Extremism in schools: the Trojan Horse affair” stated:

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.²²⁶

October 16, 2015

Former Park View staff member Susan Packer told an NCTL misconduct panel regarding teachers Inamulhaq Anwar and Akeel Ahmed that pupils were handed leaflets saying Muslim women must obey men.²²⁷ Packer also outlined

223. “Oral statement by Nicky Morgan on the ‘Trojan Horse’ letter”, UK Government website, July 22, 2014, <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/oral-statement-by-nicky-morgan-on-the-trojan-horse-letter>

224. Jeanette Oldham, “Trojan Horse: Park View School headteacher suspended”, *The Birmingham Mail*, July 26, 2014, <https://www.birminghammail.co.uk/news/midlands-news/trojan-horse-park-view-headteacher-7510122>.

225. “Implementation of recommendations from ‘Report into allegations concerning Birmingham schools ...’”, DEP2015-0126, House of Commons, January 29, 2015, <https://depositedpapers.parliament.uk/depositedpaper/2275513/files>.

226. “Government Response to the Education Select Committee Report in schools: the Trojan Horse affair”, Cm 9094, July 2015, para 11. p.3. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/438887/50288_Trojan_Horse_affair_Accessible_v3.pdf.

227. BBC News, “‘Trojan Horse’ Park View pupils ‘told wives must obey men’”, October 16, 2015, <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-birmingham-34548617>.

various religious practices imposed on the school – a non-faith school – such as loudspeaker broadcasts of the call-to-prayer; segregation in assemblies; a ban on pupils attending a disco on a trip to France; and the cancellation of sports events because male teachers or coaches would be present. Packer raised her concerns with then headteacher Lindsey Clark, who was “very dismissive”. Packer resigned from the school in October 2013 after an Islamophobia complaint was made against her. Anwar and Ahmed denied unacceptable conduct.

October 19, 2015

The National College for Teaching and Leadership (NCTL) began a misconduct hearing regarding allegations of professional misconduct involving teachers in Birmingham schools.²²⁸ They all faced a common allegation that they agreed to the inclusion of “an undue amount of religious influence in the education of the pupils” at Park View and its sister schools. Facing allegations were:

- Monzoor “Moz” Hussain, former Park View School headteacher. He allegedly put pupils in “stress positions” as punishments. Pupils had to “stand in the rain” or “stare at bushes”.
- Lindsey Clark, executive headteacher at Park View. She accepted “in part” one fact of the case levelled against her - that some pupils were placed in detention and they had to look out towards bushes, but she did not accept it was unusual or excessive punishment.
- Hardeep Saini, former headteacher of sister school Golden Hillock. He allegedly advised a teacher, who was under a police caution for having “extreme pornography” on his mobile phone, to throw it in the canal. He was also accused of not taking action when another teacher is said to have claimed that “We have the true religion.”
- Razwan Faraz, former deputy headteacher of Nansen Primary. He allegedly used the word “kuffars” in reference to non-Muslims “in a derogatory manner”; told Park View pupils that people in Guantanamo Bay were innocent; and submitted a dishonest statement when he denied knowledge of a WhatsApp social media group, the “Park View Brotherhood”.
- Arshad Hussain, an assistant headteacher at Park View.

October 20, 2015

The NCTL panel dealing with the cases of Lindsey Clark, Hardeep Saini, Razwan Faraz and Arshad Hussain said that a pupil could give evidence in private, and other witnesses were granted anonymity. The chairman said the ruling came after two witnesses had previously felt “intimidation” and were concerned it may happen again.²²⁹

At a separate hearing in Solihull, former Park View teacher Inamulhaq Anwar was alleged “to have agreed with others, on or before March 31, 2014, to the inclusion of an undue amount of religious influence in pupils’ education”. Anwar admitted to being part of the “Park View Brotherhood” WhatsApp group.²³⁰ The group, many

228. BBC News, “‘Trojan Horse’ pupils had to ‘stare at bushes as punishment’”, October 19, 2015, <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-birmingham-34574330>.

229. BBC News, “‘Trojan Horse’ witnesses can give evidence anonymously”, October 20, 2015, <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-birmingham-34584596>.

230. *Ibid.*

of whom were Park View teachers, discussed conspiracy theories, and the members were “anti-Israeli, anti-British Army and homophobic”. The comments included a discussion about the Boston bombing being organised by the CIA and the necessity for teachers to be “vigilant” in light of the Gay Marriage Act. In other discussions, homosexuals were described as “animals” and “satanic”.

October 22, 2015

The NCTL panel dealing with the cases of Lindsey Clark, Hardeep Saini, Razwan Faraz, and Arshad Hussain heard that Islamic assemblies were held without consultation with the headteacher or parents at Nansen Primary School.²³¹ It was claimed that on one occasion, Faraz, former deputy headteacher of the school, had girls sitting at the back and boys at the front.

The NCTL hearing heard from former staff member, Hilary Thompson, who resigned in May 2013 because of “ongoing exclusion, isolation, lies and bullying”.

A senior teacher at Park View, known as “Witness A”, told the hearing she was aware of flyers being distributed saying things such as women should obey their husbands in marriage. She said prefects were acting as monitors and reporting back to some teachers when boys and girls were getting too close. Where dating was evident, some children were segregated and kept in silence. In her witness statement, she said she heard both pupils and staff use antisemitic language. She said it went on unchallenged and “racist and homophobic comments were an on-going problem” at Park View.

October 23, 2015

The BBC reported that eleven misconduct cases were underway under the auspices of the NCTL. One had been dismissed and no decisions had been made on the remaining ten.²³²

Andrew Colman, who represented the NCTL, said this was “not about an evil plot to indoctrinate young children in extremist ideology or anything like it”. He added:

We say the education of children in a number of schools in Birmingham was led at the instigation of a group of like-minded individuals who shared deeply held religious beliefs, sincerely held. We don't suggest they were malicious or ill-willed but it looked as though they believed the best way to educate the children of their community was to make them mirror their own image of what a good Muslim was.

But what was suggested was that “improper pressure” was put upon “unsympathetic” staff that they wanted to remove, that there was segregation of boys and girls, and an over-emphasis on religion and a lack of tolerance towards other beliefs. A former assistant head gave evidence that she had been isolated and excluded by the changing culture of her school. It was also claimed that jobs were being “passed around” between friends.

231. BBC News, “Islamic assemblies’ held at ‘Trojan Horse’ school ‘without consultation’”, October 22, 2015, <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-birmingham-34604281>.

232. Sean Coughlan, “What lessons from Trojan Horse case?”, BBC News, October 23, 2015, <https://www.bbc.com/news/education-34606169>.

Representatives of the teachers said the claims against them were over-simplified and lacking in context. Some of the evidence had been given anonymously and there was a gulf in interpretation.

November 12, 2015

Former acting head Jahangir Akbar gave evidence to a tribunal panel over allegations of professional misconduct, and claimed that key witnesses had fabricated allegations against him because he is a Muslim.²³³

December 21, 2015

The *Birmingham Post* reported that 13 teachers from four Birmingham schools linked to Trojan Horse - Park View Academy, Oldknow, Nansen Primary and Golden Hillock were in the process of facing “allegations of agreeing to the inclusion of an undue amount of religious influence on pupils’ education.”²³⁴

2016

February 19, 2016

Inamulhaq Anwar and Akeel Ahmed were banned from the classroom for life.²³⁵ They had denied stepping up religious influence in education at Park View, but the panel said it had heard “credible” evidence from a staff member who described their roles as that of “generals” in ensuring pupils were “fed a diet of Islam”. The panel found their conduct tended to undermine tolerance and respect for the faith and belief of others. Anwar was also found to have breached proper recruitment procedures at Park View’s sister school Nansen Primary. The NCTL said Anwar would serve an indefinite ban for a minimum period of six years; and Ahmed would serve a ban with a three-year minimum term. They had 28 days to appeal against their bans to the High Court.

February 26, 2016

A tribunal panel found Wakass Haruf, who taught maths at Golden Hillock Academy, guilty of professional misconduct but could continue to teach.²³⁶ Allegations that he told pupils “we have the true religion, not like those ignorant Christians and ignorant Jews” were proven, but other allegations against him were not proven.²³⁷ The NCTL panel was told the comments were made at a prayer meeting at the school in July 2013. He was also accused of discussing the promotion of Islam in the school over an exchange of messages with other teachers in a WhatsApp group, although he was not actively involved in influencing the religious education of pupils.

October 13, 2016

Lifetime teaching bans for two Park View staff members - Inamulhaq Anwar and Akeel Ahmed - were quashed after an appeal was brought against the Secretary of State for Education and the NCTL. A High Court judge voiced “considerable doubt” about the fairness of the NCTL hearing, and allowed the appeal because of the failure of both the NCTL and the hearing’s independent three-member panel to disclose or order disclosure of key evidence to the men’s lawyers. The judge also accused the teachers’ standards watchdog of “serious procedural

233. Emma McKinney, “Former Oldknow Academy teacher accuses witnesses of making up allegations because he is a Muslim”, *The Birmingham Mail*, November 12, 2015, <https://www.birminghammail.co.uk/news/midlands-news/former-oldknow-academy-teacher-accuses-10435677>.

234. Emma McKinney, “Headteacher in Trojan Horse claims says four of her staff were part of a conspiracy”, *The Birmingham Post*, December 21, 2015, <https://www.birminghammail.co.uk/news/midlands-news/headteacher-trojan-horse-claims-says-10630402>.

235. BBC News, “Trojan Horse scandal: Teachers banned indefinitely”, February 19, 2016, <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-birmingham-35615798>

236. National College for Teaching & Leadership, “Mr Wakass Haruf: Professional conduct panel outcome”, February 2016, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/503451/Web_Decision_-_Haruf_Wakass.pdf.

237. BBC News, “Teacher at ‘Trojan Horse’ Birmingham school spared ban”, February 26, 2016, <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-birmingham-35666546>.

irregularity”.²³⁸

November 27, 2016 The *Sunday Times* reported that Tahir Alam and Razwan Faraz, despite their bans, were back in schools.²³⁹ Alam was teaching children in informal classes at the Khidmat Centre, a community centre in Sparkbrook, Birmingham. Razwan Faraz was found to be running informal classes in a different city and under a different name. Alam’s permanent ban and Faraz’s interim ban did not apply to informal schools not registered with the Department for Education.

December 16, 2016 Jahangir Akbar was banned from teaching indefinitely in any school, sixth form college, relevant youth accommodation or children’s home in England after a professional conduct panel determined that he “breached the personal and professional conduct elements of the Teachers’ Standards”.²⁴⁰ The panel remarked:

By decreasing the diversity of religious education and eliminating a diverse range of cultural events, there was a failure to promote the spiritual, moral, cultural and mental development of pupils at the school. Preparation of pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life requires pupils to have an understanding of other cultures and religions.²⁴¹

The panel also said, “although the panel has found that Mr Akbar agreed to the inclusion of an undue amount of religious influence, the panel has not made a finding that Mr Akbar was promoting religious extremism”. He was informed that he can only resume teaching if he successfully applies to have the prohibition order removed; he can apply five years from the date of the prohibition.

December 20, 2016 Lawyers for Monzoor Hussain, Lindsey Clark, Hardeep Saini, Razwan Faraz, and Arshad Hussain applied for full disclosure of the witness testimonies given to Peter Clarke during his DfE-commissioned inquiry.²⁴² Clarke’s witnesses were sent emails or letters shortly afterwards in December, informing them that their identities and the full transcripts of their private evidence would be released to Monzoor Hussain, Clark, Saini, Faraz and Arshad Hussain on January 3, 2017 and made public.

2017

January 1, 2017 The *Sunday Times* reported the requests from the lawyers of the five teachers at the centre of the misconduct trial for the testimonies of Clarke’s witnesses.²⁴³ Clarke took evidence from dozens of people, including serving staff and governors at the schools. Almost all the Muslim witnesses requested, and were granted, anonymity. On the decision to release the names and evidence, Clarke said:

I have been contacted by several people who

238. TES, “Teaching bans for two ‘Trojan Horse’ school staff quashed on appeal, October 13, 2016, <https://www.tes.com/magazine/archive/teaching-bans-two-trojan-horse-school-staff-quashed-appeal>.

239. Andrew Gilligan and Sian Griffiths, “Trojan Horse’ plotters dodge teaching ban”, *The Times*, November 27, 2016, <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/trojan-horse-plotters-dodge-teaching-ban-lwkrqc3bd>.

240. National College for Teaching & Leadership, “Mr Jahangir Akbar: Professional conduct panel outcome, December 2015”, p.36. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/489313/Web_Decision_-_Mr_Jahangir_Akbar.pdf.

241. *Ibid.*, p26.

242. Andrew Gilligan, “Trojan Horse school witnesses fear for safety as names released”, *The Sunday Times*, January 1, 2017, <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/ac905d5a-cfa8-11e6-ad0d-c147166a63d6>.

243. *Ibid.*

spoke to me. I am appalled that promises of confidentiality — made in good faith with the full knowledge of government lawyers — are seemingly now to be cast aside. Why would anyone come forward in similar circumstances in future if their trust is to be betrayed in this way?

January 4, 2017

The Government was urged to ensure witnesses in the tribunals for Lindsey Clark, Razwan Faraz, Arshad Hussain, Monzoor Hussain, and Hardeep Saini remain anonymous.²⁴⁴ The BBC reported that Rob Kelsall, from the NAHT, said the union was contacted by nine witnesses who gave statements to the DfE-commissioned inquiry by Peter Clarke. All received letters in December 2016 from lawyers acting for the DfE. The letters said that full transcripts of their evidence - including their names - would be disclosed to both the teachers accused of professional misconduct and their lawyers on 3 January. Birmingham City Council said it was alarmed by the decision. Kelsall said the NAHT had managed to prevent the publication of the nine witnesses' names by making legal representations to the DfE's lawyers. The five teachers argued that their lawyers needed to be able to question individuals who have given evidence against them.

One anonymous witness told the BBC:

Although I'm anonymous, it's clear some people involved know I was a witness, but I'm really worried if it's published widely that myself and my family would become targets for extremists.²⁴⁵

March 23, 2017

Tahir Alam appealed at a tribunal hearing after the DfE barred him from being involved in the management of schools in September 2015, and said he would not describe himself as an "extremist".²⁴⁶ Alam said he was a Muslim who believed in "democratic values", and he held "generally" mainstream political views.

Martin Chamberlain QC, representing Education Secretary Justine Greening, said that Alam, plus Park View School and the managing trust, were "at the centre" of what happened in the Trojan Horse affair. Chamberlain said inspectors had reported school staff being intimidated and suggested there had been a "climate of fear", but Alam told the tribunal he "never received any complaint along those lines" and he had not intimidated or bullied anyone.

244. BBC News, "'Trojan Horse': Plea to ensure witness anonymity", January 4, 2017, <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-birmingham-38507968>.

245. *Ibid.*

246. BBC News, "Ex-governor in 'Trojan Horse' row 'not extremist'", March 23, 2017, <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-birmingham-39372268>.

247. Olivia Rudgard, "'Trojan Horse' case against five Birmingham teachers thrown out by tribunal", *The Telegraph*, May 30, 2017, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/05/30/trojan-horse-case-against-five-birmingham-teachers-thrown-tribunal/>; Richard Adams, "Five teachers accused in Trojan horse affair free to return to classroom", *The Guardian*, May 30, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2017/may/30/trojan-horse-tribunal-five-birmingham-teachers-islam>.

May 30, 2017

The disciplinary hearings against Lindsey Clark, Razwan Faraz, Arshad Hussain, Monzoor Hussain, and Hardeep Saini – five former senior teachers at Park View Educational Trust – were thrown out by the NCTL panel after the DfE's lawyers failed to disclose evidence.²⁴⁷ Lawyers for Hussain and Saini led an application to dismiss the claim. Barrister Andrew Faux claimed that "late disclosure" of evidence had led to a "failure to ensure that all relevant material was disclosed to the defence". He said that lawyers for the NCTL failed to obtain material, including witness statements from teachers and staff – from "their ultimate

client”, the DfE.

June 17, 2017

The NCTL published its formal decision and reasons on behalf of the Secretary of State for Education.²⁴⁸

July 28, 2017

The Government surrendered its attempt to ban teachers caught up in the Trojan Horse affair, after disciplinary action was dropped against those in the remaining cases – Saqib Malik, Shakeel Aktar, Muhammad Umar Khan and Mazhar Hussain.²⁴⁹ Fifteen teachers and senior staff were accused of attempting to apply undue religious influence within a small group of schools in Birmingham, but letters from the NCTL – an arm of the DfE – to lawyers for the remaining teachers involved were told that proceedings had been discontinued.

Andrew Faux, defence lawyer for several of the teachers before the NCTL, said:

The striking thing about the Park View cases was just how crude the prosecution was. It was left to the defence team to introduce basic documents setting out the law and guidance on collective worship and other educational matters. Witness after witness called on behalf of the department confirmed that they were not aware of the guidance and it had not informed their approach to the central question: were the schools too religious?

Whether or not the schools were “too religious” was the basis on which the DfE chose to pursue disciplinary action, but this was not the remit of Kershaw or Clarke’s investigations.

Despite initial claims that as many as 100 teachers or teaching assistants could be barred as a result of Trojan Horse, only 15 faced disciplinary charges in the hearings that began in 2015. The Government’s sole success was against Jahangir Akbar, the former acting head of Oldknow school, who received a five-year ban. But the ruling in Akbar’s hearing also cleared him of promoting religious extremism and several other allegations, including accusations of segregating pupils by gender.

December 6, 2017

Tahir Alam lost an appeal to have his ban from working in the management of schools overturned.²⁵⁰ A three-strong care standards tribunal panel had reserved a ruling after analysing the evidence. The panel did not make its decision or detailed ruling publicly available.

Alam complained that the investigators had a “preconceived agenda” and reached “unfair or inaccurate” conclusions, that he had been “made a scapegoat”, and that investigation reports had not “accurately reflected” reality. He also denied holding “intolerant or narrow” views.

248. National College for Teaching and Leadership, “Mr Monzoor Hussain, Mr Hardeep Saini, Mr Arshad Hussain, Mr Razwan Faraz, Ms Lindsey Clark: Professional conduct panel outcome Panel decision and reasons on behalf of the Secretary of State for Education in respect of applications for the proceedings to be discontinued”, May 2017. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/619386/PVL_Panel_decision_and_reasons_for_web.pdf.

249. Richard Adams, “Trojan Horse affair: remaining disciplinary proceedings dropped”, *The Guardian*, July 28, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2017/jul/28/trojan-horse-affair-remaining-disciplinary-proceedings-dropped-teachers-birmingham-schools>.

250. Tony Lerner, “Ex-governor of alleged Trojan Horse school loses bid to overturn ban”, *The Birmingham Mail*, December 6, 2017, <https://www.birminghammail.co.uk/news/midlands-news/ex-governor-alleged-trojan-horse-14002965>.

2018

August 17, 2018

The BBC reported that misconduct hearings against teachers accused in the Trojan Horse inquiry cost £884,055. The case against Tahir Alam cost £387,444 in legal fees. The BBC fought a Freedom of Information battle to reveal the costs, which succeeded when the independent data watchdog, the Information Commissioner's Office, ordered the DfE to release the information.

The teachers' hearings were dropped when the professional conduct panel of the NCTL found its own organisation withheld 25 statements that had been used in an earlier inquiry led by Peter Clarke. The NCTL has since been replaced by the Teaching Regulation Agency. The only teacher who was sanctioned – out of 14 against whom the DfE pursued hearings – was the former acting headteacher of Oldknow Academy, Jahangir Akbar. Sarah Hewitt-Clarkson, headteacher of Anderton Park Primary School in Sparkhill, said some of the legacy of the inquiry was healthy in prompting schools to teach more about the equality of the sexes, British values and law.²⁵¹

251. Alex Homer, "'Trojan Horse' hearings against teachers and governor cost £1.27m", BBC News, August 17, 2018, <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-birmingham-45060721>.

Chapter 4: Tahir Alam and the Park View Brothers

Tahir Alam

Alam's Organisational Roles

Tahir Alam was the chair of governors and a listed director of the Park View Educational Trust, which operated three of the six “Trojan Horse” schools — Park View, Golden Hillock and Nansen. His extensive involvement in education and activism, including with the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB), is detailed below:

The MCB:

- Assistant Secretary General, 2006-2008²⁵²
- Advisor (alongside senior figures such as Judge Khurshid Drabu and Sir Iqbal Sacranie), 2008-2009,²⁵³ 2009-10²⁵⁴
- Central Working Committee member, 2004-2006,²⁵⁵ 2006-2008,²⁵⁶ 2009-2010²⁵⁷
- National Council member, 2012-2014,²⁵⁸ 2018-2020 (representing the Muslim Parents Association)²⁵⁹
- Trainer for MCB's Leadership Development Programme (LDP), 2008²⁶⁰
- Chair of MCB's Education Committee (in 2004 called “Education, Training & Employment Committee”), 2004-2008,²⁶¹ 2010-2011²⁶²
- Co-author, “Meeting the Needs of Muslim Pupils in State Schools”, 2007²⁶³

The Association of Muslim Schools UK:

- Deputy Chair, Executive Committee/Shura Council, 2006-2007²⁶⁴
- Member, Executive Committee/Shura Council, 2007-2008,²⁶⁵ 2008-2009,²⁶⁶ 2009-2010,²⁶⁷ 2010-2011,²⁶⁸ and 2012-2013²⁶⁹
- Chair of School Services Committee, Executive Committee/Shura Council, 2011-2012²⁷⁰
- Listed Director, October 2003-July 2014²⁷¹

252. “Central Working Committee 2006-2008”, MCB website, captured on April 10, 2008 at: <https://web.archive.org/web/20080410142751/http://www.mcb.org.uk/committee/21.php>; Muslim Council of Britain, “Marking a Decade of Community Development”, Annual Report 2007-2008, p.33, http://archive.mcb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/Annual-Report_2007-2008.pdf.
253. Muslim Council of Britain, “Seeking Renewal in the Community”, Annual Report 2008-2009, p.42, captured on January 23, 2013 at: https://web.archive.org/web/20130123164821/http://www.mcb.org.uk/uploads/AGM_Report%202008_2009.pdf.
254. Muslim Council of Britain, “Contributing towards a just and cohesive society”, Annual Report 2009-2010, p.48, http://archive.mcb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/Annual-Report_2009-2010.pdf.
255. “Central Working Committee 2004-06”, MCB website, captured on June 20, 2006 at: <https://web.archive.org/web/20060620091624/http://www.mcb.org.uk/committee/21.php>;
256. “Central Working Committee 2006-2008”, MCB website, captured on April 10, 2008.
257. Muslim Council of Britain, “Contributing towards a just and cohesive society”, Annual Report 2009-2010, p.45.
258. “Advisors, Office Bearers, National Council Members, Board of Counsellors”, MCB website, captured on February 28, 2013, https://web.archive.org/web/20130228061102/http://www.mcb.org.uk/comm_details.php?heading_id=105&com_id=1.
259. Muslim Council of Britain, Annual Report 2019-2020, p.26, <https://mcb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Annual-Report-2019-2020.pdf>.
260. Muslim Council of Britain, “Marking a Decade of Community Development”, Annual Report 2007-2008, p.17.
261. Muslim Council of Britain, Weekly E-Newsletter, April 30, 2004, p.4, <http://archive.mcb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/issue51.pdf>; “Education”, MCB website, captured on February 10, 2006 at: https://web.archive.org/web/20060210044134/http://www.mcb.org.uk/chomepage.php?com_id=12; “Education”, MCB website, captured on August 9, 2007 at: https://web.archive.org/web/20070809041537/http://www.mcb.org.uk/chomepage.php?com_id=12; “Education”, MCB website, captured on April 10, 2008 at: https://web.archive.org/web/20080410065901/http://www.mcb.org.uk/chomepage.php?com_id=12; Muslim Council of Britain, “Marking a Decade of Community Development”, Annual Report 2007-2008, p.16.
262. Muslim Council of Britain, “Working to build our shared future”, Annual Report 2010-2011, pp.25, 49, http://archive.mcb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/Annual-Report_2010-2011.pdf.
263. MCB, “Meeting the Needs of Muslim Pupils in State Schools: Information and Guidance for Schools”, 2007. Available at <http://image.guardian.co.uk/sys-files/Education/documents/2007/02/20/Schoolinfoguidance.pdf>.
264. “AMSUK Shura Council 2006-2007”, AMS-UK website, captured on March 12, 2007, https://web.archive.org/web/20070312201859/www.ams-uk.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=122&Itemid=252.
265. “AMSUK Shura Council 2007-2008”, AMS-UK website, captured on December 12, 2007, https://web.archive.org/web/20071212010517/http://www.ams-uk.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=10&Itemid=26.
266. “The Association of Muslim Schools’ Chairman’s Report, Annual General Meeting”, June 2009, p.3, captured on October 8, 2010, at: <https://web.archive.org/web/20101008162654/http://ams-uk.org/general/Chairman's%20report%202009.pdf>.
267. “Annual Report, Annual General Meeting”, July 17, 2010, p.3, captured on June 13, 2013, at: <https://web.archive.org/web/20130613012430/http://ams-uk.org/general/AMS%20UK%20Annual%20Report%202009-10.pdf>.
268. “19th Annual General Meeting Summary”, AMS-UK website, <http://ams-uk.org/19th-annual-general-meeting-summary/> (broken link).
269. “AMS UK Annual Report”, AMS-UK website, 2013, p.4, <http://ams-uk.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/AGM-Report-2013.pdf> (broken link).
270. “AMS UK Annual Report, Annual General Meeting”, July 14, 2012, p.5, captured on July 22, 2013 at: <https://web.archive.org/web/20130722060451/http://ams-uk.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/AGM-Report-2012.pdf>.
271. “Tahir Mahmood ALAM”, Companies House, undated, <https://beta.companieshouse.gov.uk/officers/yYxOHikVn-7Zz7AZz4ldWXdShw/appointments>.

272. Tahir Alam v Secretary of State for Education [2015] 2553, June 6, 2017, para.89., p.18. Available at: <https://humanists.uk/wp-content/uploads/Decision-6-June-2017-2015-2553.INS.pdf>.
273. "BIRMINGHAM MOSQUE TRUST LIMITED (THE)", Company number 00961846, Companies House, undated, <https://find-and-update.company-information.service.gov.uk/company/00961846/officers>.
274. "Preventing violent extremism", Sixth Report of Session 2009–10, HC 65, Communities and Local Government Committee, House of Commons, March 2010, p.69., <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmselect/cmcomloc/65/65.pdf>; Alam v Secretary of State for Education [2015] 2553, para.87, p.18.
275. Tahir Alam v Secretary of State for Education [2015] 2553, June 6, 2017, para.87., pp.17-18. Available at: <https://humanists.uk/wp-content/uploads/Decision-6-June-2017-2015-2553.INS.pdf>
276. "BORDESLEY BIRMINGHAM TRUST LTD", Company number 07740767, Companies House, undated, <https://find-and-update.company-information.service.gov.uk/company/07740767/officers>.
277. "Governors", Highfield School website, web page captured on September 7, 2011 at <https://web.archive.org/web/20110907023613/http://web.hifield.bham.sch.uk/page/?title=Governors&pid=6>; Alam v Secretary of State for Education [2015] 2553, para.89, p.18.
278. Clarke Report, fig.2., p.51.
279. "Preventing violent extremism", Sixth Report of Session 2009–10, HC 65, p.69; Alam v Secretary of State for Education [2015] 2553, para.87, p.18; AMG, "School Governors Matter – Education Seminars: London, Leics.", The Revival, January 26, 2007, <http://www.therevival.co.uk/forum/eventsannouncements/2190>.
280. Alam v Secretary of State for Education [2015] 2553, para.87, p.18; Andrew Gilligan, "Islamic school stand-off", *The Telegraph*, May 25, 2014, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/education-news/10854546/Islamic-school-stand-off.html>.
281. Richard Kerbaj and Sian Griffiths, "Trojan Horse kingpin led fundamentalists", *The Sunday Times*, June 1, 2014, <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/trojan-horse-kingpin-led-fundamentalists-hd-mqdp26ql>. According to the report, a "prominent Islamic scholar who had been involved in the group and who requested anonymity" said that HISAM "embraced a literalist, puritanical version of Islam" and did not believe that minority Islamic sects such as the Shi'ites could be considered as true Muslims. HISAM, said the source, "was very sectarian in its approach". The source said that HISAM was "very strict on the segregation and... believed that everything has to be Islamised". According to the source, "The group stood for establishing an Islamic state and Islamic rule and bringing about the caliphate [Islamic state]".
282. "The Project Team", ICE Project website, undated, <https://theiceproject.com/the-project-team/>.
283. "Tahir Mahmood ALAM", Companies House.
284. Alam v Secretary of State for Education [2015] 2553, para.89, p.18.
285. *Ibid.*, para.87., p.17.
286. Sean Coughlan, 'Trojan Horse' school governor is Ofsted inspector, BBC News, June 2, 2014, <https://www.bbc.com/news/education-27664948>. See also "List of additional inspectors completing inspections on behalf of Tribal", Tribal Inspections website, January 2013, p.2; document captured on November 8, 2013, <https://web.archive.org/web/20131108022451/https://www.tribalinspections.co.uk/PublicDocs/PenPortraits.pdf>; and "List of additional inspectors completing inspections on behalf of CfBT", CfBT website, October 2013, p.1; document captured on June 11, 2014, https://web.archive.org/web/20140611070336/http://www.cfbt-inspections.com/media/71384/mini_cv_template_-_maint_ind_and_cc_for_website_161013.pdf.
287. "Tahir Mahmood ALAM", Companies House.
288. Alam v Secretary of State for Education [2015] 2553, para.89, p.18.
289. *Ibid.*

Other roles:

- Adderley Primary School – Authority Governor, 2007-2009²⁷²
- Birmingham Central Mosque – Director, appointed October 2020²⁷³
- Birmingham City Council – former School Governance Consultant Trainer²⁷⁴
- Birmingham Governors Network – former Member of the Executive²⁷⁵
- Bordesley Birmingham Trust – Director, August 2011-January 2016²⁷⁶
- Highfield Junior and Infant School – former Governor, 2009-14²⁷⁷
- Al-Hijrah School – Clerk, July 2012-May 2013²⁷⁸
- Al-Hijrah Training Academy – former Director of Training²⁷⁹
- Al-Hijrah Trust – former Director²⁸⁰
- HISAM, Harakat Islah Shabaab Al Muslim (Movement to Reform Muslim Youth) - leader late 1980s-1995²⁸¹
- Islam and Citizenship Education - Member of Board of Advisors (representing the MCB)²⁸²
- Muslim Parents' Association - (Founding) Director of two organisations of the same name, appointed in September 2011 in one, and in February 2015 in the other. Both companies are now dissolved²⁸³
- Nansen Primary School (a Park View Academy) – former Governor (2011-2014)²⁸⁴
- National Governors Council – former Member of the Executive²⁸⁵
- Ofsted – Inspector, from 2010 to as late as 2013²⁸⁶
- Park View Educational Trust (now renamed Core Education Trust) - Director and Chair of Board of Trustees, February 2012-July 2014 (Director)²⁸⁷
- Park View School, Birmingham: Academy of Mathematics and Science - Chair of Governors; Academy Governor from April 2012; Governor from January 1997-July 2014²⁸⁸
- Washwood Heath Academy - appointed to IEB in 2002; Governor (2002-2014)²⁸⁹

Excerpts from Clarke report on Alam's involvement in Trojan Horse

- Staff report that the former chair of the Park View Educational Trust, Tahir Alam, manipulated appointments largely by influence, rather than attending interviews, and that he dominated all decisions. (para.4.2, p.34)
- [At Nansen Primary School:] Efforts were made to arrange for whole school activities and wider experiences but these were reported to have been regularly challenged by Tahir Alam and

the chair of the governing body, who both tried to force the cancellation of events.

Staff expressed concern about the curriculum, its lack of breadth and balance, and the Islamic direction it was taking. They did not think that the imposed secondary model, with subject-only specialist teaching, was appropriate in the primary setting. Parents were reportedly unhappy with these changes. (para.4.12, p.36)

- A former headteacher told me that the governing body asserted that assemblies should be ‘much more Islamic’. He therefore recruited someone from a nearby Islamic organisation, who gave inclusive assemblies with an Islamic focus. His decision was overruled by the governing body and, instead, Tahir Alam appointed a staff member who has been described as ‘*singularly unqualified and incapable of doing the job*’.

The former headteacher and another Adderley Primary headteacher described similar experiences of four or five members of staff, whom they feel incite the community and are led by Tahir Alam. Both say that Mr Alam’s advice has been quoted at them. They also say that complaints and issues increased after they had positive Ofsted feedback.

One headteacher also talked about workshops run by Mr Alam, Razwan Faraz and another prominent local chair of governors, which encourage parents to complain to schools about matters such as SRE. (para.4.38, p.43, italics in original)

- The Park View Educational Trust, its former trustees and several former and current staff members of Park View School appear to be closely linked to many of the issues we have investigated in Birmingham schools. A central figure is Tahir Alam, who has extensive contacts within the education field in Birmingham. A significant body of testimony attests to his influential role in decisions that have led to the changes we have observed in the ethos of several Birmingham schools. He has been closely involved with the running of Park View School for many years, having been a governor since the 1990s. He has also exerted influence at other schools as a member of several governing bodies, and more recently at schools that have become part of Park View Educational Trust. (para.6.1, p.50).
- Tahir Alam promoted the concept that schools can (and should) be changed to accommodate the faith needs of Muslim pupils by increasing Muslim representation on governing bodies and then insisting on changes to the ethos, policies and processes of

the school. Several of the governors who have caused the most difficulty on governing bodies have connections to Mr Alam and Park View School; some are staff or former staff of the school. (para.6.3, p.50)

- Mr Alam was the key person determining the policies and activities at Park View School. Most of these appear to be recommendations from the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB) report he co-authored in 2007. For example, in the teaching of modern foreign languages, pupils were encouraged to study Arabic to reflect their background and provide greater access to their religious and cultural heritage (despite the fact that the majority of Muslim pupils in Park View School are from a South Asian, rather than Arab background). Sex and relationship education is being taught with reference to an Islamic moral framework under which boyfriend/girlfriend relationships as well as homosexual relationships are not acceptable. (para.6.4, p.50)
- The ethos and culture at the school changed considerably over recent years under the Chairmanship of Tahir Alam. Patterns of behaviour have emerged in the leadership and management which suggest irregularities in employment practices. There have also been changes to the curriculum and educational plans and the rapid introduction of elements of belief inappropriate to a non-faith school. It appears to act as a blueprint for others, exhibiting all the behaviours which cause concern. Staff who were students there in recent years do not recognise the school, attributing the changes to a group of Muslim male staff, closely related by family, friendship and ideological belief. (Annex 5, p.119)

Co-author of the MCB's "Meeting the Needs of Muslim Pupils in State Schools"

- Alam co-authored "Meeting the Needs of Muslim Pupils in State Schools: Information and Guidance for Schools", published by the MCB in 2007.²⁹⁰
- This guidance for schools frames the allegedly distinct needs of Muslim children. It states that girls and boys ought to be subject to specific dress codes. Ignoring the diversity of Islamic scholarly opinion on this matter, it asserts, "In public boys should always be covered between the navel and knee and girls should be covered except for their hands and faces, a concept known as 'hijab'".²⁹¹ This prescription regarding dress is presented as the authoritative Islamic view.
- Other stipulations take a similar line, obscuring Muslim diversity

290. MCB, "Meeting the Needs of Muslim Pupils in State Schools: Information and Guidance for Schools", 2007. Available at <http://image.guardian.co.uk/sys-files/Education/documents/2007/02/20/Schoolinfo guidance.pdf>.

291. *Ibid.*, p.20.

and encouraging the perception of Muslims as a distinct and homogeneous group deserving of unique rights in the public space: Muslim children should be exempt from mixed-sex dance, swimming and PE lessons. And they should not be taught figurative art or certain types of music, even though, as the educationalist Colin Diamond recognises, “Many studies have confirmed the benefits of the arts for those growing up in cities”.²⁹²

- The report states that the adoption of a policy where religion is treated as a private matter “makes it more difficult for schools to appreciate and respond positively to meeting some of the distinctive spiritual, moral, social and cultural needs of Muslim children”.²⁹³ It appears that the provision of special arrangements in schools are proposed not merely to meet the allegedly distinct needs of Muslim children – which the MCB treats homogeneously – but to inculcate such needs.
- Religious education, the report urges, ought to include greater attention to Islam for both Muslims and non-Muslims.
- The report expresses concern about the reliability of books on Islam in school libraries. It states:

*Many schools with large proportions of Muslim pupils often have very few books which reflect their faith and cultural heritage. Often teachers may unwittingly buy Islamic books for the school that are written by non-specialist or unfriendly authors and that may have factual inaccuracies and may even misrepresent Islam.*²⁹⁴

- Assuming the role of arbiter of representative Islam, the report then provides a short reading list of “Useful publications” on Islam.²⁹⁵ This includes a book by the founder and director of the Muslim Educational Trust (MET), Ghulam Sarwar, titled, *Sex Education: The Muslim Perspective*. In a section called “Advice to Muslim pupils”, the book warns them about some non-Muslim organisations which advise on matters of Relationships and Sex Education, since some of them “have an attitude to life that does not fit with the beliefs and teachings of Islam.”²⁹⁶
- Sarwar’s book provides a number of moral guidelines for Muslims that its author, and by extension Alam and the MCB, either endorse or do not object to. Some of these are at odds with liberal democratic values. The book states, for example: “A wife should not refuse to have sexual intercourse with her husband without a reasonable excuse”.²⁹⁷
- *Sex Education: The Muslim Perspective*, also states:

292. Colin Diamond (ed.), *The Birmingham Book: Lessons in urban education leadership and policy from the Trojan Horse affair*, Camarthen: Crown House, 2022, p.342.

293. MCB, “Meeting the Needs of Muslim Pupils in State Schools”, p.18.

294. *Ibid.*, p.54

295. *Ibid.* p.65.

296. Ghulam Sarwar, *Sex Education: The Muslim Perspective*, London: MET, 2004, p.48.

297. *Ibid.*, p. 23. It then quotes a *hadith* in which the prophet Muhammad allegedly said, “If a husband invites his wife to bed (i.e., to have sexual relation [sic.]) and she refuses and causes him to sleep in anger, the angels curse her till the morning”. In other words, it appears, she cannot refuse simply because she doesn’t want to.

Homosexual practices are not allowed in Islam; they incur the anger of Allah, and are severely punished in an Islamic society. Schools should not promote homosexuality. If there are teachers or pupils in your school who are homosexual, that is their business, and you should leave them alone.

Islam does not approve of free mixing between sexes. If you are in a mixed sex school, try to restrict your friendships to your own sex; do not seek to be alone with pupils of the opposite sex. Boyfriend-girlfriend relationships inevitably lead to problems, and mean going against the teachings of Islam.²⁹⁸

- The book, published by the MET, describes the punishment for sex outside marriage (“fornication”) as 100 lashes, the punishment for adultery as stoning to death, and the punishment for homosexual acts as either lashes or death. It adds that these punishments can only occur “in an Islamic society implementing Shariah (Islamic Law) in its totality”, in other words, “in a fully-fledged Islamic state”.²⁹⁹
- Alam’s guidance, published by the MCB, also listed as a useful resource a book by Ibrahim Hewitt, titled, *What Does Islam Say?*, which was published by the MET. The book describes homosexuality as an “evil” and “depraved” practice, and a “sin” that is categorically forbidden in Islam.³⁰⁰ It refers to a *hadith* in which the prophet Muhammad is believed to have said, “If you find anyone doing as Lot’s people did [i.e., homosexual sodomy], kill the one who does it, and the One [sic.] to whom it is done”.³⁰¹ Hewitt adds:

Muslim jurists have held differing opinions concerning the punishment for this abominable practice, some stating the punishment for fornication [i.e., lashes], while some stating the death penalty for both the active and passive participants.³⁰²

Qualifying this view, Hewitt adds some context, remarking:

It is important to mention that these rulings are not given in an anarchic sense where a Muslim takes the law into his own hands. Rather for these punishments to be implemented, due legal process needs to be carried out, which can only be done under a state implementing Islamic Law.³⁰³

Former Prevent adviser and governor trainer

The Sunday Times reported in 2014 that Whitehall sources told the newspaper that Tahir Alam had been an adviser on the government’s Prevent strategy to tackle extremism and that this had given him a veneer of respectability. A senior Whitehall source reportedly said:

Alam was liked and seen as being credible — he even advised officials on the first Prevent strategy in 2008. After that he developed the right channels to

298. *Ibid.*, p.49.

299. *Ibid.*, p.16.

300. Ibrahim Hewitt, *What Does Islam Say?* London: Muslim Educational Trust, 2004, pp.25-7. Available at: <http://www.hurryu-pharry.net/wp-content/uploads/2009/03/ibrahim-hewitt.pdf>

301. *Ibid.*, p.26.

302. *Ibid.*

303. *Ibid.*

visit Whitehall on a regular basis. He fashioned himself as a kind of spokesman on all things education that concerned Muslim communities.³⁰⁴

On September 21, 2014, Jamie Martin, the special adviser to then Education Secretary Michael Gove, wrote in *The Times*:

*Tahir Alam had called publicly for state schools to ensure girls were covered except for their hands and faces, and for Muslim pupils to avoid activities that celebrated other religions. Yet Birmingham city council appointed him to train their governors, and central government (including the DfE) consulted him.*³⁰⁵

Banned from schools, September 2015

Alam was banned from managing independent schools or being a governor of maintained schools on September 3, 2015 by Nicky Morgan, then Education Secretary.³⁰⁶ According to the official notice of his barring, the decision was made on the basis that Alam had engaged in:

- Conduct which is aimed at undermining fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs.
- Conduct that is so inappropriate that, in the opinion of the appropriate authority, it makes a person unsuitable to take part in the management of independent schools, and that because of that conduct he was unsuitable to take part in the management of an independent school (including an academy or Free School). The barring decision also has the effect of disqualifying the person from being a governor at a maintained school.³⁰⁷

The notice concluded:

Mr Alam was found to be a central figure during Peter Clarke's investigation (April-July 2014) into allegations arising from a document popularly known as the 'Trojan Horse letter'. The Clarke Report also found that Mr Alam was the key person determining the policies and activities at PVET, in his role as Chair of the Trust and therefore was ultimately responsible for the activities that took place. These activities included:

- inappropriate interference in the day-to-day running of schools;
- inviting extremist/controversial speakers to address pupils;
- promoting intolerance;
- the narrowing of curricula in non-faith schools to make them conform with conservative religious teachings, including the use of unacceptable teaching materials;
- inappropriate recruitment practices and
- financial mismanagement.³⁰⁸

304. Richard Kerbaj, Sian Griffiths and Tim Shipman, "May aide quits in cabinet face off", *The Sunday Times*, June 8, 2014, <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/may-aide-quits-in-cabinet-face-off-57mf79f0w0r>.

305. Jamie Martin, "Quivering Sir Humphrey leaves it to parents to fight Islamism in schools", *The Sunday Times*, September 21, 2014, <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/quivering-sir-humphrey-leaves-it-to-parents-to-fight-islamism-in-schools-fznpbf0jg2>.

306. "Direction: Tahir Alam barred from managing independent schools", Government website, September 9, 2015, www.gov.uk/government/publications/direction-tahir-alam-barred-from-managing-independent-schools.

307. Department for Education, "Regulation of school managers and governors: prohibition direction", September 2015, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/459386/Regulation_of_school_managers_and_governors_Tahir_Alam.pdf.

308. *Ibid.*

Hardip Begol, the director of assessment, curriculum, qualifications and accountability at the DfE said Alam had pushed an intolerant ideology based on a hardline strand of Sunni Islam. The DfE said he engaged in conduct “aimed at undermining fundamental British values” and warned that any school employing Alam in a management capacity, either paid or unpaid, would be shut down. Furthermore, the DfE rejected his 11-page rebuttal.³⁰⁹

In October 2015, *The Birmingham Mail* reported that Tahir Alam vowed to continue in education despite being barred from schools.³¹⁰

Alam’s ban was upheld in a tribunal in December 2017.³¹¹ The tribunal found that Alam “took no adequate steps to ensure that children were kept safe from extremist views”.³¹²

Alam’s continuing involvement in education

In November 2016, *The Sunday Times* reported that Tahir Alam, despite being banned from involvement in schools, was back in teaching.³¹³ His ban did not apply to informal schools not registered with the Department for Education.

Alam, it was reported, had been teaching children in informal classes at the Khidmat Centre, a community centre in Sparkbrook, Birmingham. When asked about it by the newspaper, he said: “Why should I speak to you about that? I am absolutely suitable for teaching any children, I have done absolutely nothing wrong.”

The report also stated that in Facebook posts, Alam had recently described the 9/11 attacks as the “controlled demolition of three buildings”; and promoted a YouTube video claiming that “Zionist neocons” bribed the British National Party to “ignore Jew paper money and attack Islam. He said he “did not recall” the Facebook posts.

Alam’s attitude to sex-segregation

In 2017, in a book on Muslims in Britain, James Fergusson wrote about an interview he conducted with Tahir Alam, which perhaps provides an important insight into Alam’s attitudes towards segregation. Referring to changes at Park View since Alam had been forced out, Fergusson wrote:

He was particularly upset by a new anti-segregation policy, whereby male and female pupils are now zealously directed by their teachers to share classroom desks. ‘That’s not secularism, that’s social engineering!’ he spluttered. ‘It is a form of bullying; a form of cultural imperialism.’³¹⁴

It is hard to see how Tahir Alam could help prepare children for life in contemporary Britain, if he regards boys and girls being encouraged to sit together as “cultural imperialism”. Alam’s views appear at least partly to be rooted in fear:

309. Tony Bonnici, “Muslim school governor banned for ‘undermining British values’”, *The Times*, September 8, 2015, <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/muslim-school-governor-banned-for-undermining-british-values-vpszcbdq9kh>.

310. Emma McKinney, “Banned governor Tahir Alam vows to continue in education despite being barred from schools after Trojan Horse claims”, *The Birmingham Mail*, October 30, 2015, <https://www.birmingham-mail.co.uk/news/midlands-news/banned-governor-tahir-alam-vows-10362897>.

311. BBC News, “‘Trojan Horse’ school ruling hush ‘exceptional’”, January 2, 2018, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-birmingham-42540543>.

312. Alex Homer, “‘Trojan Horse’ hearings against teachers and governor cost £1.27m”, BBC News, August 17, 2018, <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-birmingham-45060721>.

313. Andrew Gilligan and Sian Griffiths, “‘Trojan Horse’ plotters dodge teaching ban”, *The Times*, November 27, 2016, <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/trojan-horse-plotters-dodge-teaching-ban-lwkrqc3bd>.

314. James Fergusson, *Al-Britannia, My Country: A Journey Through Muslim Britain*, London: Bantam Press, 2017, p. 118.

‘I know why they want to make boys and girls sit next to each other,’ Alam went on sourly. ‘It is about acculturation into nightclubs. It is about hedonism and pleasure. They think, “Let’s get some condoms moving here” – you know what I’m saying?’ The word ‘condoms’ was delivered with such a sneer that it was impossible to miss his meaning.³¹⁵

Alam’s anti-LGBT agitation

In his interview with James Fergusson, which Fergusson writes about in his 2017 book on Muslims in Britain, Alam apparently disparaged “reformist” Muslims, such as Sara Khan, and complained that the government is attacking Islam itself, not just Islamism, by its insistence on gay rights and gender equality.³¹⁶

Fergusson wrote that “The ethos in [Alam’s] schools was indeed Islamic, and he saw no reason to apologise for it”.³¹⁷ Yet none of the schools Alam was involved with, were faith schools. It is clear from the chapter Fergusson devotes to what he refers to as “Trojan Hoax” that on the issue of homosexuality, Tahir Alam holds distinct positions. According to Fergusson, Alam said, “Homosexuality is legal and must be respected, he said carefully. ‘The school’s policy was always to treat gay kids with respect. It’s not the teacher’s job to judge them’”.³¹⁸ However, Fergusson went on to comment, “But that did not stop him from regarding it as immoral, a view that he insisted is mainstream in east Birmingham”.³¹⁹

Fergusson quoted Alam further:

*We don’t take our morality from the state, he said at one point. ‘Where does this trend end? What is the moral objection to incest, if it is between consensual adults and no minors are involved? What about bestiality?’*³²⁰

On February 13, 2019, *The Times* reported that Tahir Alam had claimed that teachers were “indoctrinating” children with the No Outsiders programme in Birmingham schools.³²¹ No Outsiders is a programme which promotes LGBT equality and challenges homophobia in primary schools. Written by Andrew Moffat, a homosexual assistant headteacher, the programme ran alongside sex education lessons. The programme had been taught at several schools in Birmingham for four years but had led to protests outside Parkfield Community School in early 2019.

Alam reportedly urged parents to “investigate” schools over the No Outsiders programme and demand its removal from the curriculum. Alam said that he was not running the campaign but supported it. He wrote on social media that the headteacher of Parkfield School was “unfit and undeserving to serve this community”. Hundreds of Muslim parents and a small number of Christians signed a petition calling for No Outsiders to be ditched, and Moffat said he felt “threatened” by some parents.

In June 2019, as protests about Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) spread outside further schools, *The Times* reported that Steve Ball, the chairman of governors at Rockwood Academy (formerly known as Park View School) described the protests over lessons promoting LGBT

315. *Ibid.*, p.119.

316. David Goodhart, “Books: Al-Britannia, My Country – A Journey Through Muslim Britain by James Fergusson”, *The Sunday Times*, June 4, 2017, <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/books-al-britannia-my-country-a-journey-through-muslim-britain-by-james-ferguson-mprw2g5rs>.

317. Fergusson, *Al-Britannia, My Country*, p. 104

318. *Ibid.*, p.115.

319. *Ibid.*, p.116.

320. *Ibid.*, p.116.

321. Neil Johnston, “Banned school governor Tahir Alam fights gay equality lessons”, *The Times*, February 13, 2019, <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/banned-school-governor-tahir-alam-fights-gay-lessons-qqk-gwfnqn>.

tolerance as “a legacy of Trojan Horse, which had left some parents feeling isolated and disenfranchised”.³²²

In July 2019, it was reported that Tahir Alam had re-launched the Muslim Parents Association, which had been wound up following the Trojan Horse affair.³²³ Alam reportedly started holding monthly seminars on Relationships and Sex Education in Birmingham. A leaflet for the re-launch event said that parents would be provided with advice, support and training and it would discuss their rights and the Islamic perspective on the issue. He believed that parents should “investigate” schools over lessons promoting gay equality and claimed that children were being “groomed”. He likened the classes to “child abuse and indoctrination”.

Alam said that he intended to continue with his seminars “at a much bigger, wider level” and that they could expand to other topics. He claimed that his ban was “unjustified and based on a hoax” and that he was “extremely proud” of his work while a governor and regretted “absolutely nothing”. He claimed that schools had been “destroyed” since the authorities stepped in.

In September 2019, *The Times* reported that parents had started to remove their children from mainstream education in an escalation of the row over LGBT lessons.³²⁴ This forced some schools to close early. Concerns about home schooling increased because children drop off the grid and are potentially left open to extreme views or other safeguarding issues. Since the beginning of the row in Birmingham in January 2019, almost 400 children were pulled out of schools, a 15% rise over the same period in 2018. Some were moved to other schools.

Tahir Alam, who had been advising parents to remove their children from schools, said that parents had come to him to express their “dissatisfaction” with the curriculum. He “encouraged” them to look at home schooling. He stated that the row over LGBT teaching was a “significant factor”.

322. Neil Johnston, “We refuse to be silenced about LGBT lessons, say Birmingham protest parents”, *The Times*, June 4, 2019, <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/we-refuse-to-be-silenced-about-gay-lessons-say-protest-parents-wsrjs387s>.

323. Neil Johnston, “Banned ‘Trojan horse’ school governor holding sex education seminars”, *The Times*, July 8, 2019, <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/banned-trojan-horse-school-governor-holding-sex-education-seminars-vghtsgp6l>.

324. Neil Johnston, “LGBT protests: Pupils pulled out of schools over gay relationship classes”, *The Times*, September 20, 2019, <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/ministers-put-gay-lesson-anger-in-too-difficult-box-896qtpkpg>.

325. *The Birmingham Mail*, “Trojan Horse-linked school appoints former disgraced councillor as new chairman of governors”, May 11, 2015. <http://www.birminghammail.co.uk/news/midlands-news/trojan-horse-linked-school-appoints-former-9226747>.

326. nadeemahmadkhan, “Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani at Abu Bakar Trust Walsall, England 12 Jan 2020”, YouTube, January 14, 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6F0tN6Jaleg>.

Alam’s successor at Park View: Waheed Saleem

In May 2015, *The Birmingham Mail* reported that Waheed Saleem had replaced Tahir Alam as chair of the board of directors and governors at Park View School, now an academy, and its educational trust.³²⁵ It also reported that Saleem was banned from holding public office for a year after leaking commercially sensitive information to the Abu Bakr Trust about a bid in a tender process for a council property.

The Abu Bakr Trust, according to *The Birmingham Mail*, “adheres to the strict Salafi version of Islam and also runs a mosque and schools in Walsall”. It has embraced figures some consider radical, such as the Deobandi scholar Muhammad Taqi Usmani.³²⁶

In May 2020, Conservative MP Gary Sambrook (Birmingham Northfield) published a press release that expressed concern over the proposal by the West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner for Waheed Saleem to be his Deputy. Sambrook referred to Saleem’s earlier ban from public office

after he conferred an advantage to the Abu Bakr Trust in a tender process for a council property.³²⁷

The press release also revealed that:

Waheed Saleem approved the reinstatement of teachers banned from teaching over the Trojan Horse affair, before resigning when journalists found out about it. The teachers were subject to ‘interim prohibition orders’ banning them from teaching, but Saleem appointed them to teach children regardless.

Gary Sambrook MP went on to argue that “Waheed Saleem is categorically unfit to hold public office. Especially one which required top standards, ethics, and sensitivity. Something in my opinion Mr Saleem lacks greatly”.

Alam interview February 2022

On February 25, 2022, Alam gave an interview, alongside Talha Ahmad, to Usaama al-Azami, a lecturer in Contemporary Islamic Studies at the University of Oxford.³²⁸ In this interview, Alam suggested that the reason for the action taken by the Government after the Trojan Horse inquiries, and for his barring, pivoted on the issue of the education of Muslim children. Nothing is more important than educating Muslim children “Islamically”, he said, suggesting this is what irked the Government and prompted it to act.³²⁹ He said:

What was the aim or the goal in these interventions by the Secretary of State for Education? What we are talking about here is the education of Muslim children. And I think that going forward, this is what we really have to focus on. Because the aim and the target and the goal is to do with the education of Muslim children. It has nothing to do with me. Nobody has personally got anything against me, but it was what I was doing for the Muslim children which became an issue in the end. So what the Muslim community can do is to educate our children in a very upright manner – in terms of educating them Islamically, in terms of their knowledge, their practise, their spiritual development, their moral development. So, this is the most important thing to happen. And that approach to doing that, to raising our children upon Islam, and developing their Shakhsiyya al-Islamiyya [Islamic personality] is the most important project there is. There is nothing else more important than that.

If Trojan Horse is anything to do with that, if it is to do with anything, it is to do with the education of children and how they are raised. And the barring orders that were being pursued against the teachers cited this particular reason. They said we’re not banning them because ... what was it that they actually breached? What was their crime, so to speak, for which they needed to be barred by the NCTL? And it was to do with this, that they are promoting their own culture to the children, if you like, was the accusation that was being devised. So, in other words, in a 99% Muslim pupils [sic.], Muslim teachers must not promote any of their own cultural aspects to these children. In other words, what should you promote then? Promote something else. Maybe try

327. Gary Sambrook, “Press Release: Birmingham MP slams Police and Crime Commissioner for appointing a deputy who was banned from holding office as a Councillor”, May, 18, 2020, <https://www.garysambrook.co.uk/news/press-release-birmingham-mp-slams-police-and-crime-commissioner-appointing-deputy-who-was>.

328. “Usaama al-Azami”, staff profile page, Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies, University of Oxford, undated, <https://www.orinst.ox.ac.uk/people/usaama-al-azami>.

329. Usaama al-Azami, “3. The Curious Case of Park View Academy: Tahir Alam and the Trojan Horse Affair”, YouTube, February 25, 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Buv6Qqyb4U>.

to secularise them. Maybe do something else to them. Can you see? So what is the really important message to take away from all of this of course is that we should raise our children upon Islam unashamedly, through our own institutions, whether they are mosques, within the home environment and so on, and sending them to Islamic schools, establishing Muslim schools.³³⁰

But not all Muslim parents agree with the view that schools, especially state schools without any formal religious affiliation, should treat Muslim pupils differently from other pupils and educate them in an allegedly distinct “Islamic” way. In April 2014, for example, Mohammed Zabar, the Muslim father of a pupil then attending Oldknow Academy, said:

If you want to have a religious education, the schools are there. But I chose to send my child to a non-religious school and by changing it they are denying me that choice. They think that in this society children are corrupt and have been misled. They think they have the duty to substitute their judgment for my duty as a parent.³³¹

Mohammad Zabar’s daughter was later bullied at school and called a “Christian”, for which two pupils were suspended in June 2014.³³²

In the February 25, 2022, interview, Alam added that it was important for Muslims not to isolate or segregate from mainstream society. It was important, he said, for Muslims to be active in civic life, especially in education. He said:

And also I am not one to call for disengagement or anything. I think it is very important for Muslims also to go into the teaching profession, and to continue to participate as governors, to continue to participate – becoming directors, establishing educational institutions, and so on. These are very important things to pursue, and not to be deterred. Because the goal of those who attack people like me is to actually deter other people from even getting into this profession. So we must not allow them to succeed really, and psychologically getting us to disengage from these things, and to disconnect from these things. Because the fact of the matter is that these are important areas of civic life, and professional careers and so on. Muslims need to be active in all of these areas, particularly in education. People should go into these professions and be involved in these things and make sure our children are educated not just in academic brilliance but also in terms of their spiritual and moral brilliance and excellence as well.³³³

Razwan Faraz

Faraz met Alam when he began working in an administrative role at the Al-Hijrah Trust in 2004.³³⁴ Faraz was a member of the MCB’s Education Committee in 2006³³⁵ and 2007.³³⁶ This was the same time when Tahir Alam was the MCB’s Assistant Secretary General and Chair of its Education Committee. In 2008, Faraz began training as a teacher at Park View School and finished this a year later.³³⁷ He then became Assistant Head Teacher of Adderley Primary School, where Alam was a governor. In May 2012, he became the Deputy Head of Nansen Primary School. Three years from the

330. *Ibid.*

331. Andrew Gilligan, “Muslim parent: Radical school is brainwashing our children”, *The Telegraph*, April 5, 2014, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/10747220/Muslim-parent-Radical-school-is-brainwashing-our-children.html>.

332. Andrew Gilligan, “Trojan Horse: how we revealed the truth behind the plot”, *The Telegraph*, June 15, 2014, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/education-news/10899804/Trojan-Horse-how-we-revealed-the-truth-behind-the-plot.html>.

333. al-Azami, “3. The Curious Case of Park View Academy: Tahir Alam and the Trojan Horse Affair”.

334. Samira Shackle, “Trojan horse: the real story behind the fake ‘Islamic plot’ to take over schools”, *The Guardian*, September 1, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/sep/01/trojan-horse-the-real-story-behind-the-fake-islamic-plot-to-take-over-schools>.

335. “Education”, MCB website, February 10, 2006, web page captured on February 10, 2006, https://web.archive.org/web/20060210044134/http://www.mcb.org.uk/chomepage.php?com_id=12.

336. “Education”, MCB website, August 7, 2007, web page captured on August 7, 2007, https://web.archive.org/web/20070807012511/http://www.mcb.org.uk/comm_details.php?heading_id=21&com_id=12.

337. Shackle, “Trojan horse: the real story behind the fake ‘Islamic plot’ to take over schools”.

completion of teacher training to becoming the deputy head of a school indicates an unusually fast career progression.

Faraz and the “Park View Brotherhood”

Faraz was a member of a WhatsApp group called the “Park View Brotherhood” (also referred to by Monzoor Husain as “the PVET brotherhood”³³⁸). Its members were Muslim teachers and staff based at the Park View Academies.

In May 2013, in reference to an article³³⁹ he shared in the group on gay marriage and teaching resources for discussions on the topic in classrooms, Faraz described homosexuals as “animals”. He said: “These animals are going out full force. As teachers we must be aware and counter their satanic ways of influencing young people.”³⁴⁰

In another conversation, in September 2013, whilst discussing an article about a shrine in Karachi being used as a meeting place by gay men, Faraz said: “Sign of the end of times” and “May Allah further expose this and give us the strength to deal and eradicate it.”³⁴¹

He also made disparaging comments about women, saying their place was “in the kitchen ... a perpetual role serving men”. He described Muslims who raised money for the military charity Help for Heroes as “Uncle Toms”.³⁴²

Contradictory position on his involvement in the “Park View Brotherhood”

In his report, Peter Clarke was explicit that Faraz was a contributing member of the “Park View Brotherhood” WhatsApp group. Clarke wrote:

*Mr Faraz has been confirmed by multiple sources as the user of a particular telephone number. In addition, in a statement that he has provided to the enquiry, he admits to making specific comments on another social media group called the ‘Educational Activists’. Those comments are made using the same telephone number. I have also received evidence that Mr Faraz was using the same number in 2012. Within the ‘Park View Brotherhood’ material there is one occasion when an entry from the phone number is signed ‘Razwan Faraz’ and nine further occasions when the number is either addressed as, or responds to, ‘Razwan’. There can therefore be no doubt that he is the author of the contributions that are ascribed to him in this account of the ‘Park View Brotherhood’ discussions. For him to deny that he is the contributor, he would have to assert that someone else, presumably without his knowledge or authority, used his telephone to make contributions on no less than 423 occasions while he was a member of the group between 5 April 2013 and 6 November 2013.*³⁴³

At the National College for Teaching and Leadership (NCTL) misconduct hearing (more on which below), Andrew Colman, who led the prosecution against Faraz and other teachers on behalf of the NCTL, said Faraz told Clarke in an email that he knew nothing of the WhatsApp group, despite being a member. Colman accused Faraz of deceiving Clarke. Faraz reportedly

338. Clarke Report, p.66.

339. Emily Drabble, “Gay marriage: news and teaching resources round up”, *The Guardian*, May 26, 2013, <https://www.theguardian.com/teacher-network/teacher-blog/2013/may/26/gay-marriage-teaching-news-resources>.

340. Clarke Report, para.7.16, p.62. See also Neil Johnston, “Trojan horse teacher called gays ‘animals’”, *The Times*, August 13, 2018, <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/edition/news/trojan-horse-teacher-called-gays-animals-kfbbzmv3k>.

341. Clarke Report, para.7.16, p.63.

342. *Ibid*, para. 7.21, p.67.

343. *Ibid*, para. 7.5., p.56.

said: “Mr Clarke asked me about a WhatsApp group but never specifically mentioned the PVET Brotherhood which I was a member of. I thought he would have been specific.” Colman reportedly replied: “This was total deception - you were dishonest.”

Faraz’s reliability was questioned again during the hearing he brought against Birmingham Core Education Trust for firing him from his position at Nansen Primary School (more on this below).³⁴⁴

NCTL hearing and interim ban on teaching

On October 19, 2015, the National College for Teaching and Leadership (NCTL) began a misconduct hearing regarding allegations of professional misconduct involving Faraz and four other teachers in Birmingham schools.³⁴⁵ Faraz and the other teachers were placed under an interim teaching ban whilst the hearing was underway.

In November 2016, *The Sunday Times* reported that Razwan Faraz, despite his interim ban, was back teaching.³⁴⁶ Faraz was found to be running informal classes in a different city and under a different name. Faraz’s interim ban did not apply to informal schools not registered with the Department for Education.

On May 30, 2017, the disciplinary hearings against Faraz and four other former teachers at Park View Educational Trust were thrown out by the NCTL panel after the DfE’s lawyers failed to disclose evidence requested by the defendants’ lawyers. The evidence they sought was the testimonies of the witnesses interviewed by Peter Clarke as part of his DfE-commissioned inquiry into the Trojan Horse affair, which were provided on the condition of anonymity.³⁴⁷

Job loss and unsuccessful appeal

Faraz was fired from his job as Deputy Head of Nansen Primary School as a result of the publication of his comments about homosexuals in the “Park View Brotherhood” WhatsApp group.³⁴⁸

Separately from the NCTL hearing, Faraz brought a claim against Birmingham Core Education Trust – the new name of Park View Educational Trust – for unfair dismissal on the grounds of religious discrimination. During the hearing Faraz insisted his views had changed and explained the outburst as an expression of his faith, but both the disciplinary and appeal panels dismissed his claim.³⁴⁹ The appeal case concluded in March 2018.

The tribunal panel found that his comments “were a significant factor in causing the school to be brought into disrepute”.³⁵⁰ The judgment said that his comments were “demonstrably homophobic”.³⁵¹ Faraz, it said, “was displaying extreme homophobic and offensive views”.³⁵²

Faraz claimed that he was fired as part of a “wider conspiracy” to “rid the school” of him and other teachers in the WhatsApp group. The judge, Richard Henderson, however, described Faraz as “evasive” and “not a credible witness” and said that there were “inconsistencies in his

344. Employment Tribunal decision, Mr R Faraz v Core Education Trust, Case No.: 1303060/2015, March 23, 2018, para 18, p.7, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5b2bb1ace5274a55d102e657/Mr_R_Faraz_v_Core_Education_Trust_1303060.15.pdf.
345. BBC News, “‘Trojan Horse’ pupils had to ‘stare at bushes as punishment’”, October 19, 2015, <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-birmingham-34574330>.
346. Andrew Gilligan and Sian Griffiths, “Trojan Horse’ plotters dodge teaching ban”, *The Times*, November 27, 2016, <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/trojan-horse-plotters-dodge-teaching-ban-lwkrqc3bd>.
347. Olivia Rudgard, “Trojan Horse’ case against five Birmingham teachers thrown out by tribunal”, *The Telegraph*, May 30, 2017, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/05/30/trojan-horse-case-against-five-birmingham-teachers-thrown-tribunal/>; Richard Adams, “Five teachers accused in Trojan horse affair free to return to classroom”, *The Guardian*, May 30, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2017/may/30/trojan-horse-tribunal-five-birmingham-teachers-islam>.
348. Johnston, “Trojan horse teacher called gays ‘animals’”.
349. *Ibid.* See also Employment Tribunal decision, Mr R Faraz v Core Education Trust.
350. Johnston, “Trojan horse teacher called gays ‘animals’”.
351. Employment Tribunal decision, Mr R Faraz v Core Education Trust, para.162, p.30.
352. *Ibid.*, para.101 (ii), p.20.

evidence”.³⁵³

The judgment said:

*We take note that both the disciplinary and appeal panels (each differently constituted and including Muslim members) all concluded unanimously after a full consideration of the case that the claimant’s explanations were not credible. They were satisfied that the claimant was not expressing a religious belief in his comments. The comments were homophobic. This tribunal is satisfied that his dismissal for making homophobic comments had nothing to do with the expression of any religious belief.*³⁵⁴

Faraz’s “re-branding” as “parenting coach”

On January 2, 2020, *The Times* disclosed that Razwan Faraz, who had been dismissed as deputy headteacher of Nansen Primary School, was back in the classroom giving advice to teachers in Birmingham, after rebranding himself as a “parenting coach”.³⁵⁵

The newspaper said Faraz had described himself in promotional material for his talk as “the empathetic teacher”, stating that his aim is “developing pupils for a better world”. He presented workshops and was photographed giving talks to a full classroom of teachers.

According to *The Times*, he had since deleted the promotional material from social media but in one post said that a headteacher who participated in a workshop had told him: “Our school is your school.” Faraz was also reported as giving workshops to the wider Birmingham community, including for homeless men.

Faraz’s Facebook posts

In 2016, *The Sunday Times* established that Faraz had set up a Facebook account under a different name, Riz Pilgrim, in which he described as “idiots” those who expressed solidarity with the victims of the Nice terrorist attack, which killed 86 people.³⁵⁶ He reportedly said they were privileging “white suffering” and condoning French colonialism. Evidently, it did not occur to him that many of the victims of the Nice attack were Muslim.³⁵⁷

In a later post he attacked those who expressed solidarity with the victims of the attack on the magazine *Charlie Hebdo*. Faraz admitted that he was Riz Pilgrim but said the Facebook posts had been taken out of context, adding: “I am campaigning against patriarchy in a huge way in the Muslim community.”

Conviction of brother, Ahmed Faraz

Razwan Faraz’s brother, Ahmed Faraz, managed the Maktabah bookshop in Birmingham, which was founded by Moazzam Begg, the current Outreach Director of CAGE.³⁵⁸ The bookshop was raided by the police in 2007, after Begg sold the business, and again in 2010 under the Prevention

353. *Ibid.*, para.18, p.7.

354. Johnston, “Trojan horse teacher called gays ‘animals’”; Employment Tribunal decision, *Mr R Faraz v Core Education Trust*, para.164, p.131.

355. Neil Johnston, “Razwan Faraz: Teacher in Trojan horse scandal is back in classroom”, *The Times*, January 2, 2020, <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/razwan-faraz-teacher-in-trojan-horse-scandal-is-back-in-classroom-jh397hd9k>

356. Gilligan and Griffiths, “‘Trojan Horse’ plotters dodge teaching ban”.

357. “Nice attack: Who were the victims?”, BBC News, August 19, 2016, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-36805164>.

358. Jenny Percival, “Sparkhill Muslims ‘live in peace’”, BBC News, February 1, 2007, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/6318197.stm.

of Terrorism Act because of the “inflammatory literature” on its shelves.³⁵⁹ The academic Chetan Bhatt has described Maktabah during this period as “an important source for the dissemination of so-called ‘salafi-jihadi’ material in the UK.”³⁶⁰

In December 2011, Ahmed Faraz was convicted of two sets of charges relating to the selling of books from Maktabah.³⁶¹ He was convicted of seven counts of dissemination of terrorist publications, relating to books that the prosecution said encouraged violent jihad. He was also found guilty of disseminating material likely to be useful to someone preparing an act of terrorism. These included practical instructions for homemade bombs and other material such as a handbook called “The AQ Training Manual”. The first set of convictions were quashed on appeal in 2012, but the second set were not.³⁶²

Razwan Faraz told *The Guardian* in 2017 that he had a “difficult relationship” with his brother. “Because of his [Ahmed’s] line of thinking, I didn’t really have a relationship with him.” But several years before this, just after his brother’s conviction, Razwan Faraz was quoted by BBC News as saying the family believed it was “a travesty of justice”.³⁶³ When the Trojan Horse scandal broke and Faraz was identified in the media as the “brother of a convicted terrorist”, there was apparently no mention of the conflict between them.

Faraz, Alam, and the 2018 “Trojan Horse” play

Faraz’s exact words were used in the Trojan Horse play by LUNG, a theatre group founded in Barnsley in 2012. At the beginning of the play, Rashid, whose character is a combination of three teachers involved in the scandal, declares:

I’m a terrorist. I’m an extremist. I am the Trojan Horse. I infiltrated schools to push my hard-line, Islamist agenda. I shouldn’t be near your children. Don’t let me through your school gates. Big bad Muslim man gonna huff gonna puff gonna blow your school up.³⁶⁴

The play’s writers, Helen Monks and Matt Woodhead, took these words spoken to them by Razwan Faraz, during interviews with him. He told *Middle East Eye*: “That’s what I felt like. That I am that terrorist. We weren’t [really] exonerated in the public court. You’re innocent until proven guilty, unless of course you’re Muslim.”³⁶⁵

On the “About Us” page of LUNG’s website, which details what is described as the company’s team, there is a celebratory photo which includes Tahir Alam, and Naz Shah MP.³⁶⁶

359. Shackle, “Trojan horse: the real story behind the fake ‘Islamic plot’ to take over schools”.

360. Chethan Bhatt, “The ‘British jihad’ and the curves of religious violence”, *Ethnic and Religious Studies*, Vol 33, No 1, 2010, p 40, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/014119870903082245>.

361. BBC News, “Bookseller Ahmed Faraz jailed over terror offences”, December 13, 2011, <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-16171251>; Dominic Casciani, “Analysis: Why a ‘terror bookseller’ won his appeal”, BBC News, January 9, 2013, <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-20940716>.

362. Faraz v R. [2012] EWCA Crim 2820, December 21, 2012, <http://www.bailii.org/ew/cases/EWCA/Crim/2012/2820.html>.

363. BBC News, “Bookseller Ahmed Faraz’s family ‘shocked’ after terror conviction”, December 14, 2011, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-hereford-worcester-16174675>.

364. Aina J Khan, “‘Big bad Muslim’: The play that allowed Trojan Horse teachers to start healing”, *Middle East Eye*, February 21, 2020, <https://www.middleeasteye.net/discover/review-trojan-horse-theatre-play-birmingham-scandal>.

365. *Ibid.*

366. “About Us”, LUNG Theatre website, undated, <https://www.lungtheatre.co.uk/about-us>.

Monzoor “Moz” Hussain

In April 2014, Nigel Sloan, the former head of drama at Park View School, told *The Sunday Telegraph* that he repeatedly witnessed Monzoor Hussain, then a maths teacher at the school, giving “mind-blowing” anti-Western assemblies to pupils at the school.³⁶⁷ According to Sloan, Hussain told pupils in assembly that the Americans were, among other things, “the evil in the world” and “the cause of all famine”. Sloan said:

I heard Mr Hussain say those words. It was always anti-American, anti-Western propaganda. Some of his assemblies were so anti-American in their content as to be mind-blowing.³⁶⁸

In July 2014, Hussain, then acting head of Park View School, along with Razwan Faraz, the deputy head at Nansen Primary School, were suspended from their jobs by the new board of trustees at Park View Educational Trust.³⁶⁹

In October 2014, *The Telegraph* reported that:

Under [Hussain’s] leadership, Park View segregated boys and girls, invited an extremist speaker to address pupils, told children who did not pray that they were not proper Muslims, and restricted the syllabus in line with “conservative Islamic teaching”. Mr Hussain also set up a closed group for certain Park View teachers on WhatsApp, a mobile messaging app, which promoted grossly extremist and bigoted views.

It was also reported that in September 2014, Hussain helped to set up the Aim-High Private Tuition and Education Centre in Wolverhampton. It reportedly offered “specialised intensive courses” for children at “all levels from Key Stage 1 to A-level” and was advertised on Hussain’s Facebook page. Companies House records reportedly showed that Hussain’s wife, Salma, also known as Salma Akhtar, was Aim-High’s sole director.³⁷⁰

In October 2015, the National College for Teaching and Leadership (NCTL) began a misconduct hearing regarding allegations of professional misconduct against Hussain and other teachers in Birmingham schools.³⁷¹ Hussain was alleged to have put pupils in “stress positions” as punishments. Pupils allegedly had to “stand in the rain” or “stare at bushes”. The misconduct tribunals for Hussain and the other teachers were dropped, however, in 2017.³⁷² Hussain and another teacher, Hardeep Saini, led a successful application to have the case against them dismissed on the grounds that the DfE failed to disclose evidence (see Chapter 3 for more on this).

Demands for a public apology and inquiry

In a clip posted on February 19, 2022 on Twitter from an interview with Press TV, Razwan Faraz appeared to be demanding an apology from Michael Gove for his role in the Trojan Horse affair. Faraz said:

367. Andrew Gilligan, “Muslim parent: Radical school is brainwashing our children”, *The Telegraph*, April 5, 2014, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/10747220/Muslim-parent-Radical-school-is-brainwashing-our-children.html>.

368. *Ibid.*

369. Jeanette Oldham, “Trojan Horse: Park View School headteacher suspended”, *The Birmingham Mail*, July 26, 2014, <https://www.birminghammail.co.uk/news/midlands-news/trojan-horse-park-view-headteacher-7510122>.

370. Andrew Gilligan, “Revealed, the private academy set up by teachers barred over Trojan Horse plot”, *The Telegraph*, October 2014, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/educationnews/11171547/Revealed-the-private-academy-set-up-by-teachers-barrred-over-Trojan-Horse-plot.html>.

371. BBC News, “‘Trojan Horse’ pupils had to ‘stare at bushes as punishment’”, October 19, 2015, <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-birmingham-34574330>.

372. Olivia Rudgard, “‘Trojan Horse’ case against five Birmingham teachers thrown out by tribunal”, *The Telegraph*, May 30, 2017, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/05/30/trojan-horse-case-against-five-birmingham-teachers-thrown-tribunal/>.

... a public apology for his actions followed by a change in policy, because the actions that followed what was perceived to be a sinister plot on part [sic] of Muslim teachers, governors – and I was included within that bracket – that all of that was a complete fabrication and a lie. And so there has to be A, a public apology, and B, a rescinding of the policies that subsequently ...³⁷³

In the Press TV clip, Alam added:

Those who abused their power and authority in causing so much harm should be held accountable. Those unjustly and wrongfully maligned should be fully exonerated.³⁷⁴

Faraz and Alam's demands for a public apology echoed that of MCB Secretary General, Zara Mohammed, who on February 10, 2022, said:

We call for an independent public inquiry into the Trojan Horse case, and a public apology from those who ignored the truths presented to them.³⁷⁵

On the same day, the MCB said:

The extraordinary actions taken by the government point to a pervasive extremism determined to see Muslims as suspect communities. They must now be held accountable for their actions; for the effect this had on Muslim communities across the country at the time, and since. Trust needs to be rebuilt and only a truly independent public inquiry will shed light on the truth of the matter.³⁷⁶

Earlier, in April 2020, John Holmwood, a retired professor of sociology and author of *Countering Extremism in British Schools? The Truth about the Birmingham Trojan Horse Affair*, wrote that the Trojan Horse affair involved “the scapegoating of Muslims and the disregard for due process and rights”. He also described his role as an adviser to the LUNG Theatre production, *Trojan Horse*, and his involvement in a series of “post-show Q&As” alongside representatives of MEND. He concluded the article with the statement:

Our objective is to have an official inquiry into the conduct of the Department for Education and its agencies. We are also seeking an apology to the teachers and governors whose reputations and livelihoods were ruined, as well as compensation for their financial losses.³⁷⁷

It is not clear if the “we” refers to Holmwood and the co-author of his book on *Trojan Horse*, Therese O’Toole; Holmwood and those involved in the LUNG Theatre production; Holmwood and the teachers and governors at the heart of the Trojan Horse affair, including Tahir Alam; or something else.

373. Robert Carter/@Bob_cart124, Twitter post, February 19, 2022, https://twitter.com/Bob_cart124/status/1495090054229897218.

374. Tahir Mahmood Alam, “Britain’s Trojan Horse: A hoax that still harms Muslims”, Aljazeera, April 17, 2022, <https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2022/4/17/britains-trojan-horse-a-hoax-that-still-harms-muslims>.

375. Muslim Council of Britain, “Who was behind the National Hoax? Muslim Council of Britain Calls for Independent Public Inquiry into ‘Trojan Horse’ Affair”, MCB Press Release, February 10, 2022. <https://mcb.org.uk/press-releases/who-was-behind-the-national-hoax-muslim-council-of-britain-calls-for-independent-public-inquiry-into-trojan-horse-affair/>.

376. *Ibid.*

377. John Holmwood, “IMPACT CASE STUDY: The Birmingham Trojan Horse affair”, Transforming Society, April 2, 2020, <https://www.transformingsociety.co.uk/2020/04/02/impact-case-study-the-birmingham-trojan-horse-affair/>.

Chapter 5: The Trojan Horse affair and the “Islamisation of Knowledge”

In his report, Peter Clarke argued that the Trojan Horse agenda “appears to stem from an international movement to increase the role of Islam in education”.³⁷⁸ He continued:

*It is supported by bodies such as the Association of Muslim Schools—UK (AMS-UK), the International Board of Educational Research and Resources (IBERR), the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB) and the recently closed Muslim Parents Association (MPA). The movement provides practical advice and religious legitimisation to those who, in the words of the IBERR, seek to ‘Islamise the provision of educational services’. Some of the individuals who have featured in the investigation were associated with, or held positions in, these bodies.*³⁷⁹

Tahir Alam, Clarke noted, co-authored the MCB’s guidance document, “Meeting the Needs of Muslim Pupils in State Schools”. Clarke did not elaborate more on the connections between Alam, the events in Birmingham, and the organisations mentioned, but it is worth doing so, for there is a larger context to the Trojan Horse affair that has been absent not only from the activist-led campaign to control the narrative of events, but also from the mainstream media coverage of it and its academic treatment. This context suggests organisational and ideological factors at play in the events in Birmingham, which may not have disappeared altogether.

The guidance document published by the MCB, “Meeting the Needs of Muslim Pupils in State Schools”, acknowledges the contribution of Akram Khan Cheema, amongst others.³⁸⁰ Around the time of the publication of this guidance, both Alam and Cheema were members of the Shura (management) Committee for the Association of Muslim Schools (AMS) UK.³⁸¹ The AMS-UK is the main representative body for Muslim schools in Britain, and an MCB affiliate organisation.³⁸² It has trained teachers across the country and some of its leaders have advised the Government on educational issues.³⁸³ In 2010, its chair, Ashfaq Ali Chowdhury, and former chair, Mohamed Mukadam were consulted by the Department for Communities and Local Government to produce guidance on the training of Muslim faith leaders.³⁸⁴

At the AMS-UK conference in 2013, as part of a session called “Islamification of the Whole School Curriculum”,³⁸⁵ Akram Khan Cheema

378. Clarke Report, para.5.3, p.48.

379. *Ibid.*

380. MCB, “Meeting the Needs of Muslim Pupils in State Schools: Information and Guidance for Schools”, 2007, p.6. Available at <http://image.guardian.co.uk/sys-files/Education/documents/2007/02/20/Schoolinfoguid-ance.pdf>.

381. For the year 2006-2007, Tahir Alam was the Deputy Chair of AMS-UK’s Shura Committee and Akram Khan Cheema was a member of its Shura Committee. See “About Us”, “AMSUK Shura Council 2006-2007”, AMS-UK website, undated but web page captured on March 12, 2007, https://web.archive.org/web/20070312201859/www.ams-uk.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=122&Itemid=252. The following year, both men were AMS-UK Shura Committee members. See “About Us”, “AMSUK Shura Council 2007-2008”, AMS-UK website, undated, but web page captured on December 12, 2007, https://web.archive.org/web/20071212010517/http://www.ams-uk.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=10&Itemid=26.

382. Muslim Council of Britain, “Mid-Term Report | Strategic Priorities”, 2022, p.32, https://mcb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/AGMReport_28.01.21_2.02.pdf.

383. AMS-UK brochure, December 2013, <http://ams-uk.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/AMS-Brochure.pdf>.

384. Department for Communities and Local Government, “The Training and Development of Muslim Faith Leaders: Current Practice and Future Possibilities”, 2010, www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/6155/1734121.pdf.

385. “Conference 2013 ‘Nurturing Excellence, Enriching Society’: Workshop Resources”, AMS-UK website, Mar 27, 2013, web page captured on January 7, 2014, <https://web.archive.org/web/20140107091225/http://ams-uk.org/conference-2013-nurturing-excellence-enriching-society-workshop-resources/>.

gave a workshop titled “Learning to Teach, Teaching to Learn”. The slideshow for this workshop explicitly refers to a process of “Islamisation” – a term rejected by Islamist activists in denial of any such process in the Trojan Horse schools – and encouraged Muslim teachers to reflect on their proud Islamic heritage for a “New World Order,”³⁸⁶ which happens to be a shared goal of Islamist groups, such as the Islamic Human Rights Commission.³⁸⁷

Prior to this, Akram Khan Cheema co-authored a document with Musharraf Hussain, titled “Islamisation of Knowledge: The concept, the process and the outcomes”, which was published in 2007 on the website of the Karimia Institute, a charity founded by Hussain in 1990. This eleven-page document describes the concept of the “Islamisation of knowledge”, whilst acknowledging its controversial nature, as a necessary endeavour to bring all knowledge generation – and the National Curriculum – within “the matrix of Islam”.³⁸⁸ By this latter phrase, they mean:

an Islamic environment (organisation structures, management procedures, administration, human and material resources, personal and professional support, notice boards, spaces etc) and context or ethos where knowledge would nurture Taqwa – God consciousness.³⁸⁹

“Some superficial approaches to Islamisation”, the document states, include “Searching for parallels between Islamic and ‘European’, ‘Western’ or ‘non-Muslim’ concepts”.³⁹⁰ From this perspective, seeking common ground between Islamic and non-Islamic ideas and values does not place Islam on the primary footing required for Islamisation. There is no true knowledge that is not fundamentally Islamic. There is no real distinction between “reason” and “revelation” since all knowledge is derived from Allah.

One of the purposes of the Islamisation of knowledge project, state Cheema and Hussain, is for Muslim students “To be able to distinguish themselves from others and feel proud of this distinction and [be] anxious to preserve [it]. Thus becoming self-conscious of their true identity”.³⁹¹ It is, thus, a divisive project, despite the claim that it contributes to “community cohesion”. It prioritises Muslim collective identity above the identity of the individual; it sees individualism as a feature of secularism to be resisted. The aims of Islamic education, the document states, include countering “the foundations of secularism”, which include “individualism, relativism and materialism”; the acquisition of knowledge solely through “human reasoning and experience”; and the “unrestricted freedom of thought and expression”.³⁹²

Musharraf Hussain has a very narrow view of the purpose of Muslim schools. At a conference in Bonn, Germany, in 2002, Hussain gave a presentation in which he stated: “The *raison d’être* of Muslim schools is vigorously stated by its founders as follows: to prevent the assimilation of the new generation ...”. He went on to assert: “The Muslim school is seen as the cradle which allows the Muslim child to experience and live Islam. However, the question arises as to how Muslim schools can achieve this

386. Mohammad Akram Khan-Cheema, “Learning to Teach, Teaching to Learn”, AMS-UK Annual Conference 2013 presentation, previously available at <http://ams-uk.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/LEARN-ING-TO-TEACH-Teaching-to-Learn-MAK-C-Feb-2013.pptx>, currently available at <https://vdocument.in/learning-to-teach-teaching-to-learn-56cd16a9392f4.html>.

387. The IHRC states that it strives for “a new social and international order”. See “Aims & Objectives”, IHRC website, undated, <https://www.ihrc.org.uk/about/aims-and-objectives/>.

388. MAK Cheema and Musharraf Hussain, “Islamisation of Knowledge: The concept, the process and the outcomes”, Karimia Institute, February 19, 2007, p.3. Formerly available at: <http://www.karimia.com/Islamisation%20curriculum.pdf>. This page is no longer active, but an archived copy of the document’s landing page is viewable here: https://web.archive.org/web/20070219042212/www.karimia.fortnet.co.uk/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=245&Itemid=2. Document in authors’ possession and reproduced in Appendix 3.

389. *Ibid.*

390. *Ibid.*, p.6.

391. *Ibid.*, p.4.

392. *Ibid.*

aim if they are delivering the same National Curriculum (which is secular) as any other state school.” The implication is that the National Curriculum is a problem for the appropriate education of Muslim children and thus needs to be “Islamised”.

The prioritisation of the group over the individual within this approach to education, and the approach’s emphasis that all learning requires the adoption of an Islamic perspective, is acknowledged in the writing of J. Mark Halstead, Emeritus Professor of Education at the University of Huddersfield. Halstead – who spoke at the conference in Bonn and was acknowledged in the MCB’s guidance for schools – has stated that:

*Independence of thought and personal autonomy do not enter into the Muslim thinking about education, which is more concerned with the progressive initiation of pupils into the received truths of the faith.*³⁹³

From this perspective, he has affirmed, “the cultivation of faith is an essential part of education” and faith “provides the boundaries within which Muslims can pursue their studies with confidence”.³⁹⁴

Akram Khan Cheema is also the long-time Chief Executive of the International Board for Educational Research and Resources (IBERR),³⁹⁵ a South Africa-based organisation whose UK branch shared an address with the AMS-UK.³⁹⁶ The IBERR was established by Yusuf Islam, formerly known as Cat Stevens, to implement the aims of the First World Conference on Islamic Education held in Mecca in 1977.³⁹⁷ The statement of this conference declared that the “ultimate aim of Muslim Education” is the “complete submission to Allah on the level of the individual, the community and humanity at large”.³⁹⁸ One of the speakers at this conference, S. N. al-Attas, claimed that the difficulties experienced by contemporary Muslim communities was ultimately the product of the detachment of education from Qur’anic principles and the prophet Muhammad’s sunna.³⁹⁹ This had to be addressed, he declared, by a global programme dedicated to “the Islamisation of knowledge”.

The “Islamic education movement” – as described by the IBERR – views the Islamisation of knowledge and education as crucially important for its role in the revival of Islam as a civilisational alternative to the broadly secular Westphalian world order. It “prepares young Muslims to undertake the mission of ‘khilafat’ [the task of reviving the Islamic caliphate] through their contribution to the building and sustenance of a civilised society”.⁴⁰⁰

The goal of Islamic education as expressed by the IBERR and the statement of the 1977 conference echoes the conviction of Ghulam Sarwar, the long-time Director of the Muslim Education Trust (MET), an affiliate member of the MCB. Sarwar has stated that “The introduction of an Islamic education system should be an integral part of the efforts worldwide to establish Islam as an all-encompassing way of life”.⁴⁰¹ As mentioned elsewhere in this report, Sarwar’s book, *Sex Education: The Muslim Perspective* – which assumes there is a single Muslim perspective – is recommended in the MCB’s guidance for schools, alongside a book, *What Does Islam Say?* by

393. J. Mark Halstead, “An Islamic concept of education” in *Comparative Education*, Vol. 40, No. 4, p.519.

394. *Ibid.*, p. 525.

395. John Ware, “The Plot to Islamise Birmingham’s Schools”, *Standpoint Magazine*, September 2014, <https://standpointmag.co.uk/issues/september-2014/features-september-14-plot-to-islamise-birmingham-schools-john-ware-trojan-horse/>; AMS-UK Annual Report, July 17, 2010, <http://www.ams-uk.org/general/AMS%20UK%20Annual%20Report%202009-10.pdf>, p.3; and “Akram Khan Cheema”, Islamic Institute for Development and Research website, undated, <https://www.iidr.org/people/28-akram-khan-cheema/>.

396. IBERR website, site now inactive but archived at: <https://web.archive.org/web/20080213230657/http://www.iberr.org/iberr1.htm>.

397. “IBERR Membership” and “What is IBERR?”, IBERR website, captured on February 13, 2008, <https://web.archive.org/web/20080213230657/http://www.iberr.org/iberr1.htm>.

398. Statement from The First World Conference on Muslim Education, 1977, Mecca, quoted in Ghulam Sarwar, *Islamic Education: Its Meaning, Problems and Prospects*, London: Muslim Educational Trust, 2001, p.29.

399. Halstead, “An Islamic concept of education”, p. 521.

400. “Islamic Education Movement”, IBERR website, captured on February 13, 2008, <https://web.archive.org/web/20080213230657/http://www.iberr.org/iberr1.htm>.

401. Sarwar, *Islamic Education: Its Meaning, Problems and Prospects*, p.30, emphasis added.

Ibrahim Hewitt.⁴⁰²

A former Assistant Secretary General of the MCB⁴⁰³ and a former colleague of Sarwar at the MET, Hewitt also served as the AMS-UK's Development Officer and reportedly founded the group.⁴⁰⁴ Alongside Alam and Khan Cheema, Hewitt was a member of the AMS-UK's Shura Committee in 2009-2010.⁴⁰⁵ He was also a member of the IBERR, representing the AMS-UK.⁴⁰⁶ For Hewitt, Islamic education is not just for educational purposes, but for preserving and promoting Muslim collective identity and Islam as a "complete way of life".⁴⁰⁷ Hewitt has written:

If we believe that the issue of Muslim schools is purely educational, we are being more than a little naïve ... The education of our children is crucial for the future of the Ummah and every effort must be made to ensure that the education provided for Muslims in Britain matches the seriousness of the task ahead.⁴⁰⁸

There is no explicit indication that Tahir Alam and his associates saw themselves as implementing the "Islamisation of knowledge" project in Birmingham. But it is undeniable that Alam was part of a network of individuals and organisations that recognised and highly valued this project and its long-term goals. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the guidance Alam helped produce for the MCB – and the measures that he oversaw in some Birmingham schools – contributed, whether explicitly or tacitly, to the implementation of this project.

In 2014, in the wake of the Trojan Horse affair, Ibrahim Hewitt described media reports about "Muslim educationalists and school governors accused of plotting to 'Islamise' state schools in the city" as an attack on these educationalists and governors by government officials and "right-wing" journalists.⁴⁰⁹ His use of the term "Islamise" in quotation marks suggested that he believed no such thing was going on, that it was a fabrication of "neo-conservatives". Yet, a cursory look at the organisations in which Hewitt and his associates, including Tahir Alam, were involved clearly demonstrates that "Islamisation" was a key concept in their thinking and planning.

Further to the examples above, it is worth mentioning that a topic in the teacher training programmes of the Nida Trust – which has collaborated with IBERR and the Islamic Shakhshiyah Foundation (ISF) on the design and provision of teacher training for Muslim teachers in Britain⁴¹⁰ – was "Islamicizing [sic.] the National Curriculum".⁴¹¹ In addition to his association with IBERR, in the same month that the Trojan Horse letter first received national media coverage, Hewitt was listed on the website of the ISF as an adviser representing the AMS-UK.⁴¹² How could Hewitt not have been aware of the IBERR's promotion of the "new and exciting approaches ... to 'Islamise' the provision of educational services,"⁴¹³ his AMS-UK colleague Khan Cheema's document on the "Islamisation of education", or the focus on "Islamicizing" the National Curriculum by ISF's partner organisation, the Nida Trust?

402. MCB, "Meeting the Needs of Muslim Pupils in State Schools: Information and Guidance for Schools", 2007, p.65.

403. "Central Working Committee 2004", MCB website, captured on February 14, 2005, <https://web.archive.org/web/20050214094055/http://www.mcb.org.uk/cwc.html>; "Central Working Committee 2004-06", MCB website, captured on November 29, 2006, <https://web.archive.org/web/20061129193234/http://www.mcb.org.uk/committee/21.php>.

404. See Ibrahim Hewitt, "Having faith in freedom", *The Independent*, January 23, 1996, <https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/having-faith-in-freedom-1325401.html>; and "UK Muslim Brotherhood Leader Heads School Funded By British Taxpayers; Ibrahim Hewitt Wants Adulterers Stoned To Death", *The Global Muslim Brotherhood Daily Watch*, April 23, 2014, <https://www.globalmbwatch.com/2014/04/23/uk-muslim-brotherhood-leader-head-school-receiving-taxpayer-money-ibrahim-hewitt-adulterers-stoned-death/>.

405. AMS-UK Annual Report 2009, July 17, 2010, captured on June 13, 2013, p.3. Available at: <https://web.archive.org/web/20130613012430/http://www.ams-uk.org/general/AMS%20UK%20Annual%20Report%202009-10.pdf>.

406. "IBERR Membership", IBERR website, captured on February 13, 2008, <https://web.archive.org/web/20080213230657/http://www.iberr.org/iberr1.htm>.

407. Ibrahim Hewitt, "Crusade against British Muslims in education", *Aljazeera*, May 12, 2014, <https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2014/5/12/crusade-against-british-muslims-in-education/>.

408. See Ibrahim Hewitt, "The Case for Muslim Schools", in Ghulam Sarwar (ed.), *Issues in Islamic Education*, London: Muslim Educational Trust, 1996, p.78. In this article Hewitt also describes the desirable "ethos of a Muslim school" as one in which "the tenets of Islam influence every part of the curriculum, something not possible in non-Muslim schools" (p.74, emphasis added).

409. Hewitt, "Crusade against British Muslims in education", *Aljazeera*, May 12, 2014.

410. "Teacher Education and Consultancy", Islamic Shakhshiyah Foundation website, web page captured on February 17, 2014, <https://web.archive.org/web/20140217063046/http://www.isfnet.org.uk/index.php/teacher-education-and-cpd.html>.

411. "Education", Nida Trust website, web page captured on July 7, 2010, <https://web.archive.org/web/20100707071509/http://www.nidatrust.org.uk/education.htm>. Emphasis added.

412. "Advisors", Islamic Shakhshiyah Foundation website, web page captured on February 19, 2014, <http://web.archive.org/web/20140219084045/http://www.isfnet.org.uk/index.php/advisors.html>.

413. "Aims & Objectives", IBERR website, web page captured on April 8, 2013, <https://web.archive.org/web/20130409211059/http://www.iberr.net/aims-objectives/>.

It is noteworthy that in the document co-authored by Hewitt and Alam’s erstwhile associate at the AMS-UK, Akram Khan Cheema, headteachers were identified as central to the process of Islamisation. “The introduction of a programme of Islamisation of education,” the document stated, “is primarily [a] headteacher function and a process that needs to be clearly understood by all the stakeholders.” The headteacher – from the perspective of proponents of “the Islamisation of knowledge” – has a “pivotal” role to ensure the school has an Islamic vision, to shape the school’s culture and ethos, and to facilitate the overall process. Whilst not necessarily attributable to this document or its authors, the pattern reported in Birmingham of activist governors targeting headteachers, seeking their removal as a prelude for changing the ethos of schools, is entirely consistent with this way of thinking.

Chapter 6: The Education Committee Report, March 2015

In March 2015, the House of Commons Education Committee published its own report into the Trojan Horse affair. The report made the following statement: “All our witnesses also accepted that they had found no evidence of extremism in schools.”⁴¹⁴ The report then cited Michael Wilshaw, the then Ofsted chief, who stated:

*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.*⁴¹⁵

The committee report also cited the then Education Secretary Nicky Morgan’s statement to the House of Commons in July 2014 that there had been “no evidence of direct radicalisation or violent extremism”.⁴¹⁶

However, neither Clarke nor Kershaw – both key witnesses – were tasked to look for violent extremism or radicalisation. Clarke had made this clear in his report. He wrote:

*My investigation commenced in an atmosphere where there was a great deal of rumour, speculation and un-evidenced assertion. I explained to the leadership of Birmingham City Council and to each of the Members of Parliament who represent Birmingham constituencies that I most definitely was not approaching my role from the perspective of looking for evidence of terrorist activity, radicalisation or violent extremism. This has remained my approach throughout the three months of my investigation.*⁴¹⁷

The erroneous view that Clarke was tasked to look for evidence of radicalisation or violent extremism has nonetheless persisted. In 2017, the academic Tahir Abbas, claimed, in a peer reviewed journal article, which uncritically relayed the views of Tahir Alam, that “Clarke’s role was to explore whether there were any specific counter-terrorism implications raised by these schools.”⁴¹⁸ This is blatantly incorrect.

Although Clarke reported no evidence of “terrorism, radicalisation or violent extremism”, he reported clear evidence of “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”.⁴¹⁹ This was recognised by Education Secretary Morgan in her address to the House of Commons in July 2014. She said, as acknowledged in the Education Committee report:

414. Education Committee Report, para.8, p 6.

415. *Ibid.*

416. *Ibid.*

417. Clarke Report, p.7

418. Tahir Abbas, “The ‘Trojan Horse’ Plot and the Fear of Muslim Power in British State Schools”, *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, April 17, 2017, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13602004.2017.1313974>, p.3.

419. Clarke Report, p.12, emphasis added.

[T]here 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.⁴²⁰

It is worth noting that the definition of extremism Clarke utilised was the Government's as it appeared in the 2011 iteration of the government's counter-radicalisation strategy, Prevent – namely, the “vocal or active opposition to fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs”, as well as “calls for the death of members of our armed forces, whether in this country or overseas”.⁴²¹

The Education Committee report did acknowledge one case contrary to the general claim that there was “no evidence of extremism”. It noted: “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.”⁴²²

The Education Committee report thus concluded:

... [N]o 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.⁴²³

Upon the publication of the Education Committee report in March 2015, and drawing heavily on its findings, the BBC stated that a “series of official investigations” found claims that “extremists had tried to take over several schools in Birmingham to advance radical interpretations of Islam” to be “groundless”.⁴²⁴

Lending succour for Islamists' dismissal of extremism concerns

The Education Select Committee report, supported by its coverage in the BBC, led certain Islamist or Islamist-supporting activist groups and media outlets to declare that there has been no collectively organised effort to Islamise schools in Birmingham.

The MCB declared that “the Education Select Committee's report into the allegations found only one incident of extremism and also said there was no evidence of a plot to take over the city's schools.”⁴²⁵ It also quoted Ian Kershaw's report from 2014, in which he said, “There is no evidence of a conspiracy to promote an anti-British agenda, violent extremism or radicalisation in schools in East Birmingham”.⁴²⁶

An article on MEND's website, which criticised the Home Secretary's announcement of the new Counter-Extremism strategy, referred to the Education Select Committee's report, and said of Trojan Horse that “the ‘plot’ has been declared a sham idea”.⁴²⁷

In a blog post in October 2017, MEND cited from the Committee's report, stating: “A Parliamentary Select Committee report found ‘no evidence of extremism or radicalisation’ and ‘no evidence of a sustained

420. Education Committee Report, para.8, p.6.

421. Home Office, “Prevent Strategy”, Cm 8092, June 2011, www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/97976/prevent-strategy-review.pdf.

422. Education Committee Report, para.8., p.6.

423. *Ibid.*, para.80., p.29.

424. Patrick Howse, “Overlapping ‘Trojan Horse’ inquiries criticised by MPs”, BBC News, March 17, 2015, www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-31905704.

425. Muslim Council of Britain, “Who was behind the National Hoax? Muslim Council of Britain Calls for Independent Public Inquiry into ‘Trojan Horse’ Affair”, MCB Press Release, February 10, 2022. <https://mcb.org.uk/press-releases/who-was-behind-the-national-hoax-muslim-council-of-britain-calls-for-independent-public-inquiry-into-trojan-horse-affair/>.

426. Kershaw Report, para 7, p.4.

427. Muslim Engagement and Development, “Home Secretary announces new counter-extremism strategy”, March 24, 2015, <https://mend.org.uk/news/home-secretary-announces-new-counter-extremism-strategy/>.

plot’.”⁴²⁸ MEND continued:

But still the Conservatives are continuing to use it to implement special measures in schools, such as ensuring that British values are being taught, and as a way to introduce new statutory rules through the Prevent strategy.⁴²⁹

Islam21c, “the flagship website”⁴³⁰ of the Muslim Research and Development Foundation, ran an article with the heading: “Gove’s Trojan Horse Hoax finally exposed by Education Select Committee”. Referring to the Committee’s report, the article stated that “there was no evidence of any ‘radical’ or ‘extremist’ plot”.⁴³¹ Seeming to blame Ofsted inspectors for using concerns over extremism as an excuse to place schools in special measures, the article also said:

Often there is a perceived suspicion or belief that children are being radicalised or there is extremism in schools and inspectors’ behaviour suggest they are looking for a reason to place the school in special measures.⁴³²

Critique of the Education Committee report

Denial of extremism

Islamists’ deference to the Education Select Committee’s report for the dismissal of concerns about extremism fails to appreciate that neither Clarke nor Kershaw were tasked with looking for violent extremism or radicalisation.

The Education Select Committee’s report also fails to appreciate the limited sense in which the term is used in the report. The term “extremism” in the report seems to refer only to the violent kind.

As John Ware wrote in March 2015, “No one, least of all Mr Clarke, Mr Kershaw or ministers has ever claimed that violent extremism was found in the schools.”⁴³³ He continued:

Unlike Mr Clarke, the Labour-Lib Dem-dominated committee fails to draw the important distinction between “violent” and “non-violent” extremism, and by doing so . . . allows the latter to escape critical scrutiny.⁴³⁴

The Committee’s restriction of the meaning of the term “extremism” to its violent kind is not consistent with the Government’s view that extremism includes “vocal or active opposition” to the values that underpin British society, as first articulated in the revised Prevent counter-radicalisation strategy in 2011.⁴³⁵ Such values include “the mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs”.⁴³⁶

As Secretary of State Morgan had remarked in July 2014, “Teachers have said they fear children are learning to be intolerant of difference and diversity”.⁴³⁷ And Ofsted chief Sir Michael had criticised Birmingham City Council in June 2014 for its “failure to support schools in their efforts to keep pupils safe from the risk of extremism”, noting that in some schools

428. Muslim Engagement and Development, “Department for Education continues to use ‘Trojan Horse’ scandal”, October 5, 2017, <https://www.mend.org.uk/departement-education-continues-use-trojan-horse-scandal/>.

429. *Ibid.*

430. “About i21c”, Islam21c, July 1, 2010, <https://www.islam21c.com/website/about-i21c/>.

431. Yusuf Patel, “Gove’s Trojan Horse Hoax finally exposed by Education Select Committee”, Islam21c, March 18, 2015, www.islam21c.com/politics/goves-trojan-horse-hoax-finally-exposed-by-education-select-committee/.

432. *Ibid.*

433. John Ware, “MPs have failed us over the Trojan school affair”, *The Jewish Chronicle*, March 19, 2015, <https://www.thejc.com/lets-talk/all/mps-have-failed-us-over-the-trojan-school-affair-1.65689>.

434. *Ibid.*

435. Home Office, “Prevent Strategy”, Cm 8092, June 2011, p.107. Available at: www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/97976/prevent-strategy-review.pdf.

436. *Ibid.*

437. “Oral statement by Nicky Morgan on the ‘Trojan Horse’ letter”, UK Government website, July 22, 2014, <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/oral-statement-by-nicky-morgan-on-the-trojan-horse-letter>

“children are not being encouraged to develop tolerant attitudes to other faiths and other cultures”.⁴³⁸ Sir Michael had also noted that boys and girls were being treated unequally and that in one school, an extremist preacher was invited to address schoolchildren.

Clarke reported behaviours in Trojan Horse schools, which may be interpreted as extremist according to the Government’s own definition.⁴³⁹ Such behaviours in some of these schools – none of which were faith schools – included the alteration of the curriculum along Islamic lines prohibiting music, drama and the figurative arts; the teaching, in Sex and Relationships Education (SRE) lessons, that rape is permissible in marriage; and the banning of Christmas, Easter and Diwali celebrations. Misogynistic attitudes towards women were expressed in the lack of training opportunities and promotion, as well as disparaging comments by teachers and governors. Some senior staff of the schools expressed views and attitudes – stemming from “a shared ideological basis to their faith” – that were anti-Western and homophobic, that saw the world divided between “us” (Muslims) and “them” (non-Muslims or Muslims who disagree), and that perceived “a worldwide conspiracy” against Islam.⁴⁴⁰

Denial of a “plot”

The Education Committee also stated: “we have seen no evidence to support claims of an organised plot to take over English schools”.⁴⁴¹ This appears to be supported by the Kershaw report, which – although not cited by the Committee – stated: “there is little express evidence to which I can point of a systematic plot or co-ordinated plan to take over schools serving students of predominantly Muslim faith or background”.⁴⁴²

Both the Committee’s report and the BBC ignored what Education Secretary Morgan recognised in Clarke’s report as “compelling evidence of a determined effort by people with a shared ideology to gain control of the governing bodies of a small number of schools in Birmingham” and introduce within them “the segregationist attitudes and practices of a hardline and politicised strand of Sunni Islam”.⁴⁴³

This effort, Clarke reported, has been “co-ordinated, deliberate and sustained” by a network of individuals.⁴⁴⁴ “The tactics used,” he wrote, “are too similar, the individuals concerned too closely linked” and their behaviour “too orchestrated for there not to be a degree of co-ordination and organisation behind what has happened”.⁴⁴⁵

In Clarke’s oral evidence to the Education Committee in September 2014, he denied that he had discovered a “plot”, preferring to use the term “co-ordinated, concerted action”.⁴⁴⁶ Asked what the difference is between a plot and concerted action, Clarke replied:

You could have a continuum. At one end, a lot of spontaneous things just happen; at the other end, you have got a group of people perhaps in a darkened room sitting around a candle deciding to do something in a very furtive way – if you like, the classic plot. Somewhere between them, you will have people,

438. Gary Marks, “Trojan Horse: Sir Michael Wilshaw’s statement in full”, *The Birmingham Mail*, 9 June 9, 2014, www.birminghammail.co.uk/news/midlands-news/trojan-horse-sir-michael-wilshaws-7240705.

439. Home Office, “Prevent Strategy”, Cm 8092, June 2011; and “PM’s speech at Munich Security Conference”, UK Government website, February 5, 2011, <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/pms-speech-at-munich-security-conference>.

440. Clarke Report, pp.11, 49.

441. Education Committee Report, para.10, p. 7.

442. Kershaw Report, para 6, p.4.

443. “Oral statement by Nicky Morgan on the ‘Trojan Horse’ letter”, UK Government website, July 22, 2014, <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/oral-statement-by-nicky-morgan-on-the-trojan-horse-letter>; and Clarke Report, p.48.

444. Clarke Report, p.14.

445. *Ibid.*, p.96.

446. Education Committee, “Oral evidence: Extremism in schools”, HC 473, September 2, 2014, Q.190, <https://data.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/committeeevidence.svc/evidencedocument/education-committee/extremism-in-schools/oral/14299.html>.

as I believe we have here, who have a common mindset, common objectives, are known to each other and work in the same organisations and in the same profession. They have shared objectives and set about achieving those objectives using a set of tactics that are remarkably similar every time they emerge and remarkably similar, as it happens, to those that are set out in the Trojan horse letter.⁴⁴⁷

Sir Michael also acknowledged the reports of numerous headteachers “that there has been an organised campaign to target certain schools in Birmingham in order to impose a narrow faith-based ideology and alter the school’s character and ethos”.⁴⁴⁸

The *Telegraph* conducted its own inquiry into the controversy and concluded, similarly to Clarke, that “there is indeed an organised group of Muslim teachers, education consultants, school governors and activists dedicated to furthering what one of them describes as an ‘Islamising agenda’ in Birmingham’s schools”.⁴⁴⁹

Kershaw’s report, although stopping short of stating there was a plot, recognised sufficiently “clear patterns of behaviour” amongst the individuals involved to infer that they were connected. He also found evidence of the “improper manipulation of school governance” and pressure applied to headteachers “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”.⁴⁵⁰

In his oral evidence to the Education Committee in September 2014, Kershaw explained why he did not use the term “plot” in his report. He said:

I choose not to use the word “plot” because the word as I understand it means that there were a group of people who I could pinpoint who were sitting down at a particular time to plan together quite clearly a programme of events, which I could not find.⁴⁵¹

He also said, however, “I think you will find that my report makes clear there were a group of people who knew each other, who coalesced together and influenced schools improperly, or tried to influence schools improperly.”⁴⁵² He also said “there were people who were coalescing together to try to improperly influence schools and to improperly manage the senior leaders of the schools and the senior teams of the schools, and to remove those people if they so chose”.⁴⁵³

Furthermore, Kershaw noted that in many of the schools under investigation some, if not all, of the five steps outlined in the Trojan Horse letter had been or were evident.⁴⁵⁴ These include:

1. identifying target schools;
2. selecting a small group of activist parents – ‘those most committed to Islam’ – to pressure head teachers regarding the ‘corrupting’ influences of sex education, teaching about homosexuals, Christian prayers and mixed swimming and sports;

447. *Ibid.*, Q.191.

448. Gary Marks, “Trojan Horse: Sir Michael Wilshaw’s statement in full”, *The Birmingham Mail*, 9 June 9, 2014, www.birminghammail.co.uk/news/midlands-news/trojan-horse-sir-michael-wilshaws-7240705.

449. Andrew Gilligan, “Muslim extremists, and a worrying lesson for us all”, *The Telegraph*, March 16, 2014, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/education-opinion/10700041/Muslim-extremists-and-a-worrying-lesson-for-us-all.html>.

450. Kershaw Report, pp.4, 8.

451. Education Committee, “Oral evidence: Extremism in schools”, HC 473, September 2, 2014, Q.184, <https://data.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/committeeevidence.svc/evidencedocument/education-committee/extremism-in-schools/oral/14299.html>.

452. *Ibid.*

453. *Ibid.*

454. See Kershaw Report, p.6, and Clarke Report, p.111–112.

3. installing a governor to ‘drip feed’ ideals for an Islamic school;
4. identifying staff to disrupt schools from within so that the head teacher resigns or is removed; and
5. instigating a letter and public relations campaign to governors, local MPs, education authorities, Ofsted, Governor Support, local media and the Department for Education, to pressure the head teacher, weakening their resolve until they give up.

Kershaw’s acknowledgement of such evidence, and his description of a “determined effort to change schools” according to an “improvement agenda” for the schools involved – in addition to Clarke’s finding of a “co-ordinated, deliberate and sustained” effort to influence governing bodies and introduce “hardline” Islamic attitudes and practices, and Sir Michael’s admission of “an orchestrated campaign” to impose a faith-based ideology in schools – all seem to contradict the denial of a “systematic plot to take over schools”. Whether or not the people involved in the Trojan Horse affair sat down together at a given point in time and planned a coordinated set of actions does not alter the fact that they appeared to act in coordination on the basis of shared religious and ideological values and goals.

In November 2017, in response to an event organised by MEND that referred to the “Trojan Hoax”, Birmingham City Council stated:

What happened in the schools caught up in Trojan Horse in 2014 is clearly established and we must not shy away from challenging those who seek to deny there was a serious problem at that time. There were a number of inquiries, including the council’s own commissioned external investigation, and we have learnt the lessons of the past.⁴⁵⁵

455. Birmingham City Council, “Statement in relation to an event organised by the Muslim Engagement and Development (MEND) campaigning group”, BCC website, November 3, 2017, https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/news/article/184/statement_in_relation_to_an_event_organised_by_the_muslim_engagement_and_development_mend_campaigning_group.

Chapter 7: The Trojan Horse affair and the Prevent duty

Trojan Horse as the alleged cause (or “excuse”) for “expanding Prevent”

The claim has been made – for example, by Hamza Syed in the New York Times/Serial podcast, and CAGE – that the Trojan Horse affair was the basis for the creation of the Prevent Duty. The policy ramifications of Trojan Horse have been particularly huge, they allege, since it led to the legal requirement of public bodies to look out for signs of radicalisation within and “spy” on the Muslim community.

In the New York Times/Serial podcast, published in early February 2022, Syed said:

In 2015, Prime Minister David Cameron stood in front of a Birmingham School and invoked the Trojan Horse Affair to lay out the rationale for a robust reimagining of the country’s counter-extremism strategy.⁴⁵⁶

The podcast then cut to a speech by Prime Minister David Cameron, in which he said: “We undertook an immediate review when it became apparent that extremists had taken over some of our schools in the so-called Trojan Horse scandal here in Birmingham.” Syed went on to mention a speech by Home Secretary Theresa May, who, he said, “made her own trip to Birmingham to deliver a Trojan Horse-inspired speech by extremism”, and one by the Queen, in which she said, “Measures will also be brought forward to promote social cohesion and protect people by tackling extremism.” Syed then remarked:

This all culminated in the government expanding their counter-extremism policy, it’s called Prevent, in a way that we’re still living with it today. Citing The Trojan Horse Affair, the government mandated that public employees would now be obligated to be on the lookout for people exhibiting the early markers of extremism, or other behavior they find suspicious.⁴⁵⁷

On February 15, 2022, the People’s Review of Prevent launched its report of the same name, authored by John Holmwood and Layla Aitlhadj. The report has a section called “The Implications of the Birmingham Trojan Horse Affair”, which describes the introduction of the Prevent Duty in the aftermath of the Trojan Horse affair.⁴⁵⁸ The report does not explicitly claim that the Prevent Duty was the result of the Trojan Horse affair, but the heading of this section and the discussion of the Prevent Duty suggests

456. The New York Times/Serial Productions, “The Trojan Horse Affair” Part 6 (“Cucumbers and Cooker Bombs”), 40:08, <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2022/podcasts/trojan-horse-affair.html#listen>.

457. *Ibid.*, 40:56.

458. John Holmwood and Layla Aitlhadj, “The People’s Review of Prevent”, People’s Review of Prevent website, February 15, 2022, p.9. Available at: <https://peoples-reviewofprevent.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/mainreportlatest.pdf>.

that there was some follow-on connection. The omission of any other possible factors leading to the introduction of the Prevent duty – including, most importantly, the murder of Fusilier Lee Rigby and the rise of Islamic State – compounds the impression in this section that Trojan Horse led to the Prevent duty. The report also mentions a speech by the chief inspector of schools, Amanda Spielman, in which she mentioned the failure of the Trojan Horse schools to teach British values and the attempt of members of the community to introduce “extreme views” within some schools.

Also on February 15, 2022, an article in the Middle East Eye covered the publication of the People’s Review of Prevent report. The article described the “so-called Trojan Horse affair” as “a purported Islamist plot to take over schools in Birmingham in 2014 subsequently found to be based on a hoax letter” and asserted that this “led to the extension of Prevent into schools”.⁴⁵⁹ The article also said that the People’s Review of Prevent report “points to the link between the Trojan Horse hoax and the introduction of the Prevent Duty in 2015, a statutory duty requiring public sector workers including teachers and doctors to have ‘due regard to prevent individuals being drawn into terrorism’”. As mentioned above, the link was not made explicit by the People’s Review of Prevent report.

On the same day, CAGE published an article which alleged a stronger connection between Trojan Horse and the Prevent Duty than that suggested in the People’s Review of Prevent report. It claimed:

*The [Trojan Horse] scandal perpetuated on the back of a hoax letter has been used to roll out the powers of Prevent across all the public sector so that the health worker, teacher, and employer are all part of the surveillance network seeking out Muslim extremists – be that a child, senior citizen, or mental health patient.*⁴⁶⁰

It went on to say:

*The true Trojan Horse story is not the alleged ‘Islamification’ of some schools in Birmingham but the turbocharge given to the Prevent agenda, which has demolished the integrity of every public sector official. They have been transformed into the agents of the surveillance state, ever fearful of recriminations lest they overlook the smallest signs of extremism, and thus end up policing speech, fashion, and religious practice.*⁴⁶¹

On February 18, 2022, Usaama Al-Azami, a lecturer in Contemporary Islamic Studies at Oxford University, interviewed Tahir Alam about the Trojan Horse affair. Al-Azami said:

*The Trojan Horse leaked letter, or the hoax document, is not really the cause but it’s the excuse, potentially, of people like Gove and the DfE hacks who he had surrounding him ... to securitise the Muslim community and to suppress religious identity and so on. And this sort of stuff is, of course, is expressed in his earlier writings. His Celsius 7/7, is a highly Islamophobic document.*⁴⁶²

On March 31, 2022, the Middle East Monitor (MEMO) published an article by Nasim Ahmed that stated:

459. Simon Hooper, “Prevent report: Trojan Horse hoax led to ‘abuses’ of children”, *Middle East Eye*, February 15, 2022, <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/prevent-report-trojan-horse-hoax-led-abuses-children>.

460. CAGE, “Prevent – the real Trojan Horse conspiracy”, February 15, 2022, <https://www.cage.ngo/prevent-the-real-trojan-horse-conspiracy>.

461. *Ibid.*

462. Usaama al-Azami, “2. Tahir Alam: The Trojan Horse Affair after the NYT Serial Podcast”, YouTube, February 18, 2022, 35:03, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iA-kETq9xTm4>.

The then Education Secretary, Michael Gove, widely regarded by British Muslims as one of the most Islamophobic Members of Parliament, used the hoax letter to justify beefing up the UK's counter-terrorism policy, revamped schools and banned people from education for the rest of their lives.⁴⁶³

The background to the Prevent duty: the murder of Lee Rigby and the rise of ISIS

The Prevent Duty was not based on a “hoax letter”. Independent from the issue of the authenticity of the letter, the findings of the various inquiries, including those of Peter Clarke and Ian Kershaw, gave genuine cause for concern regarding extremism in schools (see chapter 9).

In any case, concerns about extremism in schools were already being expressed intermittently prior to Trojan Horse.

In 1996, for example, a teacher at Washwood Heath Secondary School denounced pupils for celebrating Christmas, yelling: “Who is your God? Why are you saying Jesus and Jesus Christ? God is not your God - it is Allah.” The authorities had no experience of addressing extremism amongst their staff. The teacher was asked to work from home pending an investigation, but there was no disciplinary action. He left Washwood Heath a year later to establish an independent Islamic school in Small Heath; and by 2006, it was announced that he became an Ofsted inspector.⁴⁶⁴

In 2010, a Birmingham headteacher, Tim Boyes, met twice with the DfE to warn of “the challenges that political Islam posed for schools in Birmingham”.⁴⁶⁵ The issues raised were similar to those in the Trojan Horse letter. A suggestion was made in the second meeting that a further discussion with a wider group of headteachers should be held, but this meeting never took place.⁴⁶⁶ In February 2013, a governor at Golden Hillock wrote to Birmingham City Council setting out significant concerns about a group of named governors but received no response. The headteacher, Matthew Scarrott, signed a compromise agreement that April.

One of the catalysts of the Prevent Duty was the murder of Fusilier Lee Rigby in May 2013, which, it is worth noting, was dismissed in the “Park View Brotherhood” WhatsApp group as a hoax. As a result of Lee Rigby's murder, Prime Minister David Cameron set up a Task Force on Tackling Radicalisation and Extremism in June 2013. In the same month, on June 3, 2013, Cameron said in Parliament: “We need to dismantle this process [of radicalisation] at every stage - in schools, colleges, universities, on the internet, in our prisons, wherever it is taking place”.⁴⁶⁷ Schools were only one area of concern.

The Task Force on Tackling Radicalisation and Extremism report was published in December 2013, the same month that the Trojan Horse letter landed on Albert Bore's desk. In a section titled, “Stopping extremism in institutions”, the report expressed concern regarding extremism in schools. It stated:

463. Nasim Ahmed, “UK politicians and media need to open their eyes to the Islamophobia they are fuelling”, Middle East Monitor, March 31, 2022, <https://www.middleeast-monitor.com/20220331-uk-politicians-and-media-need-to-open-their-eyes-to-the-islamophobia-they-are-fuelling/>.

464. Wayne Francis, “Muslim teacher in carol concert tirade is made Ofsted inspector”, September 30, 2006, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-407795/Muslim-teacher-carol-concert-tirade-Ofsted-inspector.html>.

465. Wormald Review, p.7.

466. Judith Burns, “Trojan Horse review: DfE ‘lacked inquisitiveness’”, BBC News, January 16, 2015, <https://www.bbc.com/news/education-30847474>; Edward Malnick, “Trojan Horse ‘plot’: ministers failed to intervene amid warnings 20 years ago”, *The Telegraph*, January 16, 2015, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/education-news/11350961/Trojan-Horse-plot-ministers-failed-to-intervene-amid-warnings-20-years-ago.html>.

467. BBC News, “Woolwich killing a betrayal of Islam, says Cameron”, June 3, 2013, <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-22756225>.

*We have a responsibility to protect children from extremist views in schools. All schools in England, whether in the state or independent sectors, including those with a faith ethos, must expect that they will be inspected and assessed on their measures to protect their pupils from extremist material.*⁴⁶⁸

It also explicitly referred to strengthening the teaching of “fundamental British values” in schools and introducing regulations to bar extremist-linked individuals from involvement with schools:

*Ofsted already conducts unannounced inspections of independent schools – these will continue. We are working to introduce even tougher standards from September 2014 to ensure that schools support fundamental British values. Regulations to bar individuals involved or linked with extremism from managing or teaching at independent schools will be in place by April 2014.*⁴⁶⁹

Whilst it did not refer to a legal duty specifically relating to schools, it did refer to the need to make Prevent a legal duty for local authorities in areas of the country where extremism is a particular concern.⁴⁷⁰ In Birmingham, the local authority was responsible for many schools of concern.

The report’s conclusion left the way open for further measures to be taken if necessary:

*Although the work of the Extremism Task Force now comes to an end, the Prime Minister will receive regular updates from departments on how these steps are being implemented, their impact and any further steps needed for an effective and comprehensive approach to dealing with extremism.*⁴⁷¹

This is consistent with what David Cameron wrote in his memoir, published in 2019. He wrote that the developments in policy were about

*shifting the responsibility for dealing with extremism from government alone to society more widely. The onus was on everyone – schools, universities, the Charity Commission, prisons, councils – to actively intervene in stopping this.*⁴⁷²

Cameron went on to express frustration at the speed of change. He wrote:

*This was far too slow, and I should have pushed harder. The power to prevent public bodies being infiltrated by extremists was needed urgently – as we were to see in some Birmingham schools later on.*⁴⁷³

This was a clear indication, contrary to arguments put forward in the *New York Times*/Serial podcast and from certain academics and Islamist activists, that the policy imperative to develop the statutory Prevent duty predates the Trojan Horse affair.

Thus, from the report of the Task Force in December 2013, it is clear that schools were identified as an area of concern prior to Trojan Horse. The Clarke and Kershaw reports were published some seven months later in July 2014. The Counter Terrorism and Security Bill was introduced in January 2015, after its initial reading in November 2014.

On November 25, 2014, the House of Commons Intelligence and Security Committee published its report on the murder of Fusilier Lee

468. HM Government, “Tackling extremism in the UK: Report from the Prime Minister’s Task Force on Tackling Radicalisation and Extremism”, December 2013, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/263181/ETF_FINAL.pdf, para 5.1.1., p.5.

469. *Ibid.*, para 5.1.2., p.5.

470. *Ibid.*, para 4.2, p.4.

471. *Ibid.*, para 6.1., p.7.

472. David Cameron, *For the Record*, London: Harper Collins, 2019 p.425.

473. *Ibid.*, p.425.

Rigby. It demonstrated that his murder – and the then heightened concern regarding the number of British citizens joining Islamic State – were the critical factors prompting the Government’s thinking regarding the need to strengthen Prevent. It is worth citing one particular section in full to demonstrate this point:

Radicalisation and Prevent: We have referred in our Report to the fact that Prevent programmes, from what we have seen, have not been given sufficient priority as a means of tackling the problem of those attracted by radical Islamist and terrorist ideologies. We have the impression that this mirrors the relatively low priority (and funding) given to Prevent in the CONTEST programme as a whole. This misses the value that Prevent can offer: successfully diverting individuals from the radicalisation path could have the single biggest impact on the rest of the CONTEST programme.

We have seen in recent months the numbers of young British men and women who have travelled to Syria and Iraq to engage in terrorism, driven by a warped understanding of Islam. The scale of the problem indicates that the Government’s counter-radicalisation programmes are not working. Such programmes, and indeed the Prevent agenda more widely, do not form part of this Committee’s core oversight remit. Responsibility for them lies with the Home Office and the Department for Communities and Local Government and therefore oversight is rightly the responsibility of the Home Affairs and Communities Select Committees. Nevertheless, from our work on this Inquiry, we are concerned that this issue does not appear to have received adequate scrutiny, far less the prioritisation it deserves. We would therefore strongly urge our colleagues on the relevant Select Committees to consider the problem of countering radicalisation and extreme Islamist ideology as a matter of urgency. This is overwhelmingly in the public interest given the threat our country currently faces.⁴⁷⁴

On the day of the publication of the Intelligence and Security Committee report on the Rigby murder, Prime Minister Cameron announced the report’s main findings in the House of Commons. He stated:

The report ... makes clear the important role of all public bodies in dealing with the threat of self-starting terrorists and extremists. Our counter-terrorism and security Bill, which will be introduced tomorrow, will include for the first time a clear legal obligation on our universities, prisons, councils and schools to play their part in tackling this poisonous extremism. New funding being made available today will include additional resources for programmes to prevent radicalisation.⁴⁷⁵

In December 2014, the Government published a consultation document on its guidance for the Prevent duty in preparation for the passing of the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act, which received its first reading in the House of Commons in November 2014.⁴⁷⁶ The 39-page consultation document referred to Trojan Horse only once. It said:

474. Intelligence and Security Committee of Parliament, “Report on the intelligence relating to the murder of Fusilier Lee Rigby”, HC 795, November 25, 2014, https://isc.independent.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/20141125_ISC_Woolwich_Reportwebsite.pdf, para.16(vii), p.6.

475. Hansard, HC, “Murder of Lee Rigby”, November 25, 2014, Col.749. Available from: <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201415/cmhansrd/cm141125/deb-text/141125-0001.htm>.

476. HM Government, “Prevent duty guidance: a consultation”, December 2014. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/388934/45584_Prevent_duty_guidance-a_consultation_Web_Accessible.pdf.

Ofsted inspects under the Common Inspection Framework. Safeguarding is inspected as part of leadership and management judgement. Since September 2014, as a result of Ofsted's involvement in the Trojan Horse case and increased levels of public awareness, Ofsted's risk-based inspections have increased their focus on fundamental British values and preventing extremism. As such Ofsted are already undertaking this activity and will enhance their procedures further when the legislation comes into effect.⁴⁷⁷

It is important to note that the draft guidance was prepared not only for schools, but for local authorities, further and higher education institutions, the NHS, the police, prison and young offender institution governors, and providers of probation services.

So, from the report of the Task Force in December 2013; the report of the House of Commons Intelligence and Security Committee on Lee Rigby's murder in November 2014; and the Government consultation on the introduction of the Prevent Duty published in December 2014, it is clear that although schools were in view as an area of concern, they were not being singled out. Schools were identified as an area of concern along with a much broader set of areas and institutions where a stronger focus was needed to tackle radicalisation and extremism in the context of the Woolwich murder and the rise of Islamic State.

It is also important to note that the placing of Prevent on a statutory footing – the Prevent duty – was just one element of the Counter-Terrorism and Security Bill (part five of seven parts). The Prevent duty needs to be seen in the context of the impetus behind the entire Bill stemming from domestic terrorism and geopolitical events. This context included a heightened concern about the rising terrorist threat from Islamic State, which had emerged to public consciousness in the summer of 2014 with the beheading of James Foley – roughly coinciding with the publication of the Clarke and Kershaw reports on Trojan Horse. A factsheet on the Bill published on December 3, 2014, made very clear that geopolitical factors were playing a role in the thinking surrounding the Bill, including the need to place Prevent on a statutory footing:

The collapse of Syria and the emergence of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), not only threatens the stability of the Middle East, but presents a clear danger here in the UK. On 29 August 2014, the independent Joint Terrorism Analysis Centre raised the UK national terrorist threat level from SUBSTANTIAL to SEVERE, meaning that a terrorist attack is 'highly likely'.⁴⁷⁸

It is incorrect to suggest that the concept of a statutory Prevent duty arose solely because of Trojan Horse; the idea had been in existence well before the various enquiries and reports in 2014. This has been acknowledged in a book chapter by academics from Durham University⁴⁷⁹ and Northumbria University,⁴⁸⁰ who wrote:

The findings of the Kershaw and Clarke Reports were published in July 2014 and were referred to in the debates on the Counter Terrorism and Security Bill

477. *Ibid.*, para 101, p.26.

478. Home Office, Fact Sheet - Counter-Terrorism and Security Bill, December 3, 2022. Available from: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/540537/CTS_Bill_-_Factsheet_1_-_The_Bill.pdf.

479. "Professor Helen Fenwick", staff profile page, Durham University, undated, <https://www.durham.ac.uk/staff/h-m-fenwick/>.

480. "Daniel Fenwick", staff profile page, Northumbria University, undated, <https://researchportal.northumbria.ac.uk/en/persons/daniel-fenwick>.

in 2014. The reference to schools as a designated authority to be subject to the legal duty to have due regard to Prevent was not, however, a direct response to their findings, but rather a response to the recommendations of the Prime Minister's taskforce on Radicalisation and Extremism.⁴⁸¹

The chapter's authors, Helen Fenwick and Daniel Fenwick, went on:

This taskforce recommended that the 'government must do more to address extremism in locations where it can exert control, such as prisons, and increase oversight where it is needed, such as in some independent and religious schools'. However, rather than a general legal duty to enforce Prevent, the Taskforce recommended a legal duty to enforce it that was specific to 'areas of the country where extremism is of particular concern'. These recommendations were interpreted in the 2014 Contest strategy to be 'in line with' the proposals for the new statutory duty placed on schools in the Counter Terrorism and Security Bill. It is probable that this evolution in policy was the result of pressure on the Home Department, created by the high profile of the Trojan Horse affair, to demonstrate, in particular, that it was taking a strong stance on Prevent and was seeking to limit the discretion given to individual schools or local authorities to implement it. This pressure was created partly by the DfE under Michael Gove which had emphasised the importance of 'promoting British values' at the time of the Trojan Horse affair, leading to a public fallout between Mr Gove and Theresa May. Another example of this pressure is evident in the debates on the Bill itself in the statement of Khalid Mahmood, a Birmingham MP who had been instrumental in supporting whistle-blowers in the Trojan Horse schools, who was critical of what he perceived as a lack of support from Birmingham City Council for his efforts.⁴⁸²

The expression "an evolution in policy" is particularly helpful to rebut the erroneous claims that are being made by Islamist agitators and their allies that the origin of the Prevent duty – and the alleged "securitisation" of Muslims associated with it – lies with a "hoax letter".

481. Helen Fenwick and Daniel Fenwick, "Prevent in schools after the Trojan Horse Affair", in Ian Cram (ed.), *Extremism, Free Speech and Counter-Terrorism Law and Policy*, London: Routledge, 2019, emphasis added. See <https://www.taylorfrancis.com/chapters/edit/10.4324/9780429469091-6/prevent-schools-trojan-horse-affair-helen-fenwick-daniel-fenwick?context=ubx-&refId=2d3b6f56-85fd-47f1-b456-42b0416979f8>. The chapter is available at: https://researchportal.northumbria.ac.uk/ws/portalfiles/portal/17163800/15.8.18_Prevent_Chapter.pdf.

482. *Ibid.*

Chapter 8: Osborne, Holmwood and O'Toole's defence of Alam and PVET

Peter Osborne on Trojan Horse

In his 2022 book, *The Fate of Abraham: Why the West is Wrong about Islam*, the journalist Peter Osborne devotes a short chapter (pp. 304-15) to the Trojan Horse affair.⁴⁸³ The scene is set via the narrative of Tahir Alam's view of events in Birmingham, and little attempt is made to position Alam in terms of his wider politico-religious activities. Alam's work for the MCB, where he was Chair of its Education Committee⁴⁸⁴ and co-author of the contentious 2007 MCB guidance document, "Towards Greater Understanding: Meeting the needs of Muslim pupils in state schools", is absent. Also unmentioned by Osborne is Alam's campaign group, Muslim Parents Association,⁴⁸⁵ or his later involvement in opposition to LGBT teaching in Birmingham schools.⁴⁸⁶ All paint a picture of someone with agency, and with distinct views – a picture absent from Osborne's text.

For much of 2013, a WhatsApp group established by Park View's Acting Principal Monzoor Hussain was known as the Park View Brotherhood. It saw a group of teachers at the school give full vent to their views. Peter Clarke examined over 3000 messages in the group, finding that:

*The all-male group discussions include explicit homophobia; highly offensive comments about British service personnel; a stated ambition to increase segregation in the school; disparagement of strands of Islam; scepticism about the truth of reports of the murder of Lee Rigby and the Boston bombings; and a constant undercurrent of anti-Western, anti-American and anti-Israeli sentiment. Some postings were challenged by the administrator, Mr Hussain, but generally only where criticism was made of other Muslim groups.*⁴⁸⁷

Tahir Alam was not a member of the group, although these were his staff, using the school's name. The Park View Brotherhood group provides evidence as to the mindset which was present at the school in 2013, but it is completely overlooked by Osborne. Yet such attitudes matter. For example, we have recently seen the damage done to the reputation of the Metropolitan Police by (alongside other issues) bigoted comments made on WhatsApp groups by serving police officers at Charing Cross police station. The subsequent Operation Hotton investigation by the

483. Peter Osborne, *The Fate of Abraham: Why the West is Wrong about Islam*, London: Simon & Schuster UK, 2022, pp.304-15.

484. See, for example, Muslim Council of Britain, Weekly E-Newsletter, April 30, 2004, <http://archive.mcb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/issue51.pdf>.

485. The Twitter feed for the Muslim Parents Association is in the name of Tahir Alam. See Tahir Alam/@MuslimParentsA, Twitter page, <https://twitter.com/MuslimParentsA>.

486. Neil Johnston, "Banned school governor Tahir Alam fights gay equality lessons", *The Times*, February 13, 2019, <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/banned-school-governor-tahir-alam-fights-gay-lessons-qk-gwfnq>.

487. Clarke Report, p. 11.

Independent Office for Police Conduct lambasted the police, and put forward a series of recommendations designed to improve both personal and institutional conduct.⁴⁸⁸ Here, bigoted messages on WhatsApp were not considered a “private” matter and were therefore deemed irrelevant.

Instead of grappling with the complexity of such issues, in Peter Osborne’s book we are given a rosy characterisation of Tahir Alam, driven to improve school standards after seeing a 1993 Panorama documentary about an “underclass” of British Muslims, which featured his old school – Park View.⁴⁸⁹ It is a heroic pen picture sketched by a skilled writer, but it is one dimensional.

Osborne’s generosity towards his subject leads him into some clumsy intellectual gymnastics, for example when discussing a Park View school trip: “there is no reason why a visit to Mecca should be regarded as any more suspicious than a trip to the Vatican in Rome.”⁴⁹⁰ But a school trip to the Vatican could be attended by all pupils, since anyone may enter Vatican City. Entrance to Mecca is for Muslims only, therefore excluding any pupil, teacher or support worker of another faith or none. Such a trip would not be “suspicious”, but could certainly be seen as one that excludes part of the school community, and therefore a questionable adventure for a non-faith school to organise.

Osborne lapses into hyperbole in his concluding comments on Trojan Horse, describing it as a “state-sanctioned attack on Muslims in east Birmingham”,⁴⁹¹ and goes on to compare the events to the initial coroner’s report into the 1989 Hillsborough disaster, in which 97 football supporters lost their lives. It is unclear why proceedings against a small number of educationalists represent an attack on every single Muslim in that part of the city. Does Osborne believe Tahir Alam is representative of the entire community? By the time a comparison is made with Liverpool supporters and the tragic 1989 FA Cup semi-final, it is clear any sense of proportion has long since departed from Osborne’s account.

Osborne returned to the issue of Trojan Horse on July 25, 2022, when he took part in a Twitter space event with MEND, on the subject of his book *The Fate of Abraham*.⁴⁹² He was interviewed by MEND’s Leicester Chair, Shockat Adam Patel. During a question-and-answer session with callers, a man claiming to be one of the Trojan Horse teachers, Jahangir (presumably Jahangir Akbar) called in.⁴⁹³ In exchanging greetings, Osborne stated they had met and said they ought to meet again. Jahangir announced he had received several new disclosures and new material. He then asked Osborne what he thought of the lack of media response to the *New York Times*/Serial podcast, and the lack of questions about Trojan Horse. Osborne responded by announcing that he is preparing a long article about the media response to Trojan Horse. He complained that it took an American company with American journalists to re-investigate the issue, something he considered shameful for the British media, and that the programme was trashed in this country by the liberal press and right wing bigots.

However, as is shown elsewhere in this report, in the immediate aftermath of the NYT/Serial podcast, more journalists appeared to have

488. “Operation Hotton recommendations - Metropolitan Police Service, September 2021”, Independent Office for Police Conduct, February 1, 2022, <https://police-conduct.gov.uk/recommendations/operation-hotton-recommendations-metropolitan-police-service-september-2021>.

489. Peter Osborne, *The Fate of Abraham: Why the West is Wrong about Islam*, London: Simon & Schuster, 2022, pp.305.

490. *Ibid.*, p.311.

491. *Ibid.*, p.315.

492. MEND Community/@mendcommunity, “In conversation with Peter Osborne: Why the West is Wrong about Islam”, Twitter, July 25, 2022, <https://twitter.com/mendcommunity/status/1551663414040223751>.

493. *Ibid.*, 53:30.

tweeted about the programme than any other profession, and the response from them was overwhelmingly positive. If anyone has ignored Hamza Syed and Brian Reed, it is politicians who have done so, not the media.

Holmwood and O'Toole's academic defence of Alam, PVET and the teachers at the heart of the affair

John Holmwood and Therese O'Toole's 2018 book, *Countering Extremism in British Schools? The Truth about the Birmingham Trojan Horse Affair*, is a detailed attempt "to redress a serious injustice", which it says is "the arbitrary and severe consequences that followed for the governors and teachers who were caught up in [the affair] and were widely vilified in the press".⁴⁹⁴ The book is dedicated to Tahir Alam, the teachers at PVET and their lawyers. Holmwood was an "expert witness" to the NCTL hearings (see chapter 3).

The general case against PVET, the schools and a small number of teachers, as described by Holmwood and O'Toole, was one of "undue religious influence over the curriculum and other practices in the schools".⁴⁹⁵ This was the issue – not one of extremism – taken up by the NCTL during the teacher tribunals which were discontinued in July 2017. Accordingly, the general case against PVET, the schools, and the teachers was deemed dismissible by Holmwood and O'Toole at least partly on the basis that all schools "are required to hold daily acts of collective worship and teach religious education".⁴⁹⁶ They write:

*PVET was accused of introducing an Islamic curriculum and practices. However, there is no evidence that this was outside the (non-statutory) guidance produced by many local authorities and other bodies.*⁴⁹⁷

They add that for Kershaw, Clarke, their advisers and the NCTL,

*It seemed to be enough that some of the practices at the school(s) were Islamic, without there being any attempt to consider how that related to the nature of their pupil intake, the expectations of the local community and statutory requirements and guidelines on good practice.*⁴⁹⁸

But it seems to be enough for Holmwood and O'Toole that some of the practices at these schools were Islamic for them to eschew concerns about the schools in question. They make no attempt to distinguish between religious practices that help Muslim pupils meet their Social, Moral, Spiritual and Cultural (SMSC) needs from such practices that hinder them from doing so.

These religious practices, Holmwood and O'Toole write, include the

*provision of space and time for private prayer (including the call to prayer, which the Clarke Report explicitly refers to as 'coercive'), Muslim assemblies, provision of Halal food, [and] separate provision for girls and boys in physical education ...*⁴⁹⁹

They write that such practices occurred in Ofsted reports prior to 2014 "as unremarkable, except to state that they serve the pupils well and are

494. John Holmwood and Therese O'Toole, *Countering Extremism in British Schools? The Truth about the Birmingham Trojan Horse Affair*, Bristol: Policy Press, 2018, p.vi.

495. *Ibid.*, p.87.

496. *Ibid.*, p.88.

497. *Ibid.*, p.226.

498. *Ibid.*

499. Holmwood and O'Toole, *Countering Extremism in British Schools?*, p.181. Holmwood and O'Toole are incorrect to claim that Clarke "explicitly refers" to the call to prayer as "coercive". This word is entirely absent from Clarke's report. Clarke, however, does report pressure on students to attend Friday prayers:

4.33 Friday prayers have been introduced at a number of schools. Their part in the central life of the school is growing, as is the pressure on students and staff to attend. We have been told by staff at Park View that a tannoy to broadcast the 'adhan', the Muslim call to prayer, was installed. It could not only be heard across the whole school site, but also by residents in the local community, and was used every day to call students and staff to prayer. However, it was switched off immediately before Ofsted visited the school and also on the days when the Department for Education and Education Funding Agency officials visited. I was informed that a member of staff at Park View used a microphone from a high window to shout at students who were in the playground, not attending prayer. Some girls were embarrassed when attention was drawn to them because girls who are menstruating are not allowed to attend prayer. But still, the teacher called to them.

4.34 A member of Park View staff, who had been seconded to Golden Hillock, held Friday prayers outside in the main playground, making a point by using a central space. Photographs of the event were posted on the school's website but were removed the day before the Department for Education officials visited. Students who did not wish to attend prayers have pressure put on them by staff and other students.

Why did Holmwood and O'Toole say Clarke's report explicitly refers to the call to prayer as "coercive" (in speech marks), when it does not?

contributing to their confidence and integration”. But Park View School’s Ofsted report of 2012 does not say that these practices contributed to pupils’ confidence or integration. It does not even mention sex segregation, even in PE. It does say that:

*Students make excellent progress in their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. There is a wide range of opportunities for spiritual development, for example, through the well attended voluntary Friday prayers meeting.*⁵⁰⁰

But it would be misleading to claim that prior to 2014, Ofsted – at least in its 2012 report for Park View – affirmed that “religious practices”, especially those other than collective worship, contributed to pupils’ “confidence and integration”.

Furthermore, Holmwood and O’Toole omit to mention the claim of Ian Kershaw, who led BCC’s official inquiry into the Trojan Horse affair, that the pre-2014 Ofsted reports for some of the schools did not reveal the extent of the problems that were subsequently reported after the Trojan Horse affair hit the media headlines in 2014. Asked by the Education Select Committee in September 2014 to comment on the “disparity between the outcomes in the Ofsted reports [prior to and after the scandal broke]”, Kershaw said:

*It is very hard for me to understand, because the behaviours were being exhibited at the times of the earlier inspections. The unacceptable practices were there. I know from the evidence that I received that that was reported to Ofsted, both by some governors who were concerned about the behaviour of other governors and also by head teachers, yet it did not appear in the Ofsted reports.*⁵⁰¹

The Education Committee report from March 2015 – which Holmwood and O’Toole were happy to quote without a sufficiently critical perspective to support the view that there was “no extremism” in the affected schools – recognised Ofsted’s failure to identify issues within the schools prior to 2014. Whilst acknowledging the possibility that the 2014 inspections may have reached negative conclusions as a result of inspector bias influenced by “the surrounding political and media storm”, the report stated:

*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.*⁵⁰²

Perhaps, as the Education Committee report pondered, “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”. Former Ofsted chief Sir Michael Wilshaw – whose carefully planned visit to Park View School and praise of the school prior to the Trojan Horse affair hitting the headlines has been widely quoted to support the view that there was nothing amiss with the school⁵⁰³ –

500. Park View Business and Enterprise School, Ofsted inspection report, inspection number 376921, inspection date January 11-12, 2012, p.8. Available at: <https://johnholmwood.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Park-View-Ofsted-Jan-2012.pdf>

501. Education Committee, “Oral evidence: Extremism in schools”, HC 473, September 2, 2014, Q.217, <https://data.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/committeeevidence.svc/evidencedocument/education-committee/extremism-in-schools/oral/14299.html>.

502. Education Committee Report, para. 41., p.17.

503. For example, see: Holmwood and O’Toole, *Countering Extremism in British Schools?*, p.144.

said after the 2014 inspections that “it is possible to miss [warning signs of problems with governors]” in announced inspections.⁵⁰⁴ He told the Education Committee in January 2015:

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.⁵⁰⁵

Holmwood and O’Toole argue that previously “outstanding” schools such as Park View were unfairly downgraded because of concerns relating to safeguarding, including students’ awareness of the risks of extremism, when “there was no statutory obligation to address the Prevent agenda directly”.⁵⁰⁶ However, even prior to the introduction of the Prevent duty in 2015, schools were already expected to safeguard against extremism and promote tolerance of diversity. The School Inspection Handbook from 2012 states, under the heading of “The behaviour and safety of pupils at the school”, that inspectors should consider:

- the extent to which pupils are able to understand and respond to risk, for example risks associated with extremism [and]
- the school’s response to any extremist behaviour shown by pupils.⁵⁰⁷

In relation to the “Quality of leadership in, and management of, the school”, the Schools Inspection Handbook states that school inspectors should consider:

- how well the school’s strategies and procedures, including the provision of appropriate guidance, help pupils to prepare for life in modern democratic Britain and a global society, and to prevent extremist behaviour.⁵⁰⁸

The handbook furthermore states that evidence of pupils’ “spiritual, moral, social and cultural development” may be found, for example, where pupils “develop awareness of and respect for diversity in relation to, for example, gender, race, religion and belief, culture, sexual orientation and disability” and where they “develop an appreciation of theatre, music, art and literature”.⁵⁰⁹

According to Sir Michael, the headteachers of the “outstanding” schools were “moved on” by “aggressive governors” after the judgment of the schools as “outstanding”. He then stated:

When we went into some of those schools and gave them an “outstanding” rating, they deserved it for attainment, they deserved it for progress and they deserved it for behaviour. The first inspectors probably didn’t pick it up because the head teachers were already in place – they were moved on by these very

504. Education Committee Report, para. 39, p.17.

505. Education Committee, “Oral evidence: Ofsted Schools and Further Education and Skills Annual Report 2013-14”, HC 880, January 28, 2015, Q.65, p.19, emphasis added. Available at: <https://data.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/committeeevidence.svc/evidencedocument/education-committee/ofsted-schools-and-further-education-and-skills-annual-report-201314/oral/17808.pdf>

506. Holmwood and O’Toole, *Countering Extremism in British Schools?*, p.154.

507. “School Inspection Handbook”, Ofsted, reference no: 120101, June 2012, para.118, p.38. Available at : https://dera.ioe.ac.uk/14742/1/Handbook_for_school_inspection_from_September_2012%5b1%5d.pdf.

508. *Ibid.*, para 122, p.43.

509. *Ibid.*, para. 102, p.24.

aggressive governors after the “outstanding” judgment was given. The head teachers who had improved those schools deserved that “outstanding” judgment, but schools change very quickly. That is why this issue of the middle tier is so important. I keep banging on about it: inspectors go into schools once every five years, but things can change very radically.⁵¹⁰

Sir Michael added that “With something as serious as Trojan Horse, there needs to be a careful eye kept on what is happening in these schools.”⁵¹¹ Whether inspectors had missed important signs of trouble at the schools or the schools had changed significantly since the previous inspections – both scenarios were possible – they conducted their inspections in 2014 with a more focused awareness on safeguarding and governance issues. Undermining the notion of a “witch-hunt”, of the 21 schools inspected, three were rated “good” or “outstanding”, 12 were found to “require improvement”, and only six were rated as “inadequate” and placed in special measures.⁵¹²

It should be noted that whilst it is uncommon for a school to receive an “inadequate” rating after an “outstanding” one, it does happen and can happen due to safeguarding concerns, even if the teaching and learning at the school remains of a high quality. An example of this is the case of Sir John Cass’s Foundation and Red Coat Church of England Secondary School in Stepney, Tower Hamlets. In October 2014, the school was given an “inadequate” rating after being an “outstanding” school because its sixth form Islamic Society was involved in social media postings of extremist material, apparently including sermons by the late Al-Qaeda-associated cleric Anwar al-Awlaki, as well as sex segregated playgrounds.⁵¹³

Holmwood and O’Toole do not appear concerned about sex segregation in subjects such as maths at Park View, and in some cases in primary schools, as reported by Clarke.⁵¹⁴ They say that “separation of girls and boys for some teaching and for physical education ... is part of the guidance offered to schools about best practice”.⁵¹⁵ But they do not demonstrate that the guidance applies to subjects such as mathematics. They do not at all question the guidance on the issue of segregation or remark where segregation might be acceptable and where it might not be acceptable. Neither do they seem bothered by Clarke’s reporting of assemblies at which anti-American views were allegedly expressed,⁵¹⁶ or where creationism was allegedly taught.⁵¹⁷ Are these practices deemed to be culturally appropriate for Birmingham’s Muslim communities and therefore acceptable?

Moreover, what Clarke and others expressed concern about was not the mere inclusion of Islamic collective worship or practices as outlined above. It was, in Clarke’s words, “a very clear pattern in changes to the curriculum and education plans across a number of schools”, with the effect of “limit[ing] the life chances of the young people ... [and] render[ing] them more vulnerable to pernicious influences in the future”.⁵¹⁸ These changes included the introduction of a secondary model into a primary school, where there were “no lessons in the humanities, arts, music or PSHE”⁵¹⁹ for Year 6 students; and the insistence, in some

510. Education Committee, “Oral evidence: Ofsted Schools and Further Education and Skills Annual Report 2013-14”, HC 880, January 28, 2015, Q.65, p.19, emphasis added. When we went into some of those schools and gave them an “outstanding” rating, they deserved it for attainment, they deserved it for progress and they deserved it for behaviour. The first inspectors probably didn’t pick it up because the head teachers were already in place – they were moved on by these very aggressive governors after the “outstanding” judgment was given. The head teachers who had improved those schools deserved that “outstanding” judgment, but schools change very quickly. That is why this issue of the middle tier is so important. I keep banging on about it: inspectors go into schools once every five years, but things can change very radically

511. *Ibid.*

512. Hansard, HC, “Extremism”, June 9, 2014, Col. 264. Available from: <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201415/cmhansrd/cm140609/debtext/140609-0001.htm>.

513. Margaret Holness, “Sir John Cass: C of E school acts fast to counter ‘extremism’ charge”, *Church Times*, November 21, 2014, <https://www.churchtimes.co.uk/29475>; Sir John Cass’s Foundation and Red Coat Church of England Secondary School, Ofsted inspection report, inspection number 453071, inspection date October 9-10, 2014, <https://files.ofsted.gov.uk/v1/file/2447244>.

514. Clarke Report, paras.4.49-4.50, p.45.

515. Holmwood and O’Toole, *Countering Extremism in British Schools?*, p.129.

516. Clarke Report, paras.4.30-4.31, p.41.

517. *Ibid.*, para.4.24, p.39.

518. *Ibid.*, p.14, para.11.7, p.96.

519. *Ibid.*, para.4.11, p.36. “PSHE” refers to Personal, Social, and Health Education.

schools, of “an Islamic approach to such subjects as PSHE, science, RE and SRE”.⁵²⁰ Corroborating Clarke’s findings, Kershaw reported that “activist governors” were

*placing demands upon head teachers to modify curriculum provision which denies students their rights to access a broad and balanced curriculum, including the right to understand other world religions and the right to sex and relationship education.*⁵²¹

One guidance document Holmwood and O’Toole say is particularly “important with regard to the Trojan Horse affair because it sets out what schools were required to address within the curriculum and other practices and the terms by which they were to be evaluated in the inspections by Ofsted”⁵²² is “Guidance on the duty to promote community cohesion”, issued by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) in 2007. This states that the promotion of community cohesion includes recognising “other strands of the equalities agenda – including gender, sexual orientation, disability and age”.⁵²³ It also recommends “Opportunities across the curriculum to promote shared values and help pupils to value differences and to challenge prejudice, discrimination and stereotyping.”⁵²⁴ Yet Holmwood and O’Toole say nothing about Clarke’s findings that some teaching staff at Nansen Primary School were told to teach that homosexuality is a sin,⁵²⁵ or the unchallenged homophobic views expressed in the “Parkview Brotherhood” WhatsApp group – although they do devote three pages trying to dismiss the group’s importance, arguing unconvincingly these were private conversations.⁵²⁶ Neither do they acknowledge Kershaw’s reporting that at Anderton School one governor objected to “training staff on homophobic bullying”⁵²⁷ – despite governmental guidance for Sex and Relationship Education stating clearly that “Schools need to be able to deal with homophobic bullying”⁵²⁸ – or Clarke’s reporting that

*Inequalities for female staff include lack of progression and promotion, lack of opportunities for training, attacks on their manner of dress and being ignored or disrespectfully treated by senior male staff and governors. Female pupils also suffer inequalities.*⁵²⁹

In their book, Holmwood and O’Toole quote the DCSF 2007 guidance document’s referral to the Commission on Integration and Cohesion’s report, *Our Shared Future*. But they do not recognise the importance of the guidance noting that the Commission’s report “underlines the importance of equality – [including] the importance of tackling inequality gaps”.⁵³⁰

Holmwood and O’Toole also refer to the “Guidance on Sex and Relationships Education”, published by the then Department of Education and Employment in 2000, to support the view that sex-segregation in the Trojan Horse schools was consistent with “the standards to which the schools were asked to adhere”.⁵³¹ They quote the guidance as saying “schools should ensure that pupils are protected from teaching and materials which are inappropriate, having regard to the age and cultural

520. *Ibid.*, para.4.14, p.36. “RE” refers to Religious Education; “SRE” refers to Sex and Relationships Education (in the Children and Social Work Act 2017, the Government changed the name of this subject area from SRE to RSE, Relationships and Sex Education).

521. Kershaw Report, para.9.1., p.4.

522. Holmwood and O’Toole, *Countering Extremism in British Schools?*, p.67.

523. Department for Children, Schools and Families, “Guidance on the duty to promote community cohesion”, 2007, p.5. Available at: <https://dera.ioe.ac.uk/8108/1/DCSF-00598-2007.pdf>.

524. *Ibid.*, p.8

525. Clarke Report, para.4.32, p.42.

526. *Ibid.*, p.188-190.

527. Kershaw Report, p.25.

528. Department for Education and Employment, “Sex and Relationship Education Guidance”, Ref: DfEE 0116/2000, July 2000, para.1.32, p.13. Available at: <http://www.educationengland.org.uk/documents/dfee/2000-sex-education.pdf>.

529. Clarke Report, para.4.43, p.44. See also, Kershaw, p.32.

530. Holmwood and O’Toole, *Countering Extremism in British Schools?*, p.68.

531. *Ibid.*, p.73.

background of the pupils concerned.”⁵³² But it is difficult to see how maths could be considered a culturally sensitive subject requiring the separation of boys and girls, as apparently was the case at Park View. And it cannot be assumed that the separation of boys and girls, even in PE and SRE/RSE, was or is uniformly supported by Muslim parents. It is worth noting Peter Clarke’s words:

I was also told by many witnesses that the majority [of Muslim parents] do not have the confidence to argue against the articulate and forceful activists who seek to impose their views, for fear of being branded as disloyal to their faith or their community.⁵³³

Holmwood and O’Toole’s statement that the Trojan Horse schools should have been judged by standards of “the communities from which their pupils come”,⁵³⁴ does not consider the possibility of diversity within the Muslim community of Birmingham, and is not based on any study of students’ parents’ views. They seem to simply accept that any cultural practices or values, regardless of their appropriateness in contemporary Britain, should be accommodated in schools without question. Yet, there are alternative Muslim perspectives. For example, as quoted elsewhere in this report, in April 2014, Mohammed Zabar, the Muslim father of a pupil then attending Oldknow Academy, said:

If you want to have a religious education, the schools are there. But I chose to send my child to a non-religious school and by changing it they are denying me that choice. They think that in this society children are corrupt and have been misled. They think they have the duty to substitute their judgment for my duty as a parent.⁵³⁵

In 2018, British Muslims for Secular Democracy published its own guidance for schools to meet the needs of Muslim pupils, which refrained from advocating sex segregation in these subjects and argued against opt-outs from PE, including swimming, and SRE.⁵³⁶ It is thus not obvious what the most representative interpretation should be for “the cultural background” of pupils. It is clearly contested between Muslims. We should be especially wary of allowing the loudest members of a putatively single religious or ethnic community speak for others who may nominally belong to the same group.

532. *Ibid.*, p.72.

533. Clarke, p.13.

534. Holmwood and O’Toole, *Countering Extremism in British Schools?*, p.73.

535. Andrew Gilligan, “Muslim parent: Radical school is brainwashing our children”, *The Telegraph*, April 5, 2014, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/10747220/Muslim-parent-Radical-school-is-brainwashing-our-children.html>.

536. British Muslims for Secular Democracy, “Advice for Schools: Brief guidance to support schools and parents in meeting the needs of young Muslim people”, 2018, available at: <https://www.bmsd.org.uk/advice-for-schools-2018/>.

Chapter 9: Forgotten findings

- The recent *New York Times*/Serial podcast reignited interest in the Trojan Horse affair. But the podcast – and the positive appraisal it received in some parts of the media and on social networks, particularly from Islamist groups – focused exclusively on the question of the letter, as if all the problems found in the schools depended on the letter’s authenticity. In doing so, much of the renewed interest in the Trojan Horse affair has ignored the numerous problems found by the Education Funding Agency, Ofsted, and the inquiries led by Peter Clarke and Ian Kershaw – problems fully acknowledged by Birmingham City Council.
- The Education Funding Agency (EFA) published its report, “Review of Park View Educational Trust” (PVET) in May 2014. It found numerous problems with the PVET schools. These included “inadequate governance arrangements for the trust”,⁵³⁷ “insufficient evidence that the Trust is promoting community cohesion”;⁵³⁸ the lack of a vetting policy for external speakers; the inconsistent application of safeguarding policies; the lapse of determinations to hold Islamic collective worship; irregular and unfair recruitment practices; unclear staffing structures; and financial mismanagement. Its executive summary stated:

*There is insufficient evidence that Park View School is welcoming to all faiths and none. It is not faith designated, but has an apparent Islamic focus and collective acts of worship are delivered at Park View School and Golden Hillock School that are not in keeping with the requirements of the funding agreement. There are also examples of non-compliance with the Equality Act 2010 and the Independent School Standards, for example the practice of segregating girls and boys in some classes in a manner which could constitute less favourable treatment of girls.*⁵³⁹

Park View School was found to have schemes of work for Biology, Sex and Relationship Education, and Personal, Social and Health Education “that had been restricted to comply with conservative Islamic teaching”.⁵⁴⁰ Students were told by teaching staff, regarding the theory of evolution, that “This is not what we believe”.⁵⁴¹ Students were left to study certain topics at home – for example, reproduction and the menstrual cycle – despite needing to know about both for their GCSE exam. Students having to teach themselves was also apparent at Golden Hillock School: non-Muslim year 11 students studying for the Religious Education GCSE who wished to take the course on Christianity rather than

537. Education Funding Agency, “Review of Park View Educational Trust”, May 2014, para.9, p.4. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/318392/Review_of_Park_View_Educational_Trust.pdf.

538. *Ibid.* para.26, p.7.

539. *Ibid.* para.4., p.3.

540. *Ibid.* para.51., p.11.

541. *Ibid.*

Islam were given no tuition to do so.⁵⁴² Concerns about the curriculum were also expressed about Nansen Primary School. Its curriculum, the EFA said, “is not broad and balanced at KS2”:⁵⁴³

*It follows a secondary model with setting throughout and specialist teaching. The timetable in year 6 does not include any lessons in the humanities, arts, music or PSHE. In year 5 there are three hours of creative curriculum on the timetable where there may be a wider range of study, for example the Ancient Greeks and the Egyptians. Younger children, including those in key stage 1 have a similarly restricted and unbalanced curriculum.*⁵⁴⁴

- Prior to the publication of the Clarke and Kershaw reports, on June 9, 2014, the Secretary of State for Education, Michael Gove, reported to the House of Commons the main findings of the Ofsted inspections and the Education Funding Agency (EFA). His comments are a useful summary of what Ofsted and the EFA found. He reported:⁵⁴⁵

Ofsted [chief Sir Michael Wilshaw⁵⁴⁶] states that “headteachers reported ... an organised campaign to target ... schools ... in order to alter their character and ethos,” with “a culture of fear and intimidation.” Head teachers who had “a record of raising standards” reported that they had been “marginalised or forced out of their jobs.” One school leader was so frightened about speaking to the authorities that a meeting had to be arranged in a supermarket car park. Ofsted concluded that governors “are trying to impose and promote a narrow faith-based ideology in what are non-faith schools” specifically by narrowing the curriculum, manipulating staff appointments, and using school funds inappropriately.

Overall, Ofsted inspected 21 schools. Three were good or outstanding; 12 were found to require improvement. The remaining six are inadequate and are in special measures. Let me explain why.

At one secular primary school, terms such as “white prostitute”, unsuitable for primary children’s ears, were used in Friday assemblies run exclusively by Muslim staff. The school organised visits to Saudi Arabia, open only to Muslim pupils, and senior leaders told inspectors that a madrassah had been established and paid for from the school’s budget. Ofsted concluded that the school was “not adequately ensuring that pupils have opportunities to learn about faith in a way that promotes tolerance and harmony between different cultures”.

At one secular secondary school [Park View⁵⁴⁷], staff told officials that the call to prayer was broadcast across the playground on loudspeakers. Officials observed that lessons had been narrowed to comply with conservative Islamic teachings. In biology, students were told that “evolution is not what we believe”.

542. *Ibid.*

543. *Ibid.* para.50., p.10.

544. *Ibid.* para.50., pp.10-11.

545. Department for Education and The Rt Hon Michael Gove MP, Oral statement to Parliament, “Birmingham schools: Secretary of State for Education’s statement”, June 9, 2014, reformatted, <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/birmingham-schools-secretary-of-state-for-education-statement>.

546. See “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”, UK Government website, June 9, 2014, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/415115/Advice_note_on_academies_and_maintained_schools_Birmingham_to_SoS_Education.pdf; Gary Marks, “Trojan Horse: Sir Michael Wilshaw’s statement in full”, *The Birmingham Mail*, June 9, 2014, <https://www.birminghammail.co.uk/news/midlands-news/trojan-horse-sir-michael-wilshaws-7240705>.

547. See Education Funding Agency, “Review of Park View Educational Trust”.

The school [Park View⁵⁴⁸] invited the preacher Sheikh Shady al-Suleiman to speak, despite the fact that he is reported to have said: “Give victory to Muslims in Afghanistan ... Give victory to all the mujaheddin all over the world. Oh Allah, prepare us for the jihad.” Ofsted concluded that “governors have failed to ensure that safeguarding requirements and other statutory duties are met”.

At another secular secondary school [Saltley⁵⁴⁹], inspectors described “a state of crisis”, with governors reportedly using school funds to pay private investigators to read the e-mails of senior leaders, and Ofsted found that there was a lack of action to protect students from extremism.

At a third secular secondary school [Golden Hillock⁵⁵⁰], Ofsted found that students were “vulnerable to the risk of marginalisation from wider British society and the associated risks which ... include radicalisation”.

At a secular primary [Nansen⁵⁵¹], Ofsted found that “pupils have limited knowledge of religious beliefs other than Islam” and “subjects such as art and music have been removed—at the insistence of the governing body”. Inspectors concluded that the school “does not adequately prepare students for life in modern Britain”.

Ofsted also reported failures on the part of Birmingham city council. It found that the council did not deal adequately with repeated complaints from head teachers. School leaders expressed “very little confidence” in the local authority, and Ofsted concluded that Birmingham had not exercised adequate judgement.

It is important to note that these were not Gove’s findings or observations, but those of the EFA, Ofsted, and the then head of Ofsted, Sir Michael Wilshaw. Gove quoted these reports accurately and all of the reports can still be viewed online. Gove concluded his remarks with praise for Islam and Muslim parents whom Islamist activists and their sympathisers had ignored or dismissed:

These findings demand a robust but considered response. It is important that no one allows concern about these findings to become a pretext for criticism of Islam itself—a great faith that brings spiritual nourishment to millions and daily inspires countless acts of generosity. The overwhelming majority of British Muslim parents want their children to grow up in schools that open doors rather than close minds. It is on their behalf that we have to act.

- Peter Clarke, in his report, found “a disconcerting pattern reaching across a number of the schools I have looked at”.⁵⁵² This, he wrote, includes the following:
 - the effective take-over of the governing body by like-minded people;

548. Park View School Academy of Mathematics and Science, Ofsted inspection report, inspection number 443507, inspection date March 5-6, 17-18, 2014. Available at: <https://files.ofsted.gov.uk/v1/file/2391877>.

549. Saltley School and Specialist Science College, Ofsted inspection report, inspection number 444853, inspection date April 9-10, 2014. Available at: <https://files.api.ofsted.gov.uk/v1/file/2391825>.

550. Golden Hillock School - A Park View Academy, Ofsted inspection report, inspection number 444502, inspection date April 2-3, 2014. Available at: <https://files.ofsted.gov.uk/v1/file/2391869>.

551. Nansen Primary School - A Park View Academy, Ofsted inspection report, inspection number 444501, inspection date April 2-3, 2014. Available at: <https://files.ofsted.gov.uk/v1/file/2391873>.

552. Clarke Report, p.10.

- nepotism in staff appointments and appointments to the governing body;
- individuals associated with each other holding teaching posts or being members of the governing body (or both) at a small number of local schools;
- rapid advancement of new or inexperienced governors to the role of chair;
- bullying and intimidation of senior teaching staff, and in particular headteachers;
- previously highly regarded headteachers made subject to criticism and complaint by governing bodies;
- interference by the governing body in the curriculum and the day-to-day running of the school;
- the reinforcement of Muslim identity to the exclusion or disparagement of others;
- the introduction of conservative Islamic practices into school life;
- a strategy of harassment to oust the headteacher; financial mismanagement; and
- inappropriate recruitment and promotion procedures for favoured staff.

“Not all of these features were present at every school,” Clarke reported, “but they occurred with sufficient regularity to warrant a detailed examination”.⁵⁵³ Table 1 below indicates at which schools evidence for these practices were found.

- Kershaw found evidence of some or all of the five steps outlined in the Trojan Horse letter in Birmingham schools. He wrote: “My investigation has found that elements of the five steps referred to in the Trojan Horse Letter ... are present in a large number of the schools considered as part of the investigation.”⁵⁵⁴ Thus – regardless of the letter’s authenticity, or indeed its authorship – Kershaw found evidence of the following five steps:⁵⁵⁵
 - Step 1 – Identify schools in a densely populated Muslim 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 (this sect of Islam is selected because the Trojan Horse Letter calls them the ‘most committed to Islam’ and having the capacity to create sustainable change). 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 their children pray Christian prayers and take part in mixed swimming and sports.

553. *Ibid.*

554. Kershaw Report, p.4.

555. *Ibid.* p.6.

- Step 3 – Install a governor to ‘drip feed’ ideals for an Islamic school. Once successful, the governor will be moved on to another school, to distance them from any troubles and to allow them to do the same in a new school.
 - Step 4 – Identify ‘weak and disgruntled’ staff and encourage them to complain to prompt an investigation, preferably an 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.
- See Table 1 below for a summary of the schools where evidence of these steps were found.⁵⁵⁶

556. Taken from Clarke Report, Figure 5, p.112, and Kershaw Report, para.20, pp.7-8.

Schools	Kershaw report					Clarke report									
	Evidence of Step 1? Target poorly performing schools in Muslim areas	Evidence of Step 2? Select parents to turn against schools	Evidence of Step 3? Install Governors to encourage Islamic ideals	Evidence of Step 4? Identify key staff to disrupt from within	Evidence of Step 5? Instigate campaign of pressure	Bullying and intimidation towards staff	Complaints made to BCC but not acted on	Unusual or inappropriate staff appointments, remuneration and promotion	Attempts to introduce a more Islamic character in the school	Discriminatory policies / practices or intolerant views	Inappropriate use of school funds	Inappropriate governing body behaviour	Sympathy to extremist views		
Golden Hillcock school - run by PVEI	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Satley School	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Park View Academy - run by PVEI	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Possible	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Adderley Primary	Yes	Possible	Yes	Yes	Yes	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Narsen Primary - run by PVEI	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Moseley School	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Oldknow Academy	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Anderton Park School	No	No	Possible	No	Possible	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Ladypool Primary	No	Yes	Yes	Possible	No	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Washwood Heath Academy	No	No	No	Possible	Possible	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Highfield Junior and Infant School	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Lozells Primary	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Springfield Primary						✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Shaw Hill Primary						✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Marlborough Junior School	No	No	Possible	Possible	No	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Regents Park Community Primary	No	No	No	No	No	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	

Table 1. Findings by Kershaw and Clarke in Birmingham Schools.

- Also in June 2014, Andrew Gilligan published an article in *The Telegraph* that highlighted the admission, within a WhatsApp group called “Educational Activists”, that there was an “Islamising agenda” at play.⁵⁵⁷ Many in the group were either teaching or governing in schools where activities such as those described in the Trojan Horse letter were found. Gilligan wrote:

Members included Mozz Hussain, head of Park View; Razwan Faraz, deputy head of Nansen; Shahid Akmal, chairman of governors at Nansen; Achmad da Costa, chairman of governors at Oldknow; other heads and governors; and the owner of an agency, Transform Training and Recruitment, which recruits hundreds of teachers to Birmingham schools.

Their leaked messages – which include anti-Semitic and Islamic supremacist statements by some members – have been a key source for this paper. In them, the “activists” pursue what Mr Faraz calls an “Islamising agenda” in Birmingham schools. In the words of another member, “the schooling babysitters, the Department of Education and Ofsted [should] be factors of [merely] incidental importance in the Prophetic endeavour to raise and educate our young people”.

Here are extracts of a sample conversation, from February 5 2014, in which members discuss how to “Islamise” Small Heath, a secular school that had rated “outstanding” and given a clean bill of health in the recent Ofsted inspections.

Samir Rauf, Teacher at Oldknow and governor at Small Heath: “Great news; at Small Heath school we have appointed Shanaz Khan as new head teacher from September. Was a hard battle but in the end decision was unanimous. Excellent for the children, and community... “

Nasim Awan, Governor at Springfield: “Great news. First agenda item is to apply for a determination [official permission to hold Islamic assemblies] which previous headteacher [the current secular head, Peter Slough, who is leaving] didn’t bother with for 25 years...”

Razwan Faraz, Deputy head at Nansen, leader of the group: “Collective worship shouldn’t be first on agenda. All middle and senior leaders are not Muslim. She has to establish herself with minimum controversy for first six months and lead the people [school staff] to believe in her before they believe in her policies...”

Samir Rauf: “My exact words to her Rizwan [sic]. However at macro governor level, ball needs to start rolling.”

557. Andrew Gilligan, “Trojan Horse: how we revealed the truth behind the plot”, *The Telegraph*, June 15, 2014, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/education-news/10899804/Trojan-Horse-how-we-revealed-the-truth-behind-the-plot.html>.

Razwan Faraz: Not every conflict has to be a battle. Not every battle must be fought, sometime we got to lose the battle to win the war. She [Mrs Khan] is a very astute lady. She knows her game mashAllah [‘God has willed it’]. Please don’t pressurise her to start the Islamising agenda first, that will be a lot easier when she is respected as a leader. . . At the same time, she can’t be a coconut [i.e. a white person on the inside].”

Samir Rauf: “Since I’ve been there we’ve had no conflicts or battles at governor level as ALL were yes men [to the school leadership] going for their samosas and pakora [free snacks.] Until tonight. Dynamics have finally changed. . .”

Huda Aslam, new headteacher of Ladypool, criticised by Ofsted in recent inspections and accused by staff of Islamising her school: “Small Heath School is a true achievement. By the way, did you discuss my appointment [on this group] in this manner a bit too open[ly]?”⁵⁵⁸

- In July 2014, the Muslim Women’s Network UK (MWN UK) issued a statement that welcomed both the Clarke and Kershaw reports’ findings that

overall there is no evidence of promoting violent extremism in the schools investigated, although the report by Peter Clarke makes reference to some specific concerns of extremism.⁵⁵⁹

Their statement is worth quoting at length, since it demonstrates an awareness of and concern for numerous problems in the schools that have not been fully acknowledged in much of the recent coverage of the affair in the wake of the NYT/Serial podcast. It also demonstrates that there are alternative Muslim points of view on what happened in the schools. The statement said:

Despite local criticisms, it was right to investigate a number of schools in Birmingham after the ‘Trojan Horse’ letter emerged. Community sensitivities should never be prioritised over the safeguarding of children.

The findings in the OFSTED reports, the Birmingham City Council report by Ian Kershaw and Department of Education report by Peter Clarke must now be acted upon. Individuals and organisations that have failed Birmingham’s children should all be held accountable. No-one should be protected whether they are considered respected members of the local Muslim community or because they are people in high positions of authority in local or central government. Everyone has failed the children and no-one can claim the moral high ground. OFSTED failed because they rated the schools as outstanding during initial inspections as they only focused on results and ignored the

558. *Ibid.*

559. Muslim Women’s Network UK, “TROJAN HORSE: Those who have failed children should be held accountable”, MWN UK website, July 19, 2014, https://www.mwnuk.co.uk/TROJAN_HORSE_STATEMENT_BY_MUSLIM_WOMEN_S_NETWORK_UK_113_resource_detail.php, emphasis added. overall there is no evidence of promoting *violent* extremism in the schools investigated, although the report by Peter Clarke makes reference to some specific concerns of extremism

quality of the curriculum and safeguarding issues. The local authority and Department of Education failed to act on previous complaints and lacked adequate oversight. A small number of religiously conservative individuals exploited their positions as governors and staff to promote hardline ideologies and behaved like moral police in state secular schools.

Some local campaigners too have failed the school pupils. They seemed to play down serious concerns about school governance by portraying them as ‘normal HR issues.’ Very real fears of Islamophobia have also been exploited by invariably stating there had been a targeted ‘witch hunt.’ Their complacency in the face of opposing views being ignored and silenced resulted in witnesses feeling unable to speak out. While we congratulate the schools for their high educational achievements, these should never be used as an excuse to turn a blind eye to misogyny, intolerance towards other faiths and safeguarding failures.

In an indication of how difficult it can be to comment publicly on these matters, the statement also described how the Chair of MWNUK, Shaista Gohir, had been subject to a “social media hate and abuse campaign” and her children threatened because she spoke out about the problems in the schools. The MWNUK statement furthermore lauded the bravery of those who gave evidence to the investigations, some of whom also shared evidence with MWNUK. It remarked:

As a women’s rights organisation MWNUK are horrified at the numerous concerns raised directly with us especially with regards issues of equality and diversity. We were told about segregation in some classes and assemblies. Expected seating arrangements were made clear to pupils so they would self-segregate and which is now being presented as the choice of pupils themselves. Not wearing the headscarf has also been presented as a pupil choice. However, it was reported to us that pressure was exerted on girls who did not wear the hijab. We were informed that they would be reminded in certain Islamic Studies lessons and assemblies that girls with morals wore the hijab. Such incidents upset girls and particular male Muslim teachers also told them they were not good Muslim girls because they did not cover their heads. Some boys also picked up this rhetoric and repeated it.

Witnesses also told us that boys and girls were warned not to sit too close to each other at break time and if these warnings were repeatedly ignored parents were called in. In another case a male member of staff allegedly hacked into a girl’s mobile phone and informed her parents about its contents. It is clear that there is little regard for the safety and well being of girls as, arguably such actions could increase the risk of honour based violence and forced marriages. School staff have a duty to protect children from bullying and not participate in it themselves.

Violence against women including sexual violence should be condemned, yet marital rape was condoned as some boys were taught that a wife is not allowed to refuse sex. Intimidation was a feature in many of the accounts including pressure to pray. For example, in one incident posters were put on walls to say that anyone who didn't pray was a 'kafir' or unbeliever, considered the worst thing that a Muslim can be accused of. Other concerns included a narrow arts curriculum, anti-Western rhetoric, discrimination and systematic pushing out of any non-Muslim and Muslim members of staff who were challenging the hardline ethos of senior management and governors.

- In September 2015, Fuzel Choudhury became the new principal of the former Park View School in Alum Rock, renamed Rockwood Academy. In November 2015, Choudhury told *The Birmingham Mail* that the pupils of his school, who are predominantly Muslim, had felt that being Muslim and British were not reconcilable.⁵⁶⁰ He said:

I am Muslim and proud to be, but my religion does not define the person I am. Undeniably my faith has helped. I think these children were confused. They felt they had to make a choice between British or being Muslim. I was able to deliver the message that we don't have to choose, we are British and we are Muslim.

- More recently, after the broadcast of the NYT/Serial podcast on Trojan Horse, on February 23, 2022, Humanists UK published a detailed statement setting out their position on Trojan Horse and the podcast.⁵⁶¹ Having achieved an amendment to what they complained was an inaccuracy in the podcast, they sought further changes, arguing that the programme had not portrayed their organisation properly. It is worth reiterating their position:

[A]s all investigations found and as we know ourselves, there were genuine and significant problems in the schools in Birmingham, corroborated by multiple whistleblowers and by documentary evidence. This remains true even if some of the other claims made in the official investigations turn out to be untrue or unsubstantiated. It cannot be swept under the carpet as Islamophobia.⁵⁶²

This encapsulates the fundamental difference between the NYT/Serial podcast and its supporters, and those, including the authors of this report, who believe there were problems in Birmingham schools, that needed to be addressed, and which ultimately were addressed by the authorities. Indeed, the opposition to the No Outsiders programme in 2019 (discussed elsewhere in this report) and the reappearance of Tahir Alam in that controversy, serve as a reminder of the need for vigilance in Birmingham schools, in order to prevent a small group of determined activists from imposing their policies.

560. Emma Mckinney, "Pupils at Trojan Horse-linked school thought they had to 'choose between being British and Muslim'", *The Birmingham Mail*, November 29, 2015, <https://www.birminghammail.co.uk/news/midlands-news/pupils-trojan-horse-linked-school-10513388.amp>.

561. "Humanists UK comment on Trojan Horse Affair podcast", February 23, 2022, Humanists UK website, <https://humanists.uk/2022/02/23/humanists-uk-comment-on-trojan-horse-affair-podcast/>.

562. *Ibid.*

- On February 27, 2022, *The Guardian* published a letter by Shaista Gohir, signed in her capacity as the executive director of MWNUK, welcoming an article by Sonia Sodha, which was critical of the NYT/Serial podcast. Gohir, who was appointed to the House of Lords as a non-party political peer in May 2022,⁵⁶³ wrote:

Thank you for filling the gaps in the Trojan Horse Serial podcast. The political motives of the initial investigation and origins of the letter could have been questioned while also shining a spotlight on how the systematic implementation of a religiously conservative ideology was affecting staff and pupils, particularly girls and women. These issues, including safeguarding, continue to be downplayed or portrayed as lies in a bid to exonerate the men. I sent Serial podcast our 2014 media statement [cited above], which was ignored, even though we spoke to Muslim witnesses directly. Among other things, segregation and girls wearing hijab were portrayed as choices but they were shamed into complying, otherwise they would not be good Muslims. Shaming into silence is a running theme even now but this time character assassination of critics like me on social media.

I am glad the “old Muslim boys’ network” was dismantled but wish it had been exposed another way and not through the lens of extremism and Trojan Horse, as this conversation would have looked very different.⁵⁶⁴

563. “Appointments”, House of Lords Commission website, May 2022, <https://lordsappointments.independent.gov.uk/appointments>.

564. “Letters: the catastrophic effect of the Trojan Horse Affair”, *The Guardian*, February 27, 2022, <https://www.theguardian.com/theobserver/commentisfree/2022/feb/27/letters-catastrophic-effect-trojan-horse-affair>.

Chapter 10: Coverage of the Trojan Horse affair in the media and arts

BBC Radio 4

Thinking Allowed

December 2017

In December 2017, BBC Radio 4 devoted two editions of “Thinking Allowed” – the slogan of which is “New research on how society works” – on the Trojan Horse affair.⁵⁶⁵ The promotional copy for the two episodes of the programme ran as follows:

The Trojan Horse Affair - Religion in Schools [episode 1]⁵⁶⁶

Laurie Taylor talks to John Holmwood, Professor of Sociology at the University of Birmingham and author of a new book which argues against the notion that there was a plot to Islamicise schools in Birmingham. Instead, he considers the teachers and pupils are victims of a false narrative. They're joined by Sukhwant Dhaliwal, one of the founders and Editorial Collective members of a new journal on gender and fundamentalism called Feminist Dissent, who considers some of the claims have foundation and raises issues about the role of religion in our educational system.

Guests

John Holmwood, Professor of Sociology at the University of Nottingham.
Sukhwant Dhaliwal, a founder/editorial collective member of Feminist Dissent.

Further Reading

Countering Extremism in British Schools? The Truth about the Birmingham Trojan Horse Affair (2017) by John Holmwood and Therese O'Toole.
Feminist Dissent Journal - edited by a collective of feminist academics, activists and writers including Sukhwant Dhaliwal.

The Trojan Horse Affair - Religion in Schools [episode 2]⁵⁶⁷

Laurie Taylor asks if there was an attempt to Islamicise schools in Birmingham.

565. “Thinking Allowed”, programme homepage, BBC Radio 4, undated, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b006qy05>.

566. Jayne Egerton (prod.), “The Trojan Horse Affair - Religion in schools” (ep.1), “Thinking Aloud”, BBC Radio 4, December 13, 2017, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b09hs4k7>.

567. Jayne Egerton (prod.), “The Trojan Horse Affair - Religion in Schools” (ep.2), “Thinking Aloud”, BBC Radio 4, December 14, 2017, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p05r2sl4>.

The Corrections

November 2020

In “The Corrections”, BBC Radio 4 “revisits news stories that left the public with the wrong idea about what really happened and investigates how and why the narrative went awry”.⁵⁶⁸ Three episodes were produced on Trojan Horse. The promotional copy appears below:

1. Trojan Horse: Brit-ish?

In 2014 an anonymous letter was sent to journalists detailing a 5 step plan to Islamise schools in Birmingham. The so-called Trojan Horse Affair sparked hundreds of articles and several investigations. But the letter was not all it seemed. The Corrections asks, what was going on behind the headlines? Presenter Jo Fidgen speaks to key players, reporters and media watchers about how the coverage measured up to the reality. How did a local education story become a national security issue? And what dilemmas do journalists face when in receipt of an anonymous tip-off? In a 3-part series, Jo explores how two incompatible narratives developed; how the controversial word ‘extremism’ entered the fray; and what the affair revealed about Britishness. Narrative consultant John Yorke is on hand to explain how storytelling techniques possibly influenced the direction the Trojan Horse story took, and why – in the end – we hear only the version that supports our tribe.⁵⁶⁹

2. Trojan Horse: The kingpin

The Corrections revisits one of the most controversial news stories of recent years to see how journalists told it and how they could have told it differently. In March 2014, *The Sunday Times* broke the story of the Trojan Horse Affair about an alleged plot to Islamise schools in Birmingham and beyond. It named as the “kingpin” a local Ofsted inspector, Tahir Alam. He was later banned from governing schools. But is he the villain or the hero of this story? In this episode, Jo Fidgen learns about Tahir Alam’s backstory to see how that changes our understanding of his role in this story. And a Muslim women’s rights campaigner reveals what she was hearing from teachers and parents behind the scenes, and how that challenges the narrative reported in the mainstream press.⁵⁷⁰

3. Trojan Horse: The anonymous letter

The Trojan Horse Affair was one of the most divisive news stories of recent years, a supposed plot by Islamists to take over schools in Birmingham. The Corrections has been exploring how journalists told it and how they could have told it differently. In this final episode, Jo Fidgen considers its impact. The Education Secretary Michael Gove responded by making it compulsory for schools in England and Wales to promote British values, including democracy, the rule of law and mutual respect. Undermining those values became grounds for prohibiting someone from managing a school. The list of values generated a lot of debate and left some British

568. “The Corrections”, programme homepage, BBC Radio 4, undated, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m0008jpc>.

569. Emma Rippon (ed.), “Trojan Horse: The anonymous letter”, The Corrections, Radio 4, November 6, 2020, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m000p0st>.

570. Emma Rippon (ed.), “Trojan Horse: The kingpin”, The Corrections, Radio 4, November 13, 2020, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m000p8xy>.

Asians wondering whether they were really at home in the UK.⁵⁷¹

Theatre: Trojan Horse play

“Trojan Horse” is a play by LUNG Productions, which debuted at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival in 2018. The website of LUNG describes the play as follows:

Trojan Horse was a local story that hit the national press, accusing ‘hardline’ Muslim teachers and governors of plotting extremism in Birmingham schools. Adapted from the real-life testimonies of those at the heart of the UK Government’s inquiry, critically acclaimed theatre-company LUNG investigates what really happened. Originally developed with Leeds Playhouse, and winner of Amnesty International Freedom of Expression & Fringe First awards, Trojan Horse is the story of a community torn apart by racial division, ‘British values’ and the culture of Prevent.⁵⁷²

The play received the Fringe First Award 2018 and the Amnesty International Freedom of Expression Award. The play’s second UK run began in early 2020. The project began in 2016 when the two playwrights, Helen Monks and Matt Woodhead, met Tahir Alam, the former chair of governors who was embroiled in the scandal, and the headteacher of one of the schools. Professor John Holmwood, author of *Countering Extremism in British Schools: The Truth about the Birmingham Trojan Horse Affair*, was consulted during the production process.⁵⁷³

In July 2018, the BBC reported on “Trojan Horse”, the play, in an article titled, “Trojan Horse play aims to crack ‘assumed truth’”:

Helen Monks, 25, from Birmingham’s Kings Heath, wrote a play titled “Trojan Horse” with Matt Woodhead after interviewing about 90 people over more than two years.⁵⁷⁴ ... The play, which focuses on five main characters, uses direct quotes from pupils, teachers, governors, politicians and parents affected. ... Monks hoped the play can cut through an “assumed truth” about the case, and lead to more openness and discussion about subjects such as Islam and Britishness and how religion should feature in schools. ... Trojan Horse open[ed] at the Blue Elephant, Camberwell, London, before moving to the Edinburgh Festival Fringe.

In September 2018, Journalist Andrew Gilligan remarked that “Trojan Horse” was performed at the Edinburgh Festival as a piece of “documentary theatre” claiming to use “real-life testimonies” to investigate “what really happened” in a scandal first revealed by *The Sunday Times*. He concluded that:

Making excuses for some of the most illiberal elements in society turns out to be strangely popular with the liberal classes. A full house of rapt white faces watched the show with me, and it has, perhaps inevitably, won the Amnesty freedom of expression award.

But documentary it is not. This production’s claim to our attention is its assertion to be true. But what it actually shows, once again, is how tricky and

571. Emma Rippon (ed.), “Trojan Horse: British?”, *The Corrections*, Radio 4, November 20, 2020, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m000phx6>.

572. “Trojan Horse”, LUNG Theatre website, undated, <https://www.lungtheatre.co.uk/trojan-horse>.

573. Aina J Khan, “‘Big bad Muslim’: The play that allowed Trojan Horse teachers to start healing”, *Middle East Eye*, February 21, 2020, <https://www.middleeasteye.net/discover/review-trojan-horse-theatre-play-birmingham-scandal>.

574. BBC News, “Trojan Horse play aims to crack ‘assumed truth’”, July 24, 2018, <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-birmingham-44939570>.

dangerous a genre is documentary-drama. It can end up falling between two stools, neither good journalism nor good drama.⁵⁷⁵

In 2019, Oberon Books published the text of *Trojan Horse* as part of the Oberon Modern Plays series, based on the LUNG play, written by Helen Monks and Matt Woodhead. The text was also translated into Urdu by Ayesha Manazir Siddiqi.⁵⁷⁶ An author's note in the book states:

*This play is based on real events but some names have been changed. It is adapted from over 200 hours of interviews conducted by LUNG as well as public documents and contains words spoken by individuals who participated in public hearings. While it contains a representation of some identifiable figures it is not endorsed or authorised by them.*⁵⁷⁷

The text was published in association with the Leeds Playhouse, which is Lottery and Arts Council England funded,⁵⁷⁸ and the charity Index on Censorship (IoC). In a supportive statement at the front of the book, IoC stated:

*We are delighted to be working alongside LUNG on their 2019-20 tour of Trojan Horse, bringing this important play to audiences across the UK, as well as directly to politicians in a special performance in parliament.*⁵⁷⁹

This is not the only example of prominent support for LUNG's telling of the Trojan Horse affair. On the "About Us" page of LUNG's website, a photo of the company's team is reproduced at an event which also includes Tahir Alam and the Labour MP for Bradford West, Naz Shah.⁵⁸⁰ The acknowledgments section of the book thanks, among others, Naz Shah and Baroness Sayeeda Warsi, as well as journalists Peter Osborne and Richard Norton-Taylor, the University of Nottingham and the campaign group MEND.⁵⁸¹ The book's foreword is written by Baroness Warsi, who uses her platform to argue "in the case of Trojan Horse, the government was Islamophobic". She ends by calling for a public inquiry, declaring that we must "truly hear from the voices that have been silenced – the accused, side-lined and outcast. This play is a start".⁵⁸²

The book's front cover is indicative of the author's preferred narrative. It shows a Muslim girl in her mid-teens hugging an exercise book, whilst three hands grab at her, one trying to yank off her hijab.⁵⁸³ It is a clear statement of how the authors view concerns about teaching in Birmingham. It plays to a distinct market, namely, those who believe that the government and the critics of Park View Educational Trust wish to forcibly remove hijabs from Muslim girls. A character in the text refers to Michael Gove's tenure as Education Secretary as a "regime of terror"⁵⁸⁴ and a whistle blower who compares the UK unfavourably to France where "head teachers can find a posh French way of saying to Muslim parents 'S'il vous plait, Fuck off'".⁵⁸⁵ From that basis, the story of Trojan Horse was told to theatre audiences across the country.

Of all the Islamist organisations in Britain, MEND took the keenest interest in the play, and presented it with the "Muslim Engagement and Development Award for Best Islamophobia Awareness Partner".⁵⁸⁶ On

575. Andrew Gilligan, "Trojan Horse reviewed by Andrew Gilligan – the man who helped report the scandal", *The Sunday Times*, September 2, 2018. <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/trojan-horse-reviewed-by-andrew-gilligan-the-man-who-helped-report-the-scandal-sh966t2sw>.

576. Helen Monks and Matt Woodhead, *Trojan Horse*, Oberon Books: London, 2019.

577. *Ibid.*, unnumbered page.

578. "About Us", Leeds Playhouse website, undated, <https://leedsplayhouse.org.uk/about-us/>.

579. Monks and Woodhead, 2019, unnumbered page.

580. "About Us", LUNG Theatre website, undated, <https://www.lungtheatre.co.uk/about-us>.

581. Monks and Woodhead, 2019.

582. *Ibid.*, Foreword, unnumbered page.

583. The image can be seen at: "Trojan Horse", Bloomsbury, <https://www.bloomsbury.com/uk/trojan-horse-9781786829504/>.

584. Monks and Woodhead, 2019, p.7.

585. *Ibid.*, p.5.

586. "Trojan Horse", LUNG Theatre website.

December 2, 2019, MEND stated:

An acclaimed theatre production, written by Helen Monks and Matt Woodhead and performed by the LUNG theatre company, powerfully unpicks the reality behind the claims that there had been an alleged plot to impose Islamist agendas in Birmingham schools. Set in Park View school, the institute at the centre of the allegations, the production deconstructs the methods, political motivations and factors that led to a situation wherein a baseless accusation was transformed into the subject of national outrage.

Based on more than 200 hours of interviews from those involved, the play uses verbatim quotes to offer a voice to those relentlessly stifled by media and political rhetoric. Amongst the many successes of the play lies in the way in which the narrative cleverly balances both sides of the argument, while simultaneously maintaining a sombre tone of indictment against the Department of Education's crusade, and the subsequent impacts of this crusade on the local community.⁵⁸⁷

MEND played a significant role in the play's second run, in 2020, when performances were held in Greater Manchester, Exeter and Oxford.

Oldham, Manchester: Both Dr Sadia Habib, a member of MEND's Manchester Working Group, and Dr Shazad Amin, MEND's CEO, "sat on the panel following the play to speak on the issues raised throughout the real like Trojan Horse case. They talked about the issues surrounding politicians and the education sector when it came to the Trojan Horse case and how this relates to the wider impact of Islamophobia in society". The event "also highlighted how Islamophobia can impact the lives of individuals catastrophically, and why it's so necessary to understand the extent of Islamophobia in order to address is effectively"⁵⁸⁸.

Exeter: Dr Yusuf Abdul-Jobbar, MEND's Regional Manager for Bristol and Gloucester, "was delighted to have been invited to sit on the panel discussion after the play. The discussions were very lively, raising awareness of the problem of Islamophobia in British society. In addition, Dr Yusuf Abdul-Jobbar explained to the audience about the false notion of 'Clash of Civilizations' (i.e. Islam is not compatible in a Western society). We need to move away from such narratives and educate the Muslim community about Islam, Muslims & Britain and how compatible it is with Western society."⁵⁸⁹

Oxford: Dr Yusuf Abdul-Jobbar of MEND participated in the panel discussion. MEND said "The discussions were very lively, raising awareness of the problem of Islamophobia in British society. In addition, Dr Yusuf Abdul-Jobbar explained to the audience the importance of tolerance and diversity within the Islamic faith." MEND described Trojan Horse as "An embarrassment, the fiasco that ruined many people's lives over power, hidden agenda and not

587. Muslim Engagement and Development, "Stellar play exposes the reality behind the Trojan horse affair", December 2, 2019, <https://www.mend.org.uk/stellar-play-exposes-the-reality-behind-the-trojan-horse-affair/>.

588. Muslim Engagement and Development, "Trojan Horse Play – Greater Manchester", March 18, 2020, <https://www.mend.org.uk/trojan-horse-play-greater-manchester-2/>.

589. Muslim Engagement and Development, "Trojan Horse Play – Exeter Panel Discussion (19th February 2020)", March 18, 2020, <https://www.mend.org.uk/trojan-horse-play-exeter-panel-discussion-19th-february-2020/>.

to forgot [sic.] institutional Islamophobia.”⁵⁹⁰

In February 2020, *Middle East Eye* wrote: “Rather than unravelling the mystery of the letter itself, the play, like Holmwood’s book, captures a snapshot of the consequences borne by the students and teachers who became collateral damage in a political-tug-of-war.” One of the playwrights, Matt Woodhead, stated that “The whole point of this play is that it’s not about radicalisation. It’s the complete opposite. It’s about communities standing together, shoulder to shoulder.”⁵⁹¹

In May 2020, Madiha Ansari – a freelance writer, performer, community arts producer, and founder of The Cultural Ecology Project which aims to develop mentorship pathways for BAME female artists – was a speaker at a MEND event. Amongst other interests, Madiha discussed her work on The Trojan Horse play and her collaboration with MEND while the play was touring in 2019-20.⁵⁹²

LUNG Theatre has spread its activism beyond the issue of Trojan Horse. It also operates an End Prevent Campaign with a group named Maslaha. End Prevent Campaign collaborates with the People’s Review of Prevent.⁵⁹³ The LUNG Theatre website has a page titled “End Prevent Campaign”, which says:

*In partnership with Maslaha, LUNG are [sic.] launching the ‘End Prevent’ campaign to raise awareness through art around the government’s Prevent policy. After the legacy of the Trojan Horse tour, LUNG are [sic.] committed to working with teachers, governors and students most impacted by Prevent.*⁵⁹⁴

Poetry and discussion

In April 2020, Razwan Faraz, one of the five teachers whose misconduct trial collapsed due to a legal technicality – the failure of the DfE’s lawyers to provide the teachers’ lawyers the witness testimony transcripts from Peter Clarke’s inquiry – was amongst the guests on stage in a one-off event in Farringdon, London. The promotional copy for the event, “Speaking Under Surveillance”, is as follows:

*What is the impact of the UK government’s counter terror policies, such as Prevent, on the Muslim communities who encounter them on a daily basis?
How can we address these issues together?*

*Join us for an evening of discussion, poetry and audio drama featuring Suhaiymah Manzoor-Khan, Azeezat Johnson and Razwan Faraz, in partnership with Liberty and Maslaha.*⁵⁹⁵

590. Muslim Engagement and Development, “Trojan Horse Play – Oxford Panel Discussion (25/26th February 2020)”, March 18, 2020, <https://www.mend.org.uk/trojan-horse-play-oxford-panel-discussion-25-26th-february-2020/>.

591. Aina J Khan, “‘Big bad Muslim’: The play that allowed Trojan Horse teachers to start healing”.

592. Muslim Engagement and Development, “MENDtalks: What Muslim Women Want You to Know”, March 13, 2020, <https://www.mend.org.uk/mendtalks-what-muslim-women-want-you-to-know/>.

593. End Prevent Campaign website, undated, <https://www.endprevent.co.uk/>.

594. “End Prevent Campaign”, LUNG Theatre website, undated, <https://www.lungtheatre.co.uk/the-end-prevent-campaign>.

595. “Speaking Under Surveillance”, event listing (event April 21, 2020), <https://www.allinlondon.co.uk/whats-on/event-220743-speaking-under-surveillance>.

Chapter 11: The New York Times/ Serial podcast: Initial journalistic coverage

News of the “Trojan Horse Affair” podcast series first broke on 27 January this year, when Serial Productions, a New York Times company, tweeted to announce a “new show” about a “mysterious letter that shocked Britain.”⁵⁹⁶ The Trojan Horse podcast series presented by Hamza Syed and Brian Reed began on February 3, 2022. In the 27 days from January 27 until February 22, we charted its news coverage, podcast reviews and statements from representative organisations.

This research found a total of 34 pieces, of which only four, marked in grey in Table 2 below, were negative. The more critical pieces came after more than two weeks of enthusiastic coverage, albeit in distinct sections of the media. Of the 34 articles, five appeared on one website – *Middle East Eye* – each by a different writer, an indication perhaps of how important the site considered the podcast to be. The *Observer*, *Middle East Eye* and the local *Birmingham Live* were the only outlets to cover the series before it began.

Islamic and left leaning sites (*Socialist Worker* and *Novara Media*) were to the fore in giving the podcast positive coverage. *Novara Media* and its journalists proved particularly vociferous. International media with an Islamic focus, namely the aforementioned *Middle East Eye*, the *New Arab* and *Press TV* were equally enthusiastic. British Islamist outlets – *Islam21c*, *5 Pillars*, the *MCB*, *MEND*, and *CAGE*, were all supportive of the podcast.

A further aspect was the interest shown by journalists and websites dedicated to identity politics – a positive article on *My London*, for example was written by Unzela Khan, the site’s “Race and Diversity Correspondent”, and a finalist in the British Muslim Awards in the Media Achiever of the year category.⁵⁹⁷ *Media Diversified* takes a similar approach, working to address the “under-representation of BAME communities” in the media.⁵⁹⁸ Its correspondent, Raf, takes the UK media to task for not conducting the type of research he observes in the NYT/Serial podcast. This, as we will see below, became a recurring theme among those supportive of Syed and Reed’s work.

Table 2 below records the articles found, which received a minimum of five retweets on Twitter, their authors and publishers, and a link to each piece. Those marked in grey were critical of the podcast.

596. Serial/@serial, Twitter post, January 27, 2022, <https://twitter.com/serial/status/1486685429441208335>.

597. See the textbox, “Unzela Khan Race and Diversity correspondent” in [Unzela Khan, “Trojan Horse scandal explained and how it affects Muslim Londoners”, My London, February 17, 2022, https://www.mylondon.news/news/uk-world-news/what-trojan-horse-scandal-how-23121045](https://www.mylondon.news/news/uk-world-news/what-trojan-horse-scandal-how-23121045).

598. “About Us”, *Media Diversified* website, <https://mediadiversified.org/about-us/>.

Date	Publication and link	Journalist
30-Jan	Observer ⁵⁹⁹	Clea Skopeliti
02-Feb	Middle East Eye ⁶⁰⁰	Alex MacDonald
02-Feb	Birmingham Live ⁶⁰¹	James Rodger
03-Feb	Middle East Eye ⁶⁰²	Simon Hooper
04-Feb	Guardian ⁶⁰³	Richard Adams, Education Editor
04-Feb	Times ⁶⁰⁴	Emma Yeomans
05-Feb	Guardian ⁶⁰⁵	Miranda Sawyer
07-Feb	Financial Times ⁶⁰⁶	Fiona Sturges
07-Feb	Socialist Worker ⁶⁰⁷	Charlie Kimber
10-Feb	MCB ⁶⁰⁸	Press release
10-Feb	The Times ⁶⁰⁹	Andrew Billen
11-Feb	The New Arab ⁶¹⁰	Asim Qureshi
11-Feb	The Conversation ⁶¹¹	Chris Allen
13-Feb	Islam 21c ⁶¹²	Shaheer Choudhury
15-Feb	5 Pillars ⁶¹³	Editorial staff
15-Feb	Middle East Eye ⁶¹⁴	Simon Hooper
15-Feb	Middle East Eye ⁶¹⁵	Peter Osborne
15-Feb	CAGE ⁶¹⁶	Editorial staff
16-Feb	5 Pillars ⁶¹⁷	Editorial staff
16-Feb	Press TV ⁶¹⁸	Rob Carter
17-Feb	The Conversation ⁶¹⁹	Celine Benoit
17-Feb	Novara ⁶²⁰	Ash Sarkar
17-Feb	Muslim Matters ⁶²¹	Mariya Bint Rehan
17-Feb	My London ⁶²²	Unzela Khan
17-Feb	The Week UK ⁶²³	Editorial staff
18-Feb	Birmingham Mail ⁶²⁴	Jane Haynes
18-Feb	Middle East Eye ⁶²⁵	Shereen Fernandez, Khadijah Elshayyal
18-Feb	Independent Ireland ⁶²⁶	Henrietta Mc Kervey
19-Feb	Birmingham Mail ⁶²⁷	Jane Haynes
20-Feb	Observer ⁶²⁸	Sonia Sodha
20-Feb	Media Diversified ⁶²⁹	Raf
20-Feb	Daily Mail ⁶³⁰	Tom Leonard
21-Feb	Irish Examiner ⁶³¹	Eoghan O'Sullivan
22-Feb	Harry's Place ⁶³²	Mohd Ali

Table 2: Media articles on the NYT podcast, 27 January – 22 February 2022.

Trojan Horse: The Petition

Further developments in the aftermath of the podcast included an online petition, created by Zeeshan Ali, which opened on February 17, 2022. Praising the NYT series, this demands “an independent public inquiry into the Birmingham ‘Trojan Horse’ affair” and in what has become

599. Clea Skopeliti, 'US podcast on Birmingham's Trojan horse affair threatens to 'reopen old wounds'', *The Guardian*, January 30, 2022, <https://www.theguardian.com/media/2022/jan/30/us-podcast-birmingham-trojan-horse-affair-reopen-old-wounds>.

600. Alex MacDonald, 'The 'Trojan Horse affair' explained', *Middle East Eye*, February 2, 2022, <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/uk-trojan-horse-affair-explained>.

601. James Rodger, 'Serial and 5-Town creators have new podcast set in Birmingham', *The Birmingham Mail*, February 2, 2022, <https://www.birminghammail.co.uk/news/showbiz-tv/serial-town-creators-new-podcast-22955321>.

602. Simon Hooper, 'UK minister Gove launched 'Trojan Horse' inquiry despite being told letter was bogus', *Middle East Eye*, February 3, 2022, <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/uk-trojan-horse-inquiry-gove-launched-told-bogus>.

603. Richard Adams, 'Gove acted on 'bogus' allegations of Islamist plot to take over Birmingham schools', *The Guardian*, February 4, 2022, <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2022/feb/04/michael-gove-acted-on-bogus-allegations-of-islamist-plot-to-take-over-birmingham-schools>.

604. Emma Yeomans, 'New Serial podcast to tell Trojan Horse affair', *The Times*, February 4, 2022, <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/new-serial-podcast-to-tell-trojan-horse-affair-d9wmxvdp>.

605. Miranda Sawyer, 'The week in audio: The Trojan Horse affair: Fake Psychic: I, An Actor: a Podcast', *The Guardian*, February 5, 2022, <https://www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/2022/feb/05/trojan-horse-affair-podcast-brian-reed-review-serial-fake-psychic-i-an-actor-nigel-planner-nicholas-craig>.

606. Fiona Sturges, 'The Trojan Horse Affair – promising podcast from Serial producers falls flat', *The FT*, February 7, 2022, <https://www.ft.com/content/74de-e7de9-afde-4510-8a73-72cd50611ab7>.

607. Charlie Kimber, 'How Michael Gove spread the racist 'Trojan Horse' conspiracy', *Socialist Worker*, February 7, 2022, <https://socialistworker.co.uk/comment/how-michael-gove-spread-the-racist-trojan-horse-conspiracy/>.

608. Muslim Council of Britain, 'Who was behind the National Hoax? Muslim Council of Britain Calls for Independent Public Inquiry into 'Trojan Horse' Affair', MCB Press Release, February 10, 2022, <https://mcb.org.uk/press-releases/who-was-behind-the-national-hoax-muslim-council-of-britain-calls-for-independent-public-inquiry-into-trojan-horse-affair/>.

609. Andrew Billen, 'What went on inside the Trojan Horse scandal?', *The Times*, February 10, 2022, <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/what-went-on-inside-the-trojan-horse-scandal-ajf626ale>.

610. Asim Qureshi, 'The Trojan Horse Affair: The Islamophobic hoax masquerading as Home Office policy', *The New Arab*, February 11, 2022, <https://english.aljazeera.com/features/what-really-happened-trojan-horse-affair>.

611. Chris Allen, 'The Trojan Horse affair: Islamophobia scholar on the long shadow cast by the scandal', *The Conversation*, February 11, 2022, <https://theconversation.com/the-trojan-horse-affair-islamophobia-scholar-on-the-long-shadow-cast-by-the-scandal-176281>.

612. Shaheer Choudhury, 'MCB demands independent inquiry into Trojan Horse scandal after viral podcast series unearths devastating facts', *Islam21c*, February 13, 2022, <https://www.islam21c.com/news-views/mcb-demands-independent-inquiry-into-trojan-horse-scandal/>.

613. Islam21c, 'The Trojan Horse affair: A microcosm of how Prevent targets Muslims', February 15, 2022, <https://5pillarsuk.com/2022/02/15/the-trojan-horse-affair-a-microcosm-of-how-prevent-targets-muslims/>.

614. Simon Hooper, 'Prevent report: Trojan Horse hoax led to 'abuses' of children', *Middle East Eye*, February 15, 2022, <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/prevent-report-trojan-horse-hoax-led-abuses-children>.

615. Peter Osborne, 'Trojan Horse affair: We need the truth. Only the New York Times has tried to tell it', *Middle East Eye*, February 15, 2022, <https://www.middleeasteye.net/opinion/uk-trojan-horse-affair-need-truth-nyt-podcast-attempted>.

616. CAGE, 'Prevent – the real Trojan Horse conspiracy', February 15, 2022, <https://www.cage.ngo/prevent-the-real-trojan-horse-conspiracy>.

617. 5Pillars, 'The Trojan Horse Affair stinks of racism', February 16, 2022, <https://5pillarsuk.com/2022/02/16/the-trojan-horse-affair-stinks-of-racism/>.

618. Robert Carter, 'Trojan Horse hoax: Muslim victims demand justice', *Press TV*, February 16, 2022, <https://www.presstv.co.uk/Detail/2022/02/16/676935/Trojan-Horse-hoax-Muslim-victims-demand-justice>.

619. Céline Benoit, 'Trojan Horse Affair: podcast reignites questions about the place of religion in English and Welsh schools', *The Conversation*, February 17, 2022, <https://theconversation.com/trojan-horse-affair-podcast-reignites-questions-about-the-place-of-religion-in-english-and-welsh-schools-176730>.

620. Novara Media, 'Why the Trojan Horse Affair Is a Very British Scandal', February 17, 2022, <https://novaramedia.com/2022/02/17/why-the-trojan-horse-affair-is-a-very-british-scandal/>.

621. Mariya Bint Rehan, 'The Trojan Horse Affair: A British Muslim Parent Perspective', *Muslim Matters*, February 17, 2022, <https://muslimmatters.org/2022/02/17/trojan-horse-affair-british-muslim-parent/>.

622. Unzela Khan, 'Trojan Horse scandal explained and how it affects Muslim Londoners', *My London*, February 17, 2022, <https://www.mylondonnews.com/news/uk-world-news/what-trojan-horse-scandal-how-23121045>.

623. The Week, 'A history of the Trojan Horse scandal', February 17, 2022, <https://www.theweek.co.uk/news/uk-news/955783/history-of-trojan-horse-scandal-true-story>.

624. Jane Haynes, 'Birmingham Trojan Horse affair: Muslim Council of Britain calls for new public inquiry', *The Birmingham Mail*, February 18, 2022, <https://www.birminghammail.co.uk/news/midlands-news/birmingham-trojan-horse-affair-muslim-23129345>.

625. Shereen Fernandez and Khadijah Elshayyal, 'Trojan Horse affair: Why new podcast evokes both enthusiasm and rage', *Middle East Eye*, February 18, 2022, <https://www.middleeasteye.net/opinion/uk-islam-trojan-horse-affair-new-podcast-enthusiasm-rage-why>.

626. Henrietta Mc Kervey, 'The Trojan Horse Affair: a completely implausible true story', *The Irish Independent*, February 19, 2022, <https://www.independent.ie/entertainment/the-trojan-horse-affair-a-completely-implausible-true-story-41357389.html>.

627. Jane Haynes, 'Birmingham Trojan Horse affair: The Dudley student behind controversial podcast', *The Birmingham Mail*, February 19, 2022, <https://www.birminghammail.co.uk/news/midlands-news/birmingham-trojan-horse-affair-dudley-23139180>.

628. Sonia Sodha, 'The Trojan Horse Affair: how Serial podcast got it so wrong', *The Observer*, February 20, 2022, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/feb/20/the-trojan-horse-affair-how-serial-podcast-got-it-so-wrong>.

629. Media Diversified, 'Trojan Horse: A failure of British journalism', February 20, 2022, <https://mediadiversified.org/2022/02/20/trojan-horse-a-failure-of-british-journalism-and-that-includes-the-observer/>.

630. Tom Leonard, 'Why DOES America's smuggest newspaper have such a pathological loathing for Britain?', *The Daily Mail*, February 22, 2022, <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-10536773/TOM-LEONARD-DOES-Americas-smuggest-newspaper-pathological-loathing-Britain.html>.

631. Eoghan O'Sullivan, 'Podcast Corner: Trojan Horse Affair is the latest offering from Serial stable', *The Irish Examiner*, February 22, 2022, <https://www.irishexaminer.com/lifestyle/artsandculture/aid-40813050.html>.

632. Mohd Ali, 'Trojan Horse Affair : A Former Student's View', *Harry's Place*, February 22, 2022, <http://harryshary.net/2022/02/22/trojan-horse-affair-a-former-students-view/>.

familiar rhetoric claims “The consequences of the ‘Trojan Hoax’ not only ruined the lives of those directly involved but affected a whole generation of Muslims across the UK.”⁶³³

The petition garnered limited appeal – by April 4, it had received 6,660 signatures and by August 17, when the petition was closed, the signatories had only risen to 6,705, well short of the 100,000 signatures required to ensure a parliamentary debate. If the events in Birmingham schools really “affected a whole generation of Muslims across the UK”, we could reasonably have expected greater demand for an examination of this affair in parliament. Here at least, the interest in the podcast does not appear to be translated into political action.

MEND names a member of its policy team as Zeeshan Ali.⁶³⁴ It is unclear if this is the same Zeeshan Ali as the person who created this petition.

Of further note concerning the petition is the similar wording to a recent MCB press release. Compare the wording of the petition with an extract from Zara Mohammed’s statement in the MCB press release of February 10, 2022. They are very similar, although the paragraphs are re-arranged. The petition states:

Following the revelations in a podcast by journalists Hamza Syed and Brian Reed. The truth now needs to come out. Who was behind this hoax? Why did decision makers dismiss crucial evidence presented at every turn? We know who the victims of this hoax were, but who were the beneficiaries?

[...]

This podcast reveals a deep-rooted nature of institutional Islamophobia in the UK. Each episode is a damning indictment of how narratives and tropes can perpetuated to feed a story of moral panic, in which Muslims are centre stage. The consequences of the ‘Trojan Hoax’ not only ruined the lives of those directly involved but affected a whole generation of Muslims across the UK.

The MCB’s press release, titled, “Who was behind the National Hoax? Muslim Council of Britain Calls for Independent Public Inquiry into ‘Trojan Horse’ Affair” quotes its Secretary General Zara Mohammed as saying:

This podcast reveals the deep-rooted nature of institutional Islamophobia in the UK. Each episode is a damning indictment of how narratives and tropes were perpetuated to feed a story of moral panic, in which Muslims are centre stage. The consequences of the ‘Trojan Hoax’ not only ruined the lives of those directly involved but punished a whole generation of Muslims across the UK. This series reflects the hostile political environment in which British Muslims still find themselves in today, suspect communities and not quite British enough.

*The truth now needs to come out. Who was behind this hoax? Why did decision makers dismiss crucial evidence presented at every turn? We know who the victims of this hoax were, but who were the beneficiaries?*⁶³⁵

633. “Conduct an independent public inquiry into the Birmingham ‘Trojan Horse’ affair”, UK Government and Parliament, August 17, 2022 (date closed), <https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/608772>.

634. Muslim Engagement and Development, “IAM2020: Breaking into Media”, December 1, 2020, <https://www.mend.org.uk/iam2020-breaking-into-media/>.

635. Muslim Council of Britain, “Who was behind the National Hoax? Muslim Council of Britain Calls for Independent Public Inquiry into ‘Trojan Horse’ Affair”, MCB Press Release, February 10, 2022. <https://mcb.org.uk/press-releases/who-was-behind-the-national-hoax-muslim-council-of-britain-calls-for-independent-public-inquiry-into-trojan-horse-affair/>.

Did MEND and the MCB work together to create the petition?

Complimentary Podcasts

Following the release of the NYT series, the format of podcasting was followed at least four times by organisations and public figures sympathetic to the work of Hamza Syed and Brian Reed. On February 15, the activist Imrana Mahmood held a Twitter space event. Her tweet advertising the event is notable for its framing of the NYT podcast as evidencing a traumatic experience for listeners – “I think many of us need to process our emotions having listened to #trojanhorseaffair.”⁶³⁶ The advertised discussion included two academics, Fatima Rajina of the Stephen Lawrence Research Centre at De Montford University, Leicester,⁶³⁷ and Kamran Khan, a Birmingham expatriate now at the University of Copenhagen.⁶³⁸ Their respective twitter feeds show considerable enthusiasm for the NYT podcasts,⁶³⁹ and a Luton based school governor, Rehana Faisal. She is also chair of the Luton Local Action Group, a community-led funding programme for Luton Council.⁶⁴⁰ In words reminiscent of Imrana Mahmood, Faisal tweeted about the “horror” of what happened to Muslim educators in Birmingham.⁶⁴¹

The February 16 MEND discussion on the Trojan Horse podcasts was led by the organisation’s Chief Executive, Azhar Qayum, and featured three of the teachers who were involved in the controversy - Jahangir Akbar, Razwan Faraz and Inam Malik. Perhaps the most intriguing part of this programme was in the Q&A session, where Azhar Qayum spoke to a caller named Mina, a young student journalist from Birmingham. Qayum states that he met Hamza Syed before he had even begun his journalism course, when Syed attended a MEND meeting on Trojan Horse.⁶⁴² This would appear to be a reference to a November 3, 2017 MEND event at the Bab Al Hara banqueting suite in Birmingham. That evening Tahir Alam, Peter Osborne, John Holmwood, Salma Yaqoob, Kevin Courtney and Dr Shamim Miah spoke under the banner “Trojan Horse: The Facts.”⁶⁴³

This telling episode underscores how small the number who have been agitating about Trojan Horse is in reality; and how they feed off of each other while recycling the same “Trojan Hoax”, “bogus letter” and “Islamophobia” claims. No observer can fail to notice that the same handful of speakers appear at almost all Trojan Horse events, and those in the audience hop from one event to the other. John Holmwood, for example, is a mainstay at most Trojan Horse events. This, and the fact that Trojan Horse agitators were able to muster fewer than 7,000 supporters for their petition, suggests that agitation is a lifestyle choice for a small clique operating in an echo chamber that has failed to engage with all the available evidence of problems in the schools.

The first episode of the NYT podcast certainly featured Hamza Syed attending a meeting in Birmingham titled “Trojan Horse: The Facts”, although in the podcast the organisation MEND is not directly mentioned.⁶⁴⁴ However, Hamza Syed had started his journalism course

636. Imrana Mahmood/@Imrana_Mahmood, Twitter post, February 10, 2022, https://twitter.com/Imrana_Mahmood/status/1491547652588244992.

637. “Dr Fatima Rajina”, staff profile page, De Montfort University, undated, <https://www.dmu.ac.uk/about-dmu/academic-staff/research/fatima-rajina/fatima-rajina.aspx>.

638. “Kamran Khan”, profile page, ResearchGate, undated, <https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Kamran-Khan-45>.

639. See for example: Fatima Rajina/@DrFRajina, Twitter post, March 13, 2022, <https://twitter.com/DrFRajina/status/1502995166721884167>; and Kamran Khan’s retweeting of both Hamza Syed and Brian Reed: Kamran Khan/@SecurityLing, Twitter post, February 25, 2022, <https://twitter.com/SecurityLing/status/1497286831661932547>.

640. Rehana Faisal, profile page, LinkedIn, undated, <https://www.linkedin.com/in/rehana-faisal-11812285> and “YSYW voting (CLLD Small Grants Programme)”, Luton Council website, undated, https://m.luton.gov.uk/Page/Show/Community_and_living/community-funding/YSYW/voting/Pages/default.aspx.

641. Rehana Faisal /لصيف مناجير/@Rehana-FaisalH, Twitter post, February 10, 2022, <https://twitter.com/RehanaFaisalH/status/1491870917965893638>.

642. The discussion between Qayum and Mina is at 1:57:21. The Twitter space recording has since been removed as the standard 30 days have passed, but a note of the discussion was taken by the authors.

643. Muslim Engagement and Development, “Trojan Horse – The Facts”, event listing, undated (event listed for Nov. 3, 2017), <https://www.mend.org.uk/event/trojan-horse-facts/>.

644. The relevant section is in *The New York Times/Serial Productions*, “The Trojan Horse Affair” Part 1 (“The Letter in the Brown Paper Envelope”), 09:15, <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2022/podcasts/trojan-horse-affair.html#listen>.

at this stage, the academic year having begun a couple of months earlier, in either September or early October 2017. Despite this, in the MEND discussion of February 16, 2022, Azhar Qayum insists he had met Syed before he even began studying. This may be a slip of the tongue or an error of recall on Qayum’s part, perhaps understandable concerning events that were several years old. Whilst the question of Hamza Syed’s relationship with MEND remains open, it does appear he was in contact with one of the activist groups campaigning on the Trojan Horse issue at an initial stage of his research.

A further discussion was held on February 18 by the University of Oxford academic Usaama Al-Azami and Tahir Alam.⁶⁴⁵ As noted above, this provided a platform for a highly personal discussion where Alam was able to set out how his case now stands in the aftermath of the NYT podcast. On February 22, Media Diversified organised a Twitter space event under the hashtag #TrojanHoaxJournalismFail, an accompanying piece to the media article of 20 February (see figure 1).⁶⁴⁶ Here the argument is presented that British media has failed, and the NYT has done what UK journalists should have been doing:

At its heart the podcast is about how the whole of society became radicalised. How the everyman and woman were groomed into viewing Muslims only through the lens of suspicion, securitisation and ‘civilising’ them (looking at you Humanist UK).⁶⁴⁷

A core element of the four podcasts listed below is that whilst each analysed the Trojan Horse affair and/or the NYT podcasts, viewpoint diversity was limited. The contributors and the organisers were uniformly supportive of the NYT, and/or the teachers who played various roles in the controversy.

Date	Organiser and Link	Scheduled participants
15/02/22	Imrana Mahmood. ⁶⁴⁸	Dr Fatima Rajina, Dr Kamran Khan, Rehana Faisal.
16/02/22	Azhar Qayum, MEND. ⁶⁴⁹	Jahangir Akbar, Razwan Faraz, Inam Malik.
18/02/22	Dr Usaama al-Azami. ⁶⁵⁰	Tahir Alam.
22/02/22	Media Diversified. ⁶⁵¹	Raf.

Table 3: Podcast and twitter space events following the NYT podcast

645. Usaama al-Azami/@DrUsaama, “Tahir Alam: The Trojan Horse Affair after the NYT Serial Podcast”, Twitter broadcast, <https://twitter.com/i/broadcasts/1OdkrBYDWOVKX>.

646. Media Diversified/@WritersofColour, Twitter post, February 21, 2022, <https://twitter.com/WritersofColour/status/1495690878010204160>.

647. Media Diversified, “Trojan Horse: A failure of British journalism”.

648. Imrana Mahmood/@Imrana_Mahmood, Twitter post, February 10, 2022, https://twitter.com/Imrana_Mahmood/status/1491547652588244992.

649. MEND Community/@mendcommunity, Twitter post, February 16, 2022, <https://twitter.com/mendcommunity/status/1494074412613750795>.

650. Usaama al-Azami/@DrUsaama, “Tahir Alam: The Trojan Horse Affair after the NYT Serial Podcast”.

651. Media Diversified/@WritersofColour, Twitter post, February 21, 2022, <https://twitter.com/WritersofColour/status/1495690878010204160>.

Twitter Coverage of the NYT/Serial Podcast

Between January 27 and February 22, 2022, there were 143 tweets concerning Trojan Horse which received at least five retweets. These are listed in Table 4 in Appendix 1. It is noteworthy that only a small number, six, were critical of the New York Times/Serial “Trojan Horse Affair” podcast (these are highlighted in the table in grey). The 143 tweets recorded came from 99 different accounts. In terms of profession, by far the greatest number came from journalists and writers, followed by academics, then

NGOs and representative organisations, in that order (see figure 4, below). The extent to which journalists, commonly freelancers, were supportive of the podcast, was marked. First to the party were Hussein Kesvani, a freelancer, and Peter Osborne of *Middle East Eye*. The latter website proved central to disseminating positive information about the podcast, with Areeb Ullah, Osborne himself on several occasions, and Simon Hooper each tweeting on the subject. In terms of particular websites, only the interest of the left-wing Novara Media proved greater.

Similarly, the heavy representation of academics, often from departments working on issues related to race and migration, was an important characteristic. There appear to have been no tweets, gaining a minimum of five retweets, from academics critical of the podcast. This matters, as in the coming months and years it is likely a series of academic papers and books will appear, establishing the history of what happened in Birmingham's schools over the past decade.

This process arguably began in 2017 when Tahir Abbas was given access, by Tahir Alam, to correspondence between Alam and investigators into Trojan Horse. Abbas interviewed Alam twice in Birmingham and once in Istanbul, and corresponded with him for some 18 months before publishing an article in *The Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*.⁶⁵² The article does not touch upon the ParkView Brotherhood WhatsApp group, despite the evidence it sheds on attitudes in the schools Alam had responsibility for. It relayed Alam's views uncritically. Abbas concluded:

*The "Trojan Horse" affair merely uncovered the fear and loathing of conservative Islam and pious Muslims in sectors of society who [sic.] have the most power but the least understanding or gumption about the causes of radicalisation beyond the rhetoric that the source is conservative Islam or a lack of "values".*⁶⁵³

Waqas Tufail of Leeds Beckett University, stated: "I teach a class about the Trojan Horse Affair for my Terrorism Policing and Security course."⁶⁵⁴ More such classes, perhaps entire modules, will follow at other universities. Whilst Tufail at least acknowledged he has read the official reports on the case, how many academics and students in coming years will do so? How many will begin and end their study with the NYT podcast? Waqas Tufail takes the view that "there is no justice or even benefit of the doubt given if you are British and Muslim".⁶⁵⁵ How will the presence of such views on campus, and their potential intellectual dominance, influence political debates, and social cohesion, in years to come?

The table below covers the occupations of those tweeting on Trojan Horse:

652. Tahir Abbas, "The 'Trojan Horse' Plot and the Fear of Muslim Power in British State Schools", *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, April 17, 2017, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13602004.2017.1313974>, p.3.

653. *Ibid.* This poorly phrased sentence appears to claim that the Trojan Horse affair revealed fear and loathing of Muslims with merely conservative values amongst people in positions of authority, and that such people lack an understanding of radicalisation; it also appears to claim that such people wrongly conflate "conservative Islam" with radicalisation. But Abbas does not clarify what he means by "conservative Islam" (or distinguish it from Islamist extremism). He does not identify those in positions of power who allegedly lack an understanding of radicalisation; and he does not justify the claim such people lack an understanding of the causes of radicalisation. Moreover, he does not distinguish between radicalisation and extremism. The latter distinction is an important one, since none of the official inquiries looked for or claimed to have found evidence of radicalisation or violent extremism, although extremist views were reportedly expressed or went unchallenged by teachers or head teachers.

654. Waqas Tufail/@WaqasTufail, Twitter post, February 11, 2022, https://twitter.com/_WaqasTufail/status/1492076351934930957.

655. Waqas Tufail/@WaqasTufail, Twitter post, February 11, 2022, https://twitter.com/_WaqasTufail/status/1492077352079212544.

Occupation	Number of tweets
Journalist or writer	71
Academic	26
Campaign group/NGO	19
Website	15
Politician	3
Musician	2
Teacher	1
Comedian	1
Theatre director	1
Celebrity	1
Activist	1
Student	1
Not known	1
Total	143

Table 5: Social media coverage by occupation

Whilst interest from freelance journalists and a distinct section of academia was intense, the podcast’s political impact appears, at this stage, to have been minimal. Despite many tweets from representative organisations, and a call for an inquiry by the MCB, political take-up was minor. No Labour MP, nor any Birmingham MP, tweeted in support of the podcast, and political interest across the three main parties was generally lacking. The NYT podcast appears to have lived, and thrived, within its own ecosystem. Baroness Warsi was perhaps the only prominent parliamentarian to enter the debate on the side of the podcasters, although fellow Conservative Nusrat Ghani MP tweeted a Times letter from Khalid Mahmood, MP for Birmingham Perry Barr, which robustly rejected the podcast’s arguments. Mahmood’s letter was one of the few times the “Park View Brotherhood” WhatsApp group was to appear in twitter debates – its existence was all but ignored by the podcast’s proponents.

Only a handful of the tweets recorded were supportive of the podcast. Whilst each comment stands as a personal, or in some cases organisational contribution to the debate, there are several core themes which emerge. A significant number raised criticisms of the Conservative Education Secretary at the time, Michael Gove. For websites such as Novara Media, and one of its most prominent journalists, Ash Sarkar, this became a mini-campaign, with Sarkar interviewing Syed and Reed, and her organisation repeatedly promoting that interview on social media.

A second approach, discussed elsewhere in this report, was to connect the Trojan Horse affair to the Government’s Prevent policy, even though the latter had begun years earlier. A third element consisted of a tendency to conjoin Trojan Horse to much more general complaints of racism in society and a purported wider trend for the country to “attack” Muslims. This tended to merge into a fourth element, which critiqued the perceived or actual failings of the British media. The February 20,

2022 intervention by Sonia Sodha in *The Observer* prompted expressions of fury from supporters of the NYT/Serial podcast, and a volley of angry tweets. As Khalid Mahmood MP was to observe, such debates are “some of the dirtiest in our liberal democracy.”⁶⁵⁶ This research even found one tweet, since deleted, by @MasterKhalifah which retweeted Sodha’s *Observer* piece with the words: “This bitch’s head would look sexy on a pike believe me.”⁶⁵⁷

Who is Brian Reed?

Brian Reed is a Senior Producer at *This American Life*.⁶⁵⁸ Reed has also produced and hosted investigative journalism podcasts such as ‘S-Town’ – which are joint creations between ‘*This American Life*’ and its investigative journalist podcast spin-off - ‘*Serial*’. The podcasts on Trojan Horse were a joint production between *Serial* and the *New York Times*.

Reed graduated with a BA in Theatre/ History from Yale University in 2007.⁶⁵⁹ He reported and produced for NPR (National Public Radio) as one of their “Kroc Fellows” – a year-long program to help shape public media journalists.⁶⁶⁰ In January 2010 Reed joined ‘*This American Life*’ as an intern. His entire career since has related to the show and its spin-offs. As a journalist, he has won multiple awards; these include Peabody Awards, Overseas Press Club Awards, Webby Awards, the DuPont Columbia Award, the Education Writers Association Award, and the Dart Award for Excellence in Coverage of Trauma, among others.⁶⁶¹ On social media Reed opened a Twitter account in May 2008, but there are no tweets left online from before 1 February 2017.⁶⁶² There is also evidence from the limited accessible archive of his Twitter account, that Reed possessed an Instagram account that has since been removed.⁶⁶³ Reed noted in the S-Town podcast that he was urged by his wife, who is black, and her family, to make his social media accounts more private to avoid racist attacks.⁶⁶⁴ This may be behind his purge of the social media posts.

Despite considerable success, his career has not been without controversy. Brian Reed was involved in a scandal in 2012 when *This American Life* withdrew material he had produced, about working conditions inside the Chinese factory that makes Apple’s iPads. Some of the source material from playwright Mike Daisey was “fabricated”,⁶⁶⁵ forcing *This American Life* to issue a public retraction:⁶⁶⁶

We’ve discovered that one of our most popular episodes contained numerous fabrications. This week, we detail the errors in Mike Daisey’s story about visiting Foxconn, which makes iPads and other products for Apple in China. Marketplace’s China correspondent Rob Schmitz discovered the fabrications.

In 2020, NPR journalist Rob Schmitz explained the failing by saying that host Ira Glass and producer Brian Reed did not have experience in the People’s Republic of China, nor in reporting on China’s supply chain.⁶⁶⁷

656. Khalid Mahmood, “What the New York Times gets wrong about the ‘Trojan Horse Affair’”, *The Spectator*, February 24, 2022, <https://www.spectator.co.uk/article/what-the-new-york-times-gets-wrong-about-the-trojan-horse-affair>.

657. Copy in the authors’ possession.

658. “Brian Reed”, profile page, LinkedIn, undated, <https://www.linkedin.com/in/brian-reed-887411166/>. Reed is no longer listed as a producer on the *American Life* website, but was listed in July 2022. See “Staff”, *This American Life*, captured on July 7, 2022, <https://web.archive.org/web/20220707070914/https://www.this-americanlife.org/about/staff>.

659. “Brian Reed”, profile page, LinkedIn.

660. Anna Christopher, “Meet The Fellows”, NPR website, September 23, 2010, <https://www.npr.org/sections/npr-extra/2010/09/23/130071204/meet-the-fellows?t=1649232604345>. For the Kroc Fellowship see: “Develop Your Journalistic Voice – Apply For NPR’s Kroc Fellowship”, NPR website, undated, <https://www.npr.org/about-npr/183691179/kroc-fellowship-details-and-application>.

661. “Brian Reed”, Steven Barclay Agency website, undated, <https://www.barclayagency.com/speakers/brian-reed>.

662. Brian Reed/@BriHReed, Twitter profile page, <https://twitter.com/BriHReed>.

663. Brian Reed/@BriHReed, archived Twitter feed captured on February 10, 2015, <https://web.archive.org/web/20150210222839/https://twitter.com/BriHReed>.


664. Reiss Smith, “S-Town: Who is Brian Reed? Host of new podcast about John B McLemore”, *The Express*, April 7, 2017, <https://www.express.co.uk/showbiz/tv-radio/789166/s-town-brian-reed-who-is-wife-john-b-mclemore-podcast-serial>.

665. Charles Arthur, “This American Life withdraws damning Apple episode”, *The Guardian*, March 16, 2012, <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2012/mar/16/foxconn-ipad-daisey-npr-retraction>. See also news report on original story: Melanie Hick, “Children Found Working In Foxconn iPhone Factory”, *HuffPost*, January 17, 2012, https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/2012/01/17/children-found-working-in-iphone-foxconn-factory_n_1209953.html.

666. “Retraction”, *This American Life*, March 16, 2012, <https://www.thisamericanlife.org/460/retraction>.

667. Rob Schmitz/@rob_schmitz, Twitter post, December 21, 2022, https://twitter.com/rob_schmitz/status/1341060610486906885.



Rob Schmitz  @rob_schmitz · Dec 21, 2020

Replying to @rob_schmitz

(2/x) The TAL episode relied solely on Monologist Mike Daisey's fabricated account of workers at Foxconn factories in China. Host Ira Glass & Producer Brian Reed, responsible for producing that piece, did not have experience in China nor in reporting on China's supply chain.

There is a potential parallel here with Trojan Horse as a topic – there is little in Reed's CV to demonstrate a detailed knowledge of events surrounding Islamism in the United Kingdom, meaning he was arguably reliant on Hamza Syed for negotiating his way around Birmingham and the Trojan Horse affair. Syed would certainly have given him a clear overview of the issues, but as we will see below in a discussion of the podcast and the British Humanist Association/Humanists UK, it is hardly likely to have been a rounded perspective. Indeed, as the opening quote in this report demonstrates, Syed approached the research project with a distinct agenda.

Reed's career low point – of being involved in reportage which had to be retracted – is one shared by the *New York Times*. Its 2018 series, *Caliphate*, had its core withdrawn in 2020, after revelations that a central figure in the programme, Shehroze Chaudhry, was not the former member of Islamic State that he claimed to be.⁶⁶⁸ Chaudhry subsequently admitted that he had never been to Syria, and in fact had spent the time he claimed to have been with ISIS working in his parents' restaurant in Canada.⁶⁶⁹

668. David Folkenflik, "New York Times' Retracts Core Of Hit Podcast Series 'Caliphate' On ISIS", NPR website, December 18, 2020, <https://www.npr.org/2020/12/18/944594193/new-york-times-retracts-hit-podcast-series-caliphate-on-isis-executioner?t=1649337371808>.

669. Leyland Cecco, "Canada drops charges against man who claimed to be IS executioner", *The Guardian*, October 11, 2021, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/oct/11/canada-drops-charges-man-lied-about-being-is-executioner-shehroze-chaudhry-terrorism-hoax-laws>.

Chapter 12: The New York Times/Serial podcast: Critical comments

The first podcast in the series “The Trojan Horse Affair” opened with Hamza Syed talking about himself, and his back story. He described his reaction after he first heard about Trojan Horse on the news in 2014, and said: “I was alarmed. It sounded possible.”⁶⁷⁰ He explained that young people were leaving to join Islamic State and:

My neighbour was a terrorist.

The guy who killed five people and then tried to run into parliament with a knife, he did his planning in a flat above the Persian restaurant across the street from me.

So I wasn't surprised watching, as over the next several months, Operation Trojan Horse snowballed into a huge national story.⁶⁷¹

Here Syed described the case of Khalid Masood, who drove a car into pedestrians on Westminster Bridge, killing four, before stabbing to death PC Keith Palmer at New Palace Yard at the House of Commons. Masood was then shot dead by armed police.⁶⁷² He had been living in the Hagley Road area of Birmingham, above the Shiraz Persian restaurant.⁶⁷³ This would appear to be an early stumble in the researchers' narrative however – Khalid Masood's attack occurred on March 22, 2017, and cannot possibly have been part of Hamza Syed's reasoning in 2014. If it was part of his thinking, it makes the podcast sound absurd. It would seem curious to believe that after his neighbour murders five people in a terrorist attack, Hamza Syed embarked on a project to show that his neighbourhood does not have a problem with extremism.

To understand the approach taken in the podcasts, a good starting point is a letter Hamza Syed wrote to Mr Aslam, the brother of two teaching assistants at Adderley School. We are told about this letter in podcast six. This is a paragraph from the letter that is read out in the podcast:

The Trojan Horse began as my dissertation project, and it is my first attempt to start righting wrongs. I never believed in the official narrative regarding the Trojan Horse. I never believed the letter was authentic. I never believed

670. *The New York Times/Serial Productions*, “The Trojan Horse Affair”, Part 1 (“The Letter in the Brown Paper Envelope”), 01:45, <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2022/podcasts/trojan-horse-affair.html#listen>.

671. *Ibid.*

672. BBC News, “Westminster attack: What happened”, April 7, 2017, <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-39355108>.

673. *The Express & Star*, “Seven Birmingham terror suspects arrested as Westminster attacker named as West Midlands man Khalid Masood”, March 23, 2017, <https://www.expressandstar.com/news/crime/2017/03/23/westminster-terror-attacker-named-as-west-midlands-man-khalid-masood/>.

Tahir Alam was masterminding the sinister Islamic plot. I never believed Birmingham City Council. I never believed Peter Clarke. I never believed Michael Gove. I never believed Rizvana Darr and I never believed your sisters wrote those resignation letters. What I believe is, I'm going to change this narrative, inshallah.⁶⁷⁴

This raises questions about the research subsequently conducted. It suggests that Hamza Syed began his investigation with a clear intention to “change the narrative”. The background to this section is also instructive. We are informed of Hamza Syed’s approach to Mr Aslam, following a rejection letter sent by an employment tribunal that denied Syed and Reed access to further information. The tribunal officers concluded that whatever Syed is doing will not be reported in “an unbiased and apolitical way” and they believed that Syed intended “to use Mr. Reed’s radio station as a medium to advocate his opinions”.⁶⁷⁵

The timing of this incident is important. The letter was not written towards the end of the investigation, by which time the evidence may have coloured Syed’s thinking. Rather, it was written right at the beginning, in the first few months, when Syed was still a student. This further emphasises an investigation that always possessed a very distinct approach, which external organisations that engaged with the *New York Times* saw as being rooted in Hamza Syed’s opinions.

The employment tribunal’s criticism of Hamza Syed is not a unique aspect of this story. In fact, ethical issues emerge at various stages in the podcasts, and anyone lauding Syed and Reed for their work needs to consider how comfortable they are with some of the conduct which emerged in the programmes. Part of the backdrop to the Trojan Horse affair surrounded the resignations of four Muslim teaching assistants, who subsequently denied that they had resigned. Two staff members, Anila Ashraf and Mark Walters, informed police that they had been present when Headmistress Rizwana Darr opened their letters of resignation.⁶⁷⁶ As Brian Reed put it:

*their statements propped up the resignation letters, which propped up the Trojan Horse letter, which propped up the national panic. These two deputies, their account underpinned the Trojan Horse affair.*⁶⁷⁷

This is silly – the disputed resignation letters tell us nothing about the conduct of Tahir Alam, the changing experiences of children, or the members of the Park View Brotherhood – to take just three examples. But it is part of the route Syed and Reed appear to have taken as researchers: disprove the validity of particular letters, and they can then declare the subsequent “national panic” to be without substance, without needing to investigate events inside the schools themselves. This would appear to be a neat approach but is reminiscent of Nelson declaring “I see no ships” when ordered to withdraw from a naval engagement.

The podcast audience was informed that one of the two teachers, Anila Ashraf, declined to speak to Syed and Reed when they called at her home requesting an interview. Lawyers acting for Birmingham City Council

674. *The New York Times*/Serial Productions, “The Trojan Horse Affair”, Part 6 (“Cucumbers and Cooker Bombs”), 03:23.

675. *Ibid.*, 01:01.

676. *Ibid.*, Part 7 (“The Detail of the Deputies”), 48:12.

677. *Ibid.*, 48:57.

subsequently wrote to the journalists, complaining of a succession of visits and alleging this amounted to harassment of both Ashraf and family members. Syed and Reed categorically denied the accusation of harassment.⁶⁷⁸ Her refusal to cooperate left this section of the podcast's case entirely dependent on one man – former deputy head of Adderley Primary School, Mark Walters. And he had moved to Australia.

Syed and Reed tried to contact Walters from the UK. They “tried to reach him at the new school he worked at in a suburb of Perth”, but he ignored calls and emails. They persisted for a year. Bearing in mind that the journalists had just denied an accusation of harassment in the case of Anila Ashraf, they did what anyone would do when emails and telephone calls go unanswered – they took along someone else (Oldknow Academy's former chairman of governors, Achmad Da Costa, who they believed might persuade Walters to talk). Da Costa was introduced to listeners at the end of part seven of the podcasts as a “South African dentist”,⁶⁷⁹ and all three flew over 9,000 miles to Perth in Australia, or 11,600 if the journey was from New York to Perth. Syed and Reed did not dwell on the fact that Da Costa had also been a member of the “Park View Brotherhood” WhatsApp group, or that he had subsequently served as secretary of Tahir Alam's Muslim Parents Association from 2015 – 2018.⁶⁸⁰

At this stage we should perhaps pay tribute to the generous support Serial Productions and/or the *New York Times* provides to its researchers. How many businesses would finance travel to the other side of the world by two employees (it is unclear who paid for Da Costa's travel and subsistence) for nothing more than a *potential* interview? It would be very interesting to hear from all three men who financed this stage of the investigation.

The eighth and final section of the podcast opened with a monologue from Hamza Syed⁶⁸¹ about the Trojan Horse affair, and how it is part of the infrastructure in Britain that is used to show that Muslims are dangerous. To Syed, focusing on what others have seen as “Islamophobia” or “racism” in the Trojan Horse affair has not worked, as people do not care about Muslims:

*That's why I'd focused on the letter, I believed exposing the author of Operation Trojan Horse would give us an agnostic fact, would sidestep the need for people to care and would force everyone to acknowledge what really happened here.*⁶⁸²

Next we were shown how far Syed and Reed were willing to go to “force everyone to acknowledge what really happened here.” The final podcast is titled “An appointment in Perth” – this is presumably an attempt at black humour, as the one thing the journalists do not have is an appointment. Indeed, when Reed and Syed knocked at Mark Walters' home, he told them in no uncertain terms to get off his property. The door was slammed shut. There is no legal requirement for members of the public to make themselves available for interview by journalists. At this stage most journalists and researchers would have accepted that this part of their research was a closed avenue and moved on to something else. Syed and

678. *Ibid.*, 49:20.

679. *Ibid.*, 50:15.

680. “Achmad DA COSTA”, Companies House, undated, <https://find-and-update.companies-information.service.gov.uk/officers/N1GiUXInxIzNe4VuJOUPlRGtjA/appointments>.

681. *The New York Times/Serial Productions*, “The Trojan Horse Affair”, Part 8 (“An Appointment in Perth”), 0:58.

682. *Ibid.*, 01:38.

Reed did not. They carried on knocking at the door of Walters' home, calling out to him from the street. This also was not enough for them – so they left him a letter. Then they sat in a car opposite his home and waited for a while.

Reed and Syed returned the following day – this time accompanied by Achmad Da Costa. We were told it is a Sunday morning. Da Costa went to knock on the door. The journalists had parked close enough to see what was happening. Da Costa knocked and knocked. He knocked loudly, he repeated himself “like a lunatic”⁶⁸³ - he paced around the front lawn, he went to every window. He knocked some more. Bear in mind that this is someone Syed and Reed have brought into Australia with them, and who they have delivered to Mark Walters' private property. It appeared to go on for quite a while. The neighbours – clearly disturbed, became involved.⁶⁸⁴

The three men left. But this was not enough for them either and after lunch they returned to the property for the third time in two days. Such behaviour, given Syed and Reed have denied harassment in the case of Ms Ashraf, is questionable. This time they parked and waited. Long enough for the neighbours to become concerned again. The neighbours started to take photos of the car's occupants. Reed got out to talk to them. Incredibly it was suggested in the podcast that Mark Walters could stop all this – “just open the bloody door.”⁶⁸⁵ But surely Walters was free to speak, or not to speak, to whoever he wished?

The unwelcome visitors were accused of harassment, told the police have been informed, and were asked by the neighbours to leave the area. Reed returned to the car. Podcast listeners were informed it was lucky Brian Reed had spoken to them, because if it had been Syed he would just “fucking bug the shit out of them”.⁶⁸⁶ We were also told that Syed, like a two-year-old in the midst of a temper tantrum, did not understand why they had to “take it”.⁶⁸⁷ This was a particularly curious observation – if anybody has been “taking it” it is surely Walters and his neighbours? Syed did not appear to understand why he needed to respect the wishes of someone who clearly did not want to be contacted – nor the objections of neighbours who were disturbed by the events unfolding outside their homes.

They all left. But this was still not enough. They emailed Mark Walters again and tried to contact his wife “a few times”.⁶⁸⁸ In what was by now becoming a masterclass in the unpleasant treatment of an individual by a journalist, even this was not enough. The next stage was to go to Walters' place of work – a primary school.⁶⁸⁹ Da Costa went inside with a letter and waited. He waited as Walters' boss - the school principal - told him that Mark Walters did not wish to talk to him. Da Costa stood there. We were not told how long he remained, but it should be noted that the whole extraordinary section in Perth is what Hamza Syed and Brian Reed admitted to doing. It was not pieced together from critics of their podcast or people who stand on the other side of the Trojan Horse debate. This is how they showcased their own work. And it was foul.

It is entirely legitimate for a journalist or researcher to ask someone for

683. *Ibid.*, 32:55.

684. *Ibid.*, 32:04.

685. *Ibid.*, 34:36.

686. *Ibid.*, 38:30.

687. *Ibid.*, 38:40.

688. *Ibid.*, 46:17.

689. *Ibid.*, 46:26.

an interview. Even if they decline, it is hardly unprofessional if the person is politely asked a second time. But to go further than that, to keep asking, to visit people at their homes and workplaces who have not responded positively, is to risk becoming a nuisance and engaging in disreputable behaviour. In Australia, the actions of Syed and Reed were redolent of the worst excesses of British tabloid journalism. Their ethics, and those of the New York Times and Serial Productions, were found wanting.

To add insult to injury, in Perth Syed, Reed and Da Costa speculated that racism may be a factor in the neighbour's objections to their behaviour: "She's worried about two Browns."⁶⁹⁰ Unfortunately we were given only a limited insight into what happened in this section, because when Brian Reed went to speak to the neighbour, he did not take his recording device with him, but instead left it in the car, recording instead Syed and Da Costa's conversation. We only heard the neighbour's voice when she directly came up to the vehicle and complained of harassment.⁶⁹¹ The neighbour told the journalists to leave.

Reed agreed that there were "undertones" in the discussion. Syed went on to suggest there was "ethnic apprehension" in her voice.⁶⁹² Da Costa suggested that because Reed was with them, he had experienced how Muslims are treated.⁶⁹³ The lack of self-awareness concerning their own conduct here, is palpable. These are two people who played no part in the Trojan Horse affair, who the journalists and Da Costa have never previously met and know nothing about. They objected to the three men repeatedly approaching their neighbour and then lingering and loitering outside their own house even when there appeared no possibility of an interview occurring. The podcast instead attacked the neighbours' character as racist and driven by anti-Muslim bigotry.

A particularly bizarre aspect of the podcast was the admission that the authors knew very little about one of the organisations that whistle-blowers teaching in Birmingham schools turned to - the British Humanist Association (BHA, formed in 1896 and renamed Humanists UK in 2017). Indeed, they seem to find the existence of the group a subject for hilarity. When the authors discussed the fact that some teachers in Birmingham went to the Humanists for support, Syed asked: "Why would teachers go to them, I don't know?" whilst Reed giggled in the background.⁶⁹⁴ "Why are they in the Clarke report?" added Syed. To superficially dismiss a representative organisation, founded in 1896, which was approached by professionals concerned about events in the schools in which they worked - provides yet another interesting insight into the mindset of both Reed and Syed. The teachers' concerns included the safeguarding of children. To understand more about the Humanist Association, the researchers went to Hamza Syed's brother, Usama, who told listeners:

I just know that within London and within the university Islamic society community, these guys were known. It's just an organisation non grata. And everyone knows that they're peddling just rhetoric of Islamophobia and doing it in this kind of intellectualized way so that it's not the kind of Islamophobia

690. *Ibid.*, 36:41.

691. *Ibid.*, 34:46.

692. *Ibid.*, 36:45.

693. *Ibid.*, 38:03.

694. *The New York Times/Serial Productions*, "The Trojan Horse Affair", Part 5 ("A Study in Scarlet"), 01:30.

that you associate with bigoted people. But they do it through studies that they've done to show how backwards the community is and things like that. So it's the most pervasive type.⁶⁹⁵

The message delivered by such rhetoric was that Humanists are not only racists, but manipulative racists. Next, the NYT podcast selectively used a critical quote by Richard Dawkins about Islam to “evidence” the bigotry of the Humanists.⁶⁹⁶ The inference was that their views on events in Birmingham can therefore be dismissed. Yet, at the time of the Trojan Horse affair, the President of the BHA was Jim Al-Khalili, the Iraqi-British scientist and broadcaster, well known for his work on improving understanding of the contribution Islam has made to science across many centuries.⁶⁹⁷ Speaking to Al-Khalili about the Humanists, rather than one of the podcasters’ brothers or associates in the University ISOC, may have given this section of the podcast much-needed nuance and depth. Humanism is a non-religious philosophy, which considers itself to be rooted in scientific method.⁶⁹⁸ Atheistic, it is wary, and indeed frequently critical of all religions. In 2012, the BHA captured headlines in *The Guardian* for exposing anti-abortion groups which were spreading falsehoods in schools. They also made the front page of *The Daily Telegraph* over their allegations that Catholic schools were unlawfully promoting a campaign against same-sex marriage.⁶⁹⁹ It is perfectly understandable that teachers at this time who were worried about religious intolerance in schools would be aware of the BHA and see them as a potential point of contact. But these facts go against the image the podcasters were intent on delivering – so listeners were not informed of the NGO’s history, prominence or relevance, and instead their inclusion in the unfolding events is treated either as a source of amusement, or a further example of bigotry towards Muslims, or as they prefer to term it “Islamophobia”.

In subsequently interviewing Richy Thompson of Humanists UK, the podcast provided an illustration of a core element of its approach – the journalist as activist. The search was not for the truth, but for the podcaster’s version of the truth, and a “truth” that listeners can both believe in and cheer on. When an under-prepared Thompson made the mistake of asking Hamza Syed what impact the Trojan Horse affair had had, a polemic ensued:

It changed our educational policy.

It changed our counterterrorism policy.

It gave lifetime bans to educationalists in East Birmingham.

It destroyed Park View Trust that was doing things that people around Europe were coming to learn from.

It had a swarm of headlines.

This was referenced in the Tory Party conferences.⁷⁰⁰

695. *Ibid.*, 03:00

696. *Ibid.*, 03:48

697. See, for example, “Science and Islam”, TV Series, IMDb, 2009, <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt1675198/>.

698. “Humanism”, Humanists UK website, undated, <https://humanists.uk/humanism/>.

699. “ANNUAL REPORT AND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 December 2012”, British Humanist Association, p.6, <https://humanists.uk/wp-content/uploads/Annual-Report-2012.pdf>.

700. *The New York Times*/Serial Productions, “The Trojan Horse Affair”, Part 5, 54:30.

As this continued, Brian Reed commented on the problem with the direction the podcast was now taking:

I got why Hamza was pissed, but he was no longer doing what I'm used to doing in interviews.

He was supposed to be asking Richy for his take on events, not spewing his own take at Richy.

I didn't think it was getting us anywhere.⁷⁰¹

Reed went on to advise Hamza Syed not to shout at people so much. In his reply, there was a hint of menace:

I don't give a fuck, mate.

That isn't what turned them off.

That's what gets them to finally just stop fucking around.

This isn't a fucking joke.

You're asking me what did the Trojan Horse do?

Fuck this, mate.⁷⁰²

“That's what gets them to finally just stop fucking around. This isn't a fucking joke”. This is more akin to an interrogation, than any traditional concept of journalism. One is tempted to ask Hamza Syed what should happen to those who carry on “fucking around”?

The Trojan Horse podcast also echoed the concept of activist-academia, where the researcher, who cannot be expected to remain neutral in a racist society, is going into battle against elements of that society, seeking not to argue his or her case, but to shift the political narrative. In doing so, they advance the cause of liberation. It may be that a consequence of the Trojan Horse podcast will not be to change the narrative around schooling in Birmingham, but to advance the case for this genre of journalism. It was no surprise to see activists like Asim Qureshi of CAGE praising this section of the programme, and the approach of Hamza Syed in particular.⁷⁰³ The call was for “more please” of this type of work. Further, the potential for crossover between the activist-journalist and the activist-academic clearly exists – consider the academic conference on Trojan Horse that was planned by lecturer Usaama al-Azami on August 30-31, 2022, at St Anthony's College, Oxford,. The call for papers for the event praised the NYT/Serial podcast, before launching into hyperbole of its own:

Brian Reed and Hamza Syed pick apart the accepted narrative with remarkable ease to show the Islamophobic underpinnings of the prevailing account purveyed for years by the UK political and media establishments. The podcast draws an explicit parallel with another sinister hoax from European history, The

701. *Ibid.*, 55:58.

702. *Ibid.*, 58:10.

703. Dr Asim Qureshi/@AsimCP, Twitter post, February 7, 2022, <https://twitter.com/AsimCP/status/1490663318452899842>.

Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion. It also has noteworthy parallels with the Zinoviev letter in Britain and the Dreyfus Affair in France.⁷⁰⁴

The event did not take place, after all, for reasons not made public.

A particular challenge with this type of journalism is that in moving away from accepted parameters, it risks being unfair to those it encounters. Perhaps not surprisingly, the very section of the podcast which drew distinct praise from activists has been one that has caused the *New York Times* considerable difficulty to defend. The extracts of the interview between Syed, Reed and Humanists UK representative Richy Thompson that were published in the podcast were challenged by Humanists UK, in a statement on February 23, 2022. They wrote:

*We believe the podcast presents a misleading account of our own involvement in these events. We have sought and continue to seek a number of corrections and retractions from the NYT. To date they have made one correction but we still hope for more.*⁷⁰⁵

Humanists UK recorded the interview between Thompson, Syed and Reed, and following the podcast published unedited versions of the exchange.⁷⁰⁶ On February 10, 2022, the NYT published the following correction on their website:

*An earlier version of this episode described incorrectly the details that Richy Thompson of Humanists UK disclosed about what he learned from sources at Park View School. Mr. Thompson said he talked to two or three other people who alleged instances of gender discrimination and homophobia at the school; it is not the case that he wouldn't tell us how many, or what they said.*⁷⁰⁷

A particular source of anger for Hamza Syed was that the Humanists had not, in his view, done enough to establish the veracity of complaints from two whistle-blowers, Mr and Mrs Packer. A section of the podcast contained a monologue from Syed, where in a reversal of the traditional format of a press interview, he told Richy Thompson how the Humanists should have done their job:

If you'd started by April investigating your own sources and if you found Sue Packer to be an untrustworthy source, that's what you could have done by April, before she gets in front of Peter Clarke, before someone is given a lifetime ban.

That's something you could have done by April to change the entire spectrum of this conversation.

So there was still something left for you to do in April if you'd done your job.

*No comment?*⁷⁰⁸

We were then told by Brian Reed, as narrator:

Richy turned from us, stricken, and walked out of the room.

704. "Call for Abstracts: The Trojan Horse Affair", St Antony's College website, undated, https://www.sant.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/cfp_the_trojan_horse_affair_0.pdf.

705. "Humanists UK comment on Trojan Horse Affair podcast", February 23, 2022, Humanists UK website, <https://humanists.uk/2022/02/23/humanists-uk-comment-on-trojan-horse-affair-podcast/>.

706. *Ibid.*

707. "Correction", *The New York Times*, February 10, 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2022/podcasts/trojan-horse-affair.html#corrections>.

708. *The New York Times*/Serial Productions, "The Trojan Horse Affair", Part 5, 57:05.

I packed up our stuff and headed out of the building to get us a cab.⁷⁰⁹

The recording of the Humanists UK suggested a potentially different version of events:

Syed: That's something you could've done by April to change the entire spectrum of this conversation. So that was still something that you could've done in April, if you'd done your job... No comment?

Thompson: Well, I don't, I mean ...

Reed: You guys disagree.

Thompson: Yeah. I don't have anything more to say.

Syed: Okay.

[Sound of the door opening and closing as Thompson leaves the room, then eight seconds later...]

Reed, quietly, presumably into his microphone: He just walked out.⁷¹⁰

Other than the assertion from Brian Reed, there was no evidence that Richy Thompson went "stricken from the room."

It is worth quoting further from the Humanists UK statement to see how quickly Hamza Syed's words melt away when exposed to the reality of events in Birmingham. The issues raised with the organisation could not be kept as an internal matter between the Humanists and a whistleblower, of which in total there were six:

The concerns included child safeguarding issues, serious and unlawful sex discrimination against girls, homophobia by staff, nepotism in recruitment, creationism taught as science, Islam unlawfully being taught as true (schools without a religious character must remain neutral on matters of religion or belief in their teaching of RE), and a range of instances of inappropriate behaviour by some male staff. Some of the most serious incidents brought to our attention at that time are still not in the public domain, as they could lead to the identification of the whistleblowers.⁷¹¹

In a line which got to the heart of both the Trojan Horse affair and the flawed response to it, it added:

Because they involved first-hand accounts of serious child safeguarding issues, we passed them immediately on to the relevant authorities, as any responsible organisation should and must do. Our policy team also reviewed the school's website and noted that it prescribed what appeared to be an unlawful approach to the curriculum subjects of RE and PSHE.⁷¹² We passed this information on to authorities at the same time.⁷¹³

It is interesting to note that a search of the eight transcripts of the NYT/Serial Trojan Horse podcast reveals that the word "safeguarding" did not feature once.⁷¹⁴ The word "children" did not appear at all in three of the eight podcasts. In fact, most of the mentions of "children" were to portray

709. *Ibid.*, 57:32.

710. "Humanists UK comment on Trojan Horse Affair podcast", February 23, 2022.

711. *Ibid.*

712. RE refers to Religious Education; PSHE refers to Personal, Social, and Health Education.

713. "Humanists UK comment on Trojan Horse Affair podcast", February 23, 2022.

714. The transcripts can be found at <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2022/podcasts/trojan-horse-affair.html>.

them as victims of the government investigation, or as examples of how well the schools were doing beforehand. The notion that the Government and the local authority acted in the way they did because of the importance of children receiving an education which prepares them for the wider society, was never raised adequately by the podcast as a viable counter-argument. Instead, Syed and Reed set the bar for any problems incredibly high, stating for example in the very first podcast:

They had found no plot called Operation Trojan Horse.

They had seen no signs that anyone had been radicalized, no evidence of violence or planned violence.

*They didn't bring any terror charges against anyone working at the schools they'd looked into.*⁷¹⁵

The inference of this is that because there were no arrests or convictions for terrorist offences, there was little or nothing of note occurring. As the journalist Sonia Sodha commented in *The Observer*:

*The Trojan Horse Affair presents a one-sided account that minimises child protection concerns, misogyny and homophobia in order to exonerate the podcast's hero, a man called Tahir Alam.*⁷¹⁶

At several points Syed and Reed encountered individuals who had problems recalling the detail of events. This is inevitable with discussions, or live interviews, concerning events that occurred anything up to five, six or seven years earlier. This failing then allowed listeners to potentially draw inferences from what may simply be failures of recollection. A problem for Richey Thompson of the Humanists UK was that he appeared to have gone into an interview with Syed and Reed without being fully briefed about events several years ago, whilst the researchers arrived ready for detailed examination of events they have been poring over in considerable detail. Additionally, some of the interviews conducted appeared to be at best marathons, at worse excessive. Two whistle-blowers complained to the NYT that a seven-hour interview left them feeling “beaten into submission”.⁷¹⁷ It is hard to imagine many people would intentionally agree to an interview of that length.

When interviewing Councillor Sir Albert Bore, the former leader of Birmingham City Council, Syed complained that Bore “seemed to be exerting an abnormal amount of effort to construct his sentences.”⁷¹⁸ The journalists appeared confused by Cllr Bore’s view that there might have been issues of concern in the schools, when he had previously been critical of any suggestion the Trojan Horse letter was genuine. Cllr Bore stated: “My objectives were to find out whether steps 1 to 5 [as set out in the letter] in any way happened amongst Birmingham Schools.”⁷¹⁹

They pushed Bore for additional information, eventually complaining that all they received “from Councillor Bore were insinuations”.⁷²⁰ They use this to belittle his view that he was concerned:

715. *The New York Times*/Serial Productions, “The Trojan Horse Affair”, Part 1, 02:48.

716. Sonia Sodha, “The Trojan Horse Affair: how Serial podcast got it so wrong”, *The Observer*, February 20, 2022, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/feb/20/the-trojan-horse-affair-how-serial-podcast-got-it-so-wrong>.

717. *Ibid.*

718. *The New York Times*/Serial Productions, “The Trojan Horse Affair”, Part 3 (“Sir Albert and the Missing ‘H’”), 03:54.

719. *Ibid.*, 06:23.

720. *Ibid.*, 09:43.

Where a school governing body is putting unacceptable pressure on teachers, unacceptable pressure on the head teacher, to do things in a way which is not acceptable to enable certain objectives to be realised in that school.⁷²¹

Because Bore could only remember specifically one incident, and clearly did not have the reports published at the time to hand to expand upon, the journalists became frustrated. Reed raised the issue of terrorism: “So there’s no evidence of anyone being incited to violence, incited to join a group that –”⁷²² before the interview gradually peters out. After they left, Hamza Syed was described as “animated” and lambasted the Councillor:

*The way in which he was describing a situation, the terms in which he was kind of addressing this issue, I’m like fucking hell, mate, you are saying some radical shit, **essentially about me.***

I cannot think, off the top of my head, a moment where I’ve sat opposite someone and they have just disparaged Muslims in the way that Bore did today.⁷²³

The issue was no longer about schools in Birmingham, their children, or their governance. It became about Hamza Syed, and the idea that he and Muslims were being “disparaged,” that people were talking “about me”.

There is a parallel in the self-pitying narcissism of Syed with that of Islamists who believe that they are representatives of all Muslims everywhere under attack. This is not only because they identify themselves and all other Muslims primarily as Muslims and as belonging to a single religious community, the *umma*. It is also because they cannot accept Muslim diversity, especially if this includes Muslims who disagree whether or how Islam should determine the manner in which Muslim children should be educated: Muslims who do not wish to segregate their children at school, who do not wish to deny their children the opportunity to study music, drama, art or the humanities, or who do not wish to insist on an allegedly “Islamic” perspective not just on religious education but other subjects, are not accommodated in Islamists’ vision of society, in their “guidance” for schools or in the books they recommend to schools. Such Muslims, who disagree with Islamist activists about their alleged status as victims of “state-sponsored Islamophobia”, are often shunned, referred to in derogatory terms (such as “Oreos”, “coconuts” or “Uncle Toms”) or even called Islamophobic. Their heterodoxy undermines the notion of a single religious “community”. This is how Islamists attempt to monopolise the discourse on Islam and determine what passes for normative Islam. So, because they cannot comprehend or accept a variety of interpretations of Islam that go beyond certain lines, which have been contested throughout Islamic history, any criticism of their understanding of Islam is an attack on Islam *per se* and, by extension – despite the existence of Muslims with diverse and heterodox views - all Muslims.

721. *Ibid.*, 08:29.

722. *Ibid.*, 11:05.

723. *Ibid.*, 13:25, emphasis added.

Conclusions

The failure of the *New York Times*/Serial podcast is also a success. By focusing exclusively on the issue of the authenticity of the Trojan Horse letter – but failing to establish its authorship – the podcast has provided an opportunity for others to present a more comprehensive picture of what actually happened in the Birmingham schools. Although the podcast failed to demonstrate an acceptable standard of journalistic objectivity – Syed’s prejudice on the matter is self-confessed – the revival of interest in the Trojan Horse affair generated by the podcast has provided an opportunity for the production of a less partisan documentary record of the relevant events. This is particularly important for young audiences brought up on social media who may not have read any of the official reports published in 2014. But it is also important for activist stalwarts – who have been making the same claims of “Islamophobia” and a “witch-hunt” since the controversy hit the headlines eight years ago – to have to contend with the full range of facts, lest the lack of a robust and public challenge to their claims fuels further conspiracies and distorts the historical record.

This report has shown there is a positive bias amongst academics tweeting about the podcast, indicating support for a narrative of Trojan Horse as an “Islamophobic” conspiracy. Although this does not demonstrate that the majority of academics working in education, public policy or other relevant fields are substituting activist politics for non-partisan academic research or analysis – since it only concerns those who tweeted about the programme – it does not bode well for our universities. The lack of a counter-balancing viewpoint on Trojan Horse amongst academics in the Twittersphere suggests that a significant number of academics are able to act as activists without adequate challenge, at least on social media. There is certainly little or no evidence of a debate within the academy on this issue. Does this extend into the lecture theatre? It certainly seems the case regarding journal articles covering the Trojan Horse affair. There is very little nuance and it is accompanied by much questionable activist-oriented “research” that appears emotionally driven. The academics and their activist allies who tweeted in favour of the NYT/Serial podcast – including groups like the MCB, the IHRC, MEND and CAGE – are of course entitled to question and criticise what they see as the official “narrative”. They would be correct in stating that criticism of government policies and government commissioned reports is their prerogative in modern liberal Britain. But they would be incorrect to deny the academic bias in favour of the Trojan Horse Affair podcast. Whilst there is some healthy debate – or at least some viewpoint diversity – within British political circles on

the Trojan Horse affair, counter-extremism and related issues, there is no evidence of healthy debate or diverse perspectives in academia about the Trojan Horse affair.

An online conference that was planned for August 30-31, 2022, by University of Oxford lecturer Usaama Al-Azami is an example of how unbalanced the treatment of the Trojan Horse affair in academia has become. For reasons not made public, the event did not go ahead, but at the UK's most prestigious institution of higher education, one of the most significant recent controversies in education governance in Britain was to be discussed by the university as an activist cause. Perhaps this is the reason why the event did not take place. No doubt, there was an unashamed lack of impartiality in the bombastic language promoting the event, which lauded the "eight gripping episodes" of the NYT/Serial podcast as having

pick[ed] apart the accepted narrative with remarkable ease to show the Islamophobic underpinnings of the prevailing account purveyed for years by the UK political and media establishments.⁷²⁴

The call for papers for this recently aborted event demonstrated no interest in establishing the existence of an "accepted narrative" or in explaining what it is or how it is supposedly "Islamophobic". It showed no interest in justifying the crude reduction of diverse media and political opinion into "the British government and media establishment" – a supposedly singular system of state oppression. One valuable topic in the event's call for papers was "The meaning of 'undue religious influence' in the educational and other public sectors of an Anglican state", but most of the topics presumed a victimhood perspective and highly contestable but unquestioned concepts with little constructive policy implications, such as "the Prevent-Islamophobia complex" and "Structural Islamophobia".⁷²⁵ The selection of keynote speakers also lacked the requisite viewpoint diversity expected for a top-tier university.⁷²⁶ Perhaps this is why the event did not take place.

Perhaps the aborted Oxford conference may have gone ahead if it had sought to provide a balanced and critical perspective on the Trojan Horse podcast, to evaluate the notion of an established "narrative" in this case, or to assess the applicability of the claim of "Islamophobia" vis-à-vis the Trojan Horse affair. These would all have been perfectly appropriate endeavours for an academic conference on the matter at any university, let alone at one of the world's best. Indeed, *the accusation that Islamophobia played any role in the official inquiries is precisely what needs to be demonstrated.* Efforts to tease out the distinction between "conservative" Islamic values and Islamist "extremism", or to discuss the most appropriate safeguarding measures against corrupt or extremist governors would also provide some fascinating discussions and valuable learning opportunities for government policy. But no such treatment of this issue has been pursued by any university in the UK.

The Trojan Horse affair has become one of the most important recent events to galvanise a convergence of activists and academics in Britain. The NYT/Serial podcast, embraced uncritically by numerous activist academics

724. "Call for Abstracts: The Trojan Horse Affair", St Antony's College website, undated, https://www.sant.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/cfp_the_trojan_horse_affair_0.pdf.

725. *Ibid.*

726. Professor Emeritus John Holmwood, who has described the Trojan Horse affair as a "miscarriage of justice" and defended Tahir Alam (Holmwood and O'Toole, *Countering Extremism in British Schools?*, p.15.) was due to speak alongside Khadijah Elshayyal, an academic at the University of Edinburgh, who has described the affair as a "witch-hunt" (Khadijah Elshayyal, "Swim or Sink: The Trojan Horse Affair as a Witch-Hunt of the Forever 'Underclass'", Amaliah, February 25, 2022, <https://www.amaliah.com/post/64099/trojan-horse-affair-podcast-review-prevent-strategy-muslims>).

and advocacy groups, has exacerbated this blurring of boundaries. But as this report has shown, the podcast suffered from a lack of impartiality and extensive significant omissions. Hamza Syed's premise for the entire programme was: "You solve this one question [who wrote the letter], the rest does not matter."⁷²⁷ But this claim is incorrect. It takes an irrational stance, and, based on the evidence, an unsupportable one.

Even if the letter was written by a teacher involved in a dispute with a number of teaching assistants who claimed she had forged their resignation letters – as the programme suggests – it does not follow that the actions described in the letter as part of a plan did not take place. It is possible for the letter to have been faked but the description within the letter of a strategy to take over schools to accurately correspond to events. Syed and Reed – and all those who lauded the podcast – cannot seem to grasp that identifying the author of the letter throws up a range of interesting questions, but in no way demonstrates that no coordinated action was taken by like-minded governors and teachers to spread undue religious influence in schools. Nor does it demonstrate that any investigations were illegitimate. Indeed, had the authorities failed to react, there was a potential risk regarding the safeguarding of children.

Both Clarke and Kershaw were right to focus on what actually happened in the schools rather than try to establish the authorship of the letter, since the behaviours and practices that occurred in the schools were of primary concern. If an explicit plan for these behaviours and practices was found, then that would have provided further evidence to the investigation, but the lack of a plan did not mean there was nothing problematic to see. Even if the letter was faked, it provided an opportunity to investigate governance and safeguarding issues in certain schools more carefully and the investigations by Clarke, Kershaw and Ofsted all found evidence of wrongdoing that might not have been discovered or rectified if the letter had not surfaced. So, the logic that a "hoax" letter implies nothing was amiss is irredeemably flawed. This flawed logic, however, is integral to Islamist-led activism on the Trojan Horse affair, driven by and indeed fanning victimhood identity politics. The chief victim in this case, though, is arguably the truth of the matter. As Humanists UK observed after the release of the NYT/Serial podcast,

*Since 2014, a narrative has developed that foregrounds the fake letter and asserts from this that because the letter was fake, all the concerns and events surrounding the schools were an Islamophobic witch hunt. This is at odds with the facts.*⁷²⁸

It should be added, that even if there was no instance where the key figures came together to devise a "take-over" plan in advance, this would still not undermine the fact that coordinated action by likeminded people to further a certain understanding of their religion in schools was found, and that, at times, this involved the introduction of inappropriate practices and the expression of, or failure to challenge, intolerant or extremist views. Whether or not there was a written "masterplan" or a "plot"

727. *The New York Times*/Serial Productions, "The Trojan Horse Affair", Part 2 ("The Case of the Four Resignations"), 51:05, <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2022/podcasts/trojan-horse-affair.html#listen>.

728. "Humanists UK comment on Trojan Horse Affair podcast", February 23, 2022, Humanists UK website, <https://humanists.uk/2022/02/23/humanists-uk-comment-on-trojan-horse-affair-podcast/>.

devised at one point in time by a group of likeminded governors and teachers is incidental to the seriousness of the discovery of coordinated action advancing a shared vision of non-faith schools run along religious lines, and the range of inappropriate actions taken to advance that vision. Whether or not the word “plot” could be used in this case is nothing more than a semantic quibble. The chronology outlined elsewhere in this report demonstrates that there was a clear need for government investigation before the Trojan Horse letter and for government intervention.

The “Educational Activists” WhatsApp group, comprised of teachers and governors from schools where activities described in the Trojan Horse letter were found, did in fact reveal an example of strategic thinking to “Islamise” schools. Razwan Faraz, then deputy head of Nansen Primary School, advised his associates not to rush the introduction of “the Islamising agenda” in Small Heath School, when it was announced that a new headteacher had been appointed. “Please don’t pressurise her to start the Islamising agenda first,” wrote Faraz, and he continued: “that will be a lot easier when she is respected as a leader.” He added that “At the same time, she can’t be a coconut [i.e. a white person on the inside].”⁷²⁹ Faraz was a member of another WhatsApp group, the “Park View Brotherhood”, set up and administered by Monzoor Hussain, who was the Acting Principal at Park View School. According to the Clarke report, extremist views were not challenged, and Hussain only intervened when other strands of Islam were criticised by the group members. Alam was not a member of the group, but he had been the chair of governors of the school for years and was the driving force behind the school. So, either he knew about the intolerance and extremism in the group, in which case he was complicit in it, or he did not, in which case he cannot be considered a reliable source for claiming to know what was happening in the school. The WhatsApp group and the views expressed by some of its members – highly indicative of their unsuitability for teaching in schools – was mentioned in passing by the NYT/Serial podcast. Syed acknowledged Faraz’s homophobic and misogynistic comments here, admitting they were “clearly troubling coming from a teacher”, but failed to mention his “Islamising agenda” comments in the “Educational Activists” group.⁷³⁰

It cannot be overemphasised that concerns about governance malpractice in relation to undue religious influence in schools had been raised numerous times prior to the surfacing of the Trojan Horse letter. In 2010, a Birmingham headteacher, Tim Boyes, met twice with the DfE to warn of “the challenges that political Islam posed for schools in Birmingham”.⁷³¹ In 2012, Birmingham City Council (BCC) officers, through attending a headteacher forum, were made aware of similar concerns.⁷³² And in July 2013, an email from a senior BCC officer to elected members and other officials noted that “There was, and is, a view that some head teachers had been hounded out and this was as a result of organised community action focussed on a group of Muslim governors”.⁷³³ Thus, BCC had received information that matched what was in the Trojan Horse letter long before the letter itself appeared. That the problematic behaviours described in

729. Andrew Gilligan, “Trojan Horse: how we revealed the truth behind the plot”, *The Telegraph*, June 15, 2014, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/education-news/10899804/Trojan-Horse-how-we-revealed-the-truth-behind-the-plot.html>.

730. *The New York Times*/Serial Productions, “The Trojan Horse Affair”, Part 6 (“Cucumbers and Cooker Bombs”), 35 :55.

731. Wormald Review, para.15, p.7.

732. Clarke Report, para.8.8, p.75.

733. *Ibid.*, para.8.6, pp.75-76.

the letter existed prior to 2014 was confirmed more recently by Emma Knights, the Chief Executive of the National Governors Association. Based in Birmingham, her advice was sought by BCC early on in the affair. In a recent book on the lessons for governance and leadership from the Trojan Horse affair, she wrote:

The Trojan Horse behaviours identified in the Kershaw report had gathered momentum long before the coalition government was elected in 2010 and were deeply embedded in Birmingham's state-maintained schools. As one head teacher put it to me, the Academies Act 2010 enabled some academy trustees and governors not just to 'run with the ball but steal it'.⁷³⁴

The Muslim Council of Britain (MCB) has played an important albeit indirect role in the Trojan Horse affair. Tahir Alam was, after all, not only the central figure in the affair and one of the few individuals whom the Government succeeded in taking legal action against.⁷³⁵ He was also the MCB's Assistant Secretary General in 2006-2008, the chair of MCB's education committee in 2004-2008, and 2010-2011, and co-authored the MCB's 2007 guidance document for schools, "Meeting the Needs of Muslim Pupils in State Schools" (see Chapter 4).

In her statement after the release of the NYT/Serial podcast, the MCB's Secretary General, Zara Mohammed, asked: "Who was behind this hoax?" But the claim of a "hoax" – by which numerous activist groups refer not just to the letter but the conclusions of multiple official investigations – is a red herring and totally unsubstantiated. It is also a direct challenge to the authority of the Government and BCC as well as to the honesty and integrity of all of those who conducted these investigations on their behalf. Unfortunately, it has become a commonly voiced mantra amongst those who see "Islamophobia" not only in each instance of genuine anti-Muslim bigotry and discrimination, but also in every case where people who happen to be Muslims are investigated or criticised for advancing an understanding of Islam in the public space in a way that is possibly inappropriate.

Zara Mohammed also asked, "Why did decision makers dismiss crucial evidence presented at every turn?" But it is the MCB as well as Syed and Reed who appear to dismiss the "crucial evidence at every turn". This includes the aforementioned WhatsApp group that provided an insight into the attitudes and values of some of the teachers involved in the Trojan Horse affair. Far from being merely a private matter, this group, named after Park View School, according to Monzoor Hussain, met to discuss school assemblies. But the discussions were wide-ranging and intolerant attitudes were frequently expressed in the group, exemplified in homophobic remarks, disparaging comments about the "eurocentric education system", and comments in favour of imposing sex segregation during form time to avoid "unnecessary conversations".⁷³⁶ Clarke reported "an undercurrent of anti-Western sentiment" in this group, plus "explicit antagonism towards the British military, a sceptical reaction to news of terrorist attacks" – with links to conspiracy videos claiming

734. Emma Knights, "Learning for governance from Trojan Horse", in Colin Diamond (ed.), *The Birmingham Book: Lessons in urban education leadership and policy from the Trojan Horse affair*, Camarthen: Crown House, 2022, p.100.

735. Alam was banned from managing independent schools or being a governor of maintained schools on September 3, 2015 by the then Education Secretary Nicky Morgan. See "Direction: Tahir Alam barred from managing independent schools", Government website, September 9, 2015, www.gov.uk/government/publications/direction-tahir-alam-barred-from-managing-independent-schools.

736. Clarke Report, para.7.13, p.58.

the Boston bombings and the killing of Lee Rigby were hoaxes – “and numerous links posted to extremist speakers”.⁷³⁷ These included “hard-line Salafi, Deobandi and occasionally Islamist”⁷³⁸ speakers, such as former Hizb ut-Tahrir member Hamza Tzortzis,⁷³⁹ who, in 2009, defended and refused to condemn sharia hudud punishments, which include stoning and amputation.⁷⁴⁰ And in another WhatsApp group, “Educational Activists”, as mentioned above, there were expressions of desire to implement an “Islamising agenda” in one particular school.

Other evidence ignored by the MCB and the NYT/Serial podcast include the Ofsted reports for the school inspections that took place in 2014. These were written after in-person, in-depth inspections of the schools, and drew upon extensive interviews and questionnaires with teachers, governors, parents and pupils. The inspection report for Nansen Primary School found that “Subjects such as art and music have been removed for some year groups at the insistence of the governing body,”⁷⁴¹ which some pupils told inspectors they felt was unfair.⁷⁴² The report also stated:

*Pupils have only a superficial knowledge and understanding of religions and beliefs other than Islam. The lack of leadership of religious education means that teachers are ill-informed about what to teach and how to teach this subject. Pupils’ cultural development is inadequate because the academy does not help pupils to develop an understanding of the diversity of traditions, religions and customs in modern British society. This leaves pupils at risk of cultural isolation.*⁷⁴³

It furthermore found that:

*The governing body and senior leaders have not engaged with the government’s ‘Prevent’ agenda. Consequently, pupils are not taught or prepared well enough to deal with any potential exposure to extremism or radicalisation.*⁷⁴⁴

The Ofsted report for Saltley Secondary School expressed similar concerns amongst many others, stating of the school governors:

*They have no understanding of the ‘Prevent’ programme and do not see any need to engage with external agencies to make sure students are safe from and aware of the risks of radicalisation and extremism.*⁷⁴⁵

At Golden Hillock Secondary School, Ofsted inspectors found that:

*Leaders and governors are not doing enough to mitigate against cultural isolation. This may leave students vulnerable to the risk of marginalisation from wider British society and the associated risks which could include radicalisation. The academy has been slow to engage with local and national initiatives such as the ‘Prevent’ programme. Staff have only very recently been trained in recognising signs of radicalisation and extremism and how to tailor their teaching to counter this.*⁷⁴⁶

As noted earlier in this report, even prior to the introduction of the Prevent duty in 2015, introduced after the Trojan Horse affair, school inspectors were expected to consider how well schools “help pupils to prepare for

737. *Ibid.*, para.7.10, p.58.

738. *Ibid.*, para.7.24, p.68.

739. *Ibid.*, para.7.25, p.69.

740. InviteToGod, “Islamic Law - Barbaric or Misunderstood by Hamza Tzortzis”, YouTube, March 27, 2014, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iILFF6aS_Q0&ab_channel=InviteToGod. See 56:17; 1:52:44. He argued that the burden of proof for convictions for crimes such as adultery is high and that the punishments were rarely implemented in Islamic history.

741. Nansen Primary School - A Park View Academy, Ofsted inspection report, inspection number 444501, inspection date April 2-3, 2014, p.6. Available at: <https://files.ofsted.gov.uk/v1/file/2391873>.

742. *Ibid.*, p.7.

743. *Ibid.*

744. *Ibid.*

745. Saltley School and Specialist Science College, Ofsted inspection report, inspection number 444853, inspection date April 9-10, 2014, p.8. Available at: <https://files.api.ofsted.gov.uk/v1/file/2391825>.

746. Golden Hillock School - A Park View Academy, Ofsted inspection report, inspection number 444502, inspection date April 2-3, 2014, p.6. Available at: <https://files.ofsted.gov.uk/v1/file/2391869>.

life in modern democratic Britain and a global society, and to prevent extremist behaviour”.⁷⁴⁷ Although no evidence was found of radicalisation in these schools, restrictions in the curriculum, in terms of the removal of subjects or teaching through a narrow Islamic perspective, and the segregation of boys and girls risked, in Sir Michael Wilshaw’s words, “making children vulnerable to segregation and emotional dislocation from wider society”.⁷⁴⁸ The lack of a “broad and balanced curriculum”, he said, meant that “children are not being encouraged to develop tolerant attitudes towards all faiths and all cultures” or being equipped “to live and work in a multi-cultural, multi-faith and democratic Britain”.

Other evidence that was ignored by the MCB and Syed and Reed include the media statement of the Muslim Women’s Network UK from 2014. In February 2022, the executive director of MWNUK, Shaista Gohir, wrote in *The Guardian* that the “the systematic implementation of a religiously conservative ideology was affecting staff and pupils, particularly girls and women”.⁷⁴⁹ She wrote:

These issues, including safeguarding, continue to be downplayed or portrayed as lies in a bid to exonerate the men. I sent Serial podcast our 2014 media statement, which was ignored, even though we spoke to Muslim witnesses directly. Among other things, segregation and girls wearing hijab were portrayed as choices but they were shamed into complying, otherwise they would not be good Muslims.

The MWNUK’s 2014 media statement, cited in full earlier in this report, noted that “pressure was exerted on girls who did not wear the hijab” and that certain male Muslim teachers told the girls they were not good Muslims because they did not cover their heads. It also stated that witnesses had told the MWNUK that boys and girls were warned not to sit too near to each other during breaks and informed parents if warnings went unheeded; and that in one case, a teacher allegedly “hacked into a girl’s mobile phone and informed her parents about its contents”. The media statement also asserted:

[M]arital rape was condoned as some boys were taught that a wife is not allowed to refuse sex. Intimidation was a feature in many of the accounts including pressure to pray. For example, in one incident posters were put on walls to say that anyone who didn’t pray was a ‘kafir’ or unbeliever, considered the worst thing that a Muslim can be accused of. Other concerns included a narrow arts curriculum, anti-Western rhetoric, discrimination and systematic pushing out of any non-Muslim and Muslim members of staff who were challenging the hardline ethos of senior management and governors.

Zara Mohammed’s statement for the MCB also claimed that “We know who the victims of this hoax were,” and asked, along lines reminiscent of conspiracy theorists, “but who were the beneficiaries?” But the matter of who the victims were is a highly contested one. For the MCB and others who support Alam and the teachers whose trials were discontinued in 2017, the chief victims were obviously Alam and those teachers, plus,

747. “School Inspection Handbook”, Ofsted, reference no: 120101, June 2012, para 122, p.43. Available at : https://dera.ioe.ac.uk/14742/1/Handbook_for_school_inspection_from_September_2012%5b1%5d.pdf.

748. “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”, UK Government website, June 9, 2014, para. 5.a and b, p.7, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/415115/Advice_note_on_academies_and_maintained_schools_Birmingham_toSoS_Education.pdf.

749. “Letters: the catastrophic effect of the Trojan Horse Affair”, *The Guardian*, February 27, 2022, <https://www.theguardian.com/theobserver/commentisfree/2022/feb/27/letters-catastrophic-effect-trojan-horse-affair>.

according to some accounts, “the Muslim community” in Birmingham.⁷⁵⁰ The latter is a particularly vague claim. Alam himself went further, claiming that “the entire British Muslim community was vilified and cast as suspicious outsiders in their own country”.⁷⁵¹ In June 2014, some Muslim parents reportedly complained to Jonathan Ashworth, then the Labour MP for Leicester South, about “the tone of this debate” and “felt that the Muslim community were being branded as extremists”.⁷⁵² There was certainly some irresponsible media reporting on the affair. But none of the reports from Ofsted, Clarke or Kershaw said anything about Muslims as a community – in Birmingham or the country as a whole.

Clarke’s words, which have been ignored by Zara Mohammed and those who claim Muslims were scapegoated, are worth repeating. He stated that the majority of Muslim parents “are not demanding that their children adhere to conservative religious behaviour at school”.⁷⁵³ He said he had received evidence that it is only a minority of parents who welcomed this. Many witnesses, he reported, told him “that most parents do not have the confidence to argue against the articulate and forceful people” who seek the imposition of strict religious codes of practice, “for fear of being branded as disloyal to their faith or their community”. In distinguishing between the behaviour and wishes of some Muslim governors, teachers and parents supporting such codes, on one hand, and other Muslim parents not supporting such codes, on the other, Clarke cannot be said to have vilified the “entire British Muslim community”. And far from vilifying Muslims *en masse*, Michael Gove, the then Education Secretary, said: “The overwhelming majority of British Muslim parents want their children to grow up in schools that open doors rather than close minds. It is on their behalf that we have to act.”⁷⁵⁴

In addition, neither Ofsted nor the DfE made any generalisations about Muslims. It is deeply insincere or naïve to claim that beyond some irresponsible and sensational media reporting Muslims as a whole were vilified or scapegoated by government bodies or officials.

Such a claim – arguably irresponsible itself for potentially stoking a victimhood mentality amongst Muslims – also ignores the fact that Muslims were amongst the chief victims of the behaviour and practices in the affected schools: Muslim children who were denied a broad and balanced curriculum and Muslim parents who were afraid to stand up to aggressive governors regarding the running of their children’s schools. Some parents were reportedly unhappy with the imposition of a secondary model and the narrowing of the curriculum in Nansen Primary School.⁷⁵⁵ Some parents reportedly objected to the cancellation of Christmas celebrations at Oldknow School.⁷⁵⁶ At Highfield Junior and Infants School, Arabic was introduced as the main foreign language “in contradiction to the results of a questionnaire completed by parents”.⁷⁵⁷ The extent of dissatisfaction amongst Muslim parents and pupils with how the schools were changing under the influence of certain governors, headteachers and teaching staff, is difficult to ascertain. Some parents supported these changes and were reportedly involved in pressuring certain headteachers to resign. But others,

750. Peter Osborne, “Trojan Horse affair: When government and media colluded to vilify the Muslim community”, *Middle East Eye*, February 28, 2018, <https://www.middleeasteye.net/opinion/trojan-horse-affair-when-government-and-media-colluded-vilify-muslim-community>.

751. Tahir Mahmood Alam, “Britain’s Trojan Horse: A hoax that still harms Muslims”, *Aljazeera*, April 17, 2022, <https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2022/4/17/britains-trojan-horse-a-hoax-that-still-harms-muslims>.

752. Hansard, HC, “Extremism”, June 9, 2014, Col. 284. Available from: <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201415/cmhansrd/cm140609/debtext/140609-0001.htm>.

753. Clarke Report, para.11.3, p.95.

754. Hansard, HC, “Extremism”, June 9, 2014, Col. 265.

755. Clarke Report, para. 4.12, p.36.

756. *Ibid.*, para 4.36, pp.42-3.

757. Kershaw Report, p.27.

it is clear, either opposed these changes or were simply not consulted on their implementation. Muslim parents were also pressured to comply with the agenda that some school officials were bringing into what were non-faith schools. At Anderton Park School, for example, a governor ran a texting campaign suggesting that Muslim parents who did not vote for him in upcoming governor elections were not “good Muslims”.⁷⁵⁸

Muslim parents who were unhappy with how their children’s schools were changing were unlikely to speak out for fear of ostracisation. But one parent, Mohammed Zabar, who was brave enough to speak to the media about his misgivings over the way his then 10-year old daughter was being educated at Oldknow School told the BBC in June 2014, “If I wanted my daughter to have a faith-based education I could have sent her to any number of faith-based schools. It was important to me that she received a secular education.”⁷⁵⁹ Zabar told *The Telegraph*, “I want to ensure that those involved can never be in a position to carry any influence in our schools ever again.” His daughter, who was told her hair was “un-Islamic”, was bullied at school and called a “Christian”, for which two pupils were suspended. Similarly, girls wearing trousers were also described as “un-Islamic”.⁷⁶⁰

None of this is to deny the damage that the Trojan Horse affair made to the reputation of Birmingham. Colin Diamond, the former Deputy Education Commissioner in Birmingham (2014-15) and Executive Director for Education in Birmingham City Council (2015-18), recently wrote:

*Its fall from being England’s leading education authority in 2002 to the humiliation of being under the Department for Education’s direction and monitored by a commissioner was demoralising for educationalists. The city they loved, and in which they had worked tirelessly to transform children’s lives, was a national disgrace.*⁷⁶¹

But it is important to emphasise that the damage to Birmingham, including to its Muslim communities, was not inflicted by a “hoax” letter or by those alleging wrongdoing – as if there were no problems in the schools – but by what the letter precisely warned about, and what Ofsted, the EFA, Clarke and Kershaw found evidence for: a connected group of people – school governors and managers, with some parents – who undermined and ousted headteachers, influenced governing bodies, and inappropriately operated non-faith schools in accordance with their own interpretation of Islamic principles, thus limiting the outlooks of the schoolchildren they were appointed to serve.

Islamist groups and their activist sympathisers in academia and the media do not speak for all Muslims. They cannot speak for both Muslim governors or teachers pursuing what Razwan Faraz described as “the Islamising agenda” in schools and Muslim parents vocally or silently opposed to it. Their claims of collective Muslim victimhood should not go unchallenged. But they dominate or attempt to dominate the narrative on the Trojan Horse affair. This is why this report’s fuller documentary

758. *Ibid.*, p.36. The word “him” is used but the gender of the governor was redacted in Kershaw’s report.

759. Rick Kelsey and Frankie McCamley, “What is the Trojan Horse in Birmingham Schools?”, BBC News, June 9, 2014, <https://www.bbc.com/news/newsbeat-27765363>.

760. Gilligan, “Trojan Horse: how we revealed the truth behind the plot”; Andrew Gilligan, Trojan Horse ‘links to terror’, *The Telegraph*, June 8, 2014, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/10883894/Trojan-Horse-links-to-terror.html>.

761. Colin Diamond, “Shame visited on Birmingham: publication of the Trojan Horse letter and its consequences, 2013-2014”, in Diamond (ed.), *The Birmingham Book*, pp.16-17.

picture of events surrounding this controversy is important to help set the record straight.

This report is all the more important given official silence on the matter since the Trojan Horse Affair podcast aired in February 2022 and reinvigorated activist agitation on the matter. But it should be noted that the current silence of the DfE, Ofsted, and those involved in the official investigations eight years ago regarding the NYT/Serial podcast does not mean that the claims of an Islamophobic “witch-hunt” are correct. Eight years is a long time within any government department for staff to remain in position. Most of the people who were working in the relevant positions in the DfE, Ofsted, the EFA or BCC have moved on, and the knowledge and experience of working on this matter has moved on with them. There are still a few individuals working within the civil service who have a fuller grasp of what happened in Birmingham, but there is also the question of permission within government bodies to speak publicly. It is likely that the few senior civil servants and politicians who have the authority to speak either lack adequate knowledge of what happened or are reluctant to publicly counter activists’ claims for fear of re-igniting community tensions, getting bogged down in pointless feuds, or being accused of “Islamophobia”. Fears of being branded “Islamophobic” or “racist” were, after all, part of the reason why BCC failed to act on concerns about Birmingham schools that were raised at least as early as 2010.

Some five years after the Trojan Horse affair hit the headlines, Tahir Alam, who had been barred from school governance, found himself once again involved in controversy. In January 2019, a parent at Parkfield School in Birmingham began a petition against the No Outsiders programme – a programme for primary schools promoting the equality and tolerance of LGBT groups – claiming that its teaching about same-sex marriage was contradictory to Islam. In February 2019, Alam claimed that teachers were “indoctrinating” children with the No Outsiders programme and reportedly urged parents to demand its removal from the curriculum.⁷⁶² Protests about the programme and the Government’s plans to make Relationship and Sex Education (RSE) compulsory in schools began outside the school and spread to other schools. The protests were not exclusively Muslim, but Muslim parents and others who were not parents of the schoolchildren comprised the majority of the protestors. In the summer of 2019, Alam re-launched the Muslim Parents Association, which had been closed following the Trojan Horse affair,⁷⁶³ and began monthly seminars on RSE in Birmingham, advising parents of their rights and “the Islamic perspective” on the issue. Alam apparently encouraged parents to look at home schooling. Whilst not being solely attributable to Alam, there was a significant rise in the number of children taken out of school during this period,⁷⁶⁴ further emphasising the challenges facing education in Birmingham.

The conflict of values at the heart of the Trojan Horse affair – where the imposition of Islamic principles in schools occasionally smudged the line between “religious conservatism” and “extremism” as defined by the

762. Neil Johnston, “Banned school governor Tahir Alam fights gay equality lessons”, *The Times*, February 13, 2019, <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/banned-school-governor-tahir-alam-fights-gay-lessons-qkkgwfnqn>.

763. Neil Johnston, “Banned ‘Trojan horse’ school governor holding sex education seminars”, *The Times*, July 8, 2019, <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/banned-trojan-horse-school-governor-holding-sex-education-seminars-vghtsgp6l>.

764. Figures obtained under the Freedom of Information Act showed that between the beginning of the row in January 2019, and September 2019, almost 400 children were pulled out of schools in Birmingham – a 15 % rise over the same period in the previous year. See Neil Johnston, “LGBT protests: Pupils pulled out of schools over gay relationship classes”, *The Times*, September 20, 2019, <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/ministers-put-gay-lesson-anger-in-too-difficult-box-896qtppqg>.

Government – had not gone away. Resurfacing in the 2019 RSE protests was a clash of religious values with English education and equalities law, but also the organised efforts of activists determined to institutionalise such values. There was an important difference, however, in tactics. In a book published in July 2022, Colin Diamond, Birmingham’s former Deputy Education Commissioner, compared the Trojan Horse affair with the 2019 RSE protests. He wrote:

The difference between the years leading up to 2014 and the landscape in 2019 was that the subversion of headteachers via entryism into governing bodies was no longer possible, so activists focused on mobilising outside the school gates. The most visible signs were the nasty protests; the less visible activities were attempts to discredit school leaders via multiple spurious complaints to Ofsted.⁷⁶⁵

The protests outside Parkfield School ceased when the school presented parents with a modified programme called “No Outsiders in the Faith Community”, which has some concessions on the books used and the age at which parts of the programme were introduced. Mediation efforts failed at Anderton Park School, but the protests outside the school were banned indefinitely within a certain radius by a High Court in November 2019. BCC, which brought the case to court, alleged that the protesters had spread false information about the school, the teachers and the curriculum. Street protestors, BCC alleged, claimed the school was pursuing “a paedophile agenda”, and teaching children how to masturbate. Videos accused the school of “bringing in gay teachers to teach children about anal sex, and allowing convicted paedophiles into the school”.⁷⁶⁶ The judge found these aspects of BCC’s case as “clearly proved”.⁷⁶⁷ The Commission for Countering Extremism found evidence that during the protests, the Islamist group Hizb ut-Tahrir circulated a “deeply hate-filled” PowerPoint presentation “to prepare protesters to counter ‘arguments that legitimise LGBT’ and prevent Muslim youth from questioning Islamic values”.⁷⁶⁸

The 2019 protests over RSE were a reminder of the readiness of activists to spread false information to advance a worldview at odds with Britain’s mainstream liberal culture. Whether wielded by unscrupulous governors to undermine and remove headteachers in order to advance a supposedly “conservative” religious ethos in schools, by activists during street protests against the teaching of tolerance for minority groups including homosexual families, or by activist academics attempting to influence or control the narrative over what happened in the Birmingham schools at the heart of the Trojan Horse affair, it is important that such misinformation or disinformation is challenged. This report hopes to do so regarding the latter, by providing a more rounded picture of the events and inquiries that took place.

765. Colin Diamond, Introduction to Joy Warmington, “Opposition to LGBT awareness teaching: no outsiders, but what was it like in the inside?”, in Diamond (ed.), *The Birmingham Book*, p.275.

766. Birmingham CC v Afsar (No 3) [2019] EWHC 3217 (QB), para.3, p.2. Available at: <https://www.judiciary.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Birmingham-CC-v-Afsar-No-3-2019-EWHC-3217-QB-Final.pdf>.

767. *Ibid.*

768. Commission for Countering Extremism, “Challenging Hateful Extremism”, October 2019, p.67. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/874101/200320_Challenging_Hateful_Extremism.pdf.

Policy recommendations

1. The Government should conduct a full review of the progress made in implementing Peter Clarke’s recommendations, as advised in his July 2014 report.

Clarke’s report provided 15 recommendations for the Government to consider in the wake of the Trojan Horse inquiry. The Government accepted all of them.⁷⁶⁹ These urged the Department for Education (DfE) to review the processes by which schools support new teachers to become qualified; to extend the role of the designated Child Protection Officer in schools to include Prevent; to take action against teachers breaching the teacher standards; to review the process by which schools can convert to academy status or become Multi Academy Trusts; to consider requiring academies to notify the DfE of changes in their governing bodies; and to provide stronger powers for the Secretary of State to bar individuals from taking part in the management of any type of school.

Some recommendations were aimed at Birmingham City Council (BCC). These were to review its systems, processes and policies regarding the support it provides to maintained schools to ensure that they are more strategic and joined-up; to review the compromise agreements it had signed with headteachers in the previous five years and reassess their appropriateness; and to improve the running of its governor support services and ensure it is able to intervene effectively where governing bodies were failing to act appropriately.

Ofsted was recommended to consider whether the existing inspection framework and associated guidance was capable of detecting extremism and ensuring that the character of a school is not changed substantively without following the proper process. Local authorities and multi-academy trusts were encouraged to review their governor arrangements to ensure a wide range of people are able to hold governor positions. Clarke recommended that schools were required to include details of their governing body on their websites to ensure transparency.

Perhaps the most important recommendation was number five, aimed at the Department for Education, the Education Funding Agency, Ofsted and Birmingham City Council. This urged them each to review their own existing channels for voicing concerns and ensure that their channels “are robust, responsive and provide proper protection for those coming forward with sensitive concerns; and judge properly whether there are indicators of extremism, and refer the cases to the relevant authority to consider”.⁷⁷⁰

769. Hansard, “Birmingham Schools”, Volume 591, January 29, 2015, <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2015-01-29/debates/15012949000002/Birmingham-Schools>.

770. Clarke Report, p.98.

It is unclear how many of these recommendations have been fully implemented, and what the results have been from their implementation. The last update on their implementation was on January 29, 2015, when the then Secretary of State for Education, Nicky Morgan, made a statement in the House of Commons. She said that she had deposited a note on the status of their implementation in the House of Commons.⁷⁷¹ This note – a table describing what actions had been taken between July 2014 and January 2015 – categorised six of the recommendations as “completed” and the rest as “underway”.⁷⁷² (The note, which includes Clarke’s list of recommendations, appears in Appendix 2 of this report.) There have been eight subsequent Secretaries of State for Education since then. The Government should provide an update to this document, and inform Parliament and the public what has been done and what remains to be done, as well as the results of the action it has taken. It should also provide an explanation if any of the recommendations have not been implemented.

2. The Government should ensure that there is in place appropriate whistle-blowing mechanisms for reporting cases to the DfE of suspected extremism and intolerance, as well as governance malpractice, in schools, and that these mechanisms are clearly communicated to the public.

There should be an effective whistle-blowing line for staff and parents to report inappropriate behaviour by staff and/or governing bodies. Is there a confidential hotline to which concerned teachers, governors and members of the public can report concerns? Clarke’s fifth recommendation – the only one addressed to the DfE, the EFA, Ofsted and BCC – urged for effective whistle-blowing mechanisms. The January 2015 document on progress with the implementation of Clarke’s recommendations (presented in Appendix 2) stated that progress on this recommendation is underway. It stated that Ofsted is reviewing its arrangements for handling all forms of complaint. It also stated:

*The [DfE] is planning improvements to the process for school staff and the general public to contact the department to help ensure safeguarding concerns, including radicalisation and extremism, are acted on promptly.*⁷⁷³

The Government should prioritise the provision of an update to the public on progress in this area. The January 2015 document added:

*The department intends to extend the legal protections in the Public Interest Disclosure Act 2013 (PIDA) so that school staff making whistleblowing allegations regarding extremism concerns to the department are protected, through the regulations owned by BIS [Department of Business, Innovation and Skills] in relation to designated bodies under PIDA.*⁷⁷⁴

The Government should also provide an update in this area, explaining whether and how whistle-blowers are protected nationally. The January 2015 document further described the role of Regional Schools

771. Hansard, “Birmingham Schools”, Volume 591, January 29, 2015.

772. “Implementation of recommendations from ‘Report into allegations concerning Birmingham schools ...’”, DEP2015-0126, House of Commons, January 29, 2015, <https://depositedpapers.parliament.uk/depositedpaper/2275513/files>.

773. *Ibid.*, p.3.

774. *Ibid.*

Commissioners (RSCs) in receiving sensitive complaints. It stated that they “understand how to handle safeguarding concerns, which may include extremism”, and report all such concerns to the DfE’s Due Diligence and Counter Extremism Group (DDCEG). They also work with local authorities, Ofsted and others to ensure all complaints and concerns are identified and reported to the DfE. It may be useful for the DfE to produce an annual report or ministerial statement on the number and kind of concerns that have been reported to it, what actions it has taken to address them, and the results of their actions.

3. The Government should consider an investigation into the impact that fears of being labelled “Islamophobic” or “racist” are having on the reporting by teachers of incidents of extremism or intolerance in schools and of governance malpractice, as well as on the willingness of local authorities to act on such reports.

Ian Kershaw’s report noted that his team was “made aware of a culture within BCC of not wanting to address difficult issues and problems with school governance where there may be a risk of BCC being accused of being racist or Islamophobic”.⁷⁷⁵ This was confirmed by the then leader of BCC, Sir Albert Bore, who apologised in public for the council’s failure to tackle Trojan Horse activities for so long “out of a misguided fear of being accused of racism”.⁷⁷⁶ This corresponds with what Dame Louise Casey found more widely in her review into opportunity and integration, published in December 2016. She reported:

*Too many public institutions, national and local, state and non-state, have gone so far to accommodate diversity and freedom of expression that they have ignored or even condoned regressive, divisive and harmful cultural and religious practices, for fear of being branded racist or Islamophobic.*⁷⁷⁷

It is time that the Government considers a review into the extent to which these fears are hindering the reporting of extremism, intolerance and governance malpractice in Britain’s schools, and inducing paralysis within the relevant public bodies to act. It is also important for the Government to understand, for the sake of the public, the possible damage this paralysis has wreaked and identify ways to address it.

4. The Government should expect schools to regularly engage with a broad section of their parent bodies on curriculum issues, for example in relation to RSE, to ensure that curriculum development and adaptation, if necessary, is not unduly influenced by activist parents and governors but informed by a comprehensive and representative cross-section of parents.

The Department for Education and Ofsted, specifically, should expect schools to engage widely with parents on issues relating to the curriculum, including new requirements from the Government and requests from

775. Kershaw Report, para.46, p.12.

776. Neil Elkes, “‘We’re sorry’ Council leader admits staff ignored Trojan Horse issue for ‘fear of being accused of racism’”, *The Birmingham Mail*, July 14, 2014, <https://www.birminghammail.co.uk/news/midlands-news/birmingham-mail-trojan-horse-investigation-7456936>.

777. Louise Casey, “The Casey Review: A Review into Opportunity and Integration”, Department for Communities and Local Government, December 2016, p.16, n.1.67. Available at: www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/575973/The_Casey_Review_Report.pdf.

community parent groups. Schools should be required to show that they have and are using mechanisms to ensure that such parent groups and governors, who may lobby for curriculum restrictions, for example in RSE, are not the only voices heard on these matters. Schools should not be beholden to a small number of vocal parents or governors.

Furthermore, schools should not accept on face value that certain individuals, such as religious or community “leaders”, can speak on behalf of the parents who happen to identify as a member of the same faith. Parents’ views on the curriculum – for example, in relation to the requirements to teach RSE or fundamental British values – should not be represented by or mediated through community “leaders”, whether these are parents, governors or external individuals. Mosque officials, such as imams, do not represent the views of the entirety of Muslims in a given locale. Muslims’ views are diverse and there are many parts of the country where the majority of Muslims do not attend mosques (and where those that do attend represent a narrow demographic). Schools need to be proactive in seeking the views of parents from religious communities precisely because many are not politically or collectively mobilised and afraid to speak against members of their own faith who are.

5. The Government should consider a review of all guidance to schools that relate to the accommodation of local communities’ religious or cultural values. As part of this, it should articulate a clear distinction between appropriate and inappropriate religious or cultural influence on the curriculum and on the running of schools.

One of the arguments in defence of the actions of those alleged to have introduced an “an intolerant and aggressive Islamic ethos”⁷⁷⁸ into Birmingham schools was that they were merely following guidance for schools to reflect the local community’s religious values. There is a need for clarity on what guidance relating to the accommodation of religious or cultural sensibilities is currently in effect. Schools and the public would benefit from knowing what religious or cultural practices are appropriate and inappropriate in school settings, and how this is reflected in guidance for schools, local authorities and Ofsted inspectors. The action plan for the Government’s 2019 Integrated Communities Strategy stated,

*we will not shy away from challenging cultures and practices that can act as barriers to integration, that are harmful to individuals or restrict their rights and hold them back from making the most of the opportunities of living in modern Britain.*⁷⁷⁹

But the Government needs to provide clarity on what determines a given practice as a barrier to integration or is harmful within schools. In which contexts and in relation to which aspects of the curriculum, for example, is it appropriate to segregate boys and girls in mixed sex schools? Where is the limit to what schools can concede regarding RSE? There should be clear criteria against which to assess the acceptability of demands on

778. Clarke Report, p.14.

779. HM Government, “Integrated Communities Action Plan”, February 2019, p.18. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/778045/Integrated_Communities_Strategy_Govt_Action_Plan.pdf

schools to accommodate the allegedly distinct religious and cultural needs of pupils from minority communities. This clarity should be embedded in all currently applicable guidance for schools.

6. The Government should request that the MCB clarify its position on whether it still endorses the document, “Meeting the Needs of Muslim Pupils in State Schools: Information and Guidance for Schools”.

Does the MCB stand by this document? The Government should request that the group, which claims to be the largest Muslim representative body in Britain and to represent a cross-section of Islamic traditions in the country, clarifies whether it officially endorses the standpoints, as stated in this document, that:

- “boys should always be covered between the navel and knee and girls should be covered except for their hands and faces” whilst at school, including during sports (p.20);
- schools should accommodate two of the five daily prayers (Zuhr and Asr) if they both fall within school hours, including the ritual wash, taking around 20 minutes each (p.25);
- schools should ensure that contact sports, such as football and basketball, “are always in single gender groups” (p.37); and
- most Muslim parents see little or no educational value in dance after early childhood and that Muslim pupils should not be required to learn dance (p.39)

The Government should also demand the MCB clarifies whether it endorses the contents of two books its guidance document recommends, namely, *Sex Education: The Muslim Perspective*, by Ghulam Sarwar, and *What Does Islam Say?* by Ibrahim Hewitt. In particular, the MCB should clarify what it understands by the following statements from these books and whether it officially agrees with them or not. This is important given the potential impact these books may have on young children’s outlooks and the fact that the MCB has explicitly recommended these specific books:

- “Islam does not approve of free mixing between sexes” (*Sex Education*, p.49). Does the MCB believe that this applies in schools? If so, from what age and in what contexts does it apply?
- “Schools should not promote homosexuality” (*Sex Education*, p.49). Does this apply to the teaching of tolerance towards homosexual people?
- “Homosexual practices are not allowed in Islam; they incur the anger of Allah, and are severely punished in an Islamic society” (*Sex Education*, p.49). Homosexuality is “evil”, “depraved”, and a “sin” (*What Does Islam Say?*, p.26). Does the MCB agree with these statements and that homosexual acts, as stated in these books, are punishable – albeit only in a fully-fledged Islamic society governed

by sharia – by lashings or death (*Sex Education*, p.16; *What Does Islam Say?*, p.26)?

Does the MCB believe that Muslim children ought to learn that in a fully-fledged Islamic society the punishment for sex outside marriage (“fornication”) is 100 lashes and that the punishment for adultery is stoning to death? (*Sex Education*, p.16). Does the MCB agree that sharia hudud punishments would be appropriate if Britain was to become a Muslim-majority country? Can the MCB categorically deny that Muslim children should be educated to believe that the ideal society is one in which sharia is the basis of state law, where hudud punishments are applied to homosexual acts, adultery, and sex before marriage as described in these books that it has recommended for schools?

7. Anti-LGBT protests outside Anderton Park School were banned indefinitely by a High Court in November 2019; the Government should consider devising legislation that extends this to all educational institutions.

Protests outside schools disrupt children’s education, and spread fear and anxiety amongst schoolchildren, teachers and parents. Protests can sometimes have the opposite effect of protestors’ wishes; as a result of the 2019 anti-LGBT protests, the number of schools interested in and adopting the No Outsiders programme increased. But such protests at the school gates are potentially harmful, particularly for schoolchildren, and a distraction from learning. Their mental health and education may suffer. The judges who ruled in BCC’s favour in upholding the ban of protests outside Anderton Park School were correct in their judgement, but the same protection ought to be provided to all schools in Britain.

Appendix 1

Social media coverage of NYT/ Serial “Trojan Horse Affair” podcast

January 27 –February 22, 2022

In the period January 27 and February 22, 2022, there were 143 tweets concerning Trojan Horse which received at least five retweets. These are listed in the table below. Only a small number, six, were critical of the New York Times/Serial “Trojan Horse Affair” podcast. These are highlighted in the table in grey.

Date	Commentator and Link	Organisation
29/01/22	Shani Malik, ⁷⁸⁰ Pakistani social media user. This tweet occurs shortly pre-broadcast, and its nature is unclear.	N/K.
03/02/22	Hussein Kesvani, ⁷⁸¹ journalist. Praises the research, attacks UK coverage of the case.	Freelance.
03/02/22	Gurminder K Bhambra, ⁷⁸² academic. Tweet links to a 2020 article by the academics John Holmwood, Helen Monks and Matt Woodhead.	Sussex University, and editor of Discover Society.
03/02/22	Peter Osborne, ⁷⁸³ journalist. Praises the podcast enthusiastically.	Middle East Eye.
03/02/22	Peter Osborne, ⁷⁸⁴ journalist. Criticises Michael Gove’s conduct.	Middle East Eye.
04/02/22	Prevent Watch. ⁷⁸⁵ This tweet links to an article in Middle East Eye denouncing Michael Gove.	Prevent Watch, a campaign group opposed to the prevent counter-terrorism policy.
04/02/22	Discover Society. ⁷⁸⁶ This tweet links to a 2014 article by the academic Shamim Miah.	Discover Society, is an online publication established by Prof John Holmwood and Sue Scott. ⁷⁸⁷
04/02/22	Dr Rizwaan Sabir, ⁷⁸⁸ academic. Tweet links to a Guardian article on Trojan Horse.	Liverpool Hope University.
04/02/22	DOAM. ⁷⁸⁹ Tweet links to an article in Middle East Eye condemning Michael Gove.	Documenting Oppression Against Muslims (DOAM).

780. Inocent/@T_shani46, Twitter post, January 29, 2022, https://twitter.com/t_shani46/status/1487309083870957570.

781. HK/ @HKesvani, Twitter post, February 3, 2022, <https://twitter.com/HKesvani/status/1489197850089164800>.

782. Gurminder K Bhambra/@GKBhambra, Twitter post, February 3, 2022, <https://twitter.com/GKBhambra/status/1489209139339444231>.

783. Peter Osborne/@OsborneTweets, Twitter post, February 3, 2022, <https://twitter.com/OsborneTweets/status/1489219970798129156>.

784. Peter Osborne/@OsborneTweets, Twitter post, February 3, 2022, <https://twitter.com/OsborneTweets/status/1489278307015303173>.

785. PREVENT Watch UK/@PREVENT-watchUK, Twitter post, February 4, 2022, <https://twitter.com/PREVENTwatchUK/status/1489502292244062211>.

786. Discover Society/@DiscoverSoc, Twitter post, February 4, 2022, <https://twitter.com/DiscoverSoc/status/1489658917944705029>.

787. “About Us”, Discover Society, undated, <https://discoversociety.org/about/>.

788. Dr. Rizwaan Sabir/@RizwaanSabir, Twitter post, February 4, 2022, <https://twitter.com/RizwaanSabir/status/1489665252522352644>.

789. DOAM/@doamuslms, Twitter post, February 4, 2022, <https://twitter.com/doamuslms/status/1489703352657137664>.

790. Shiv Ramdas Traing To Rite Buk/@nameshiv, Twitter post, February 5, 2022, <https://twitter.com/nameshiv/status/1489861787285549056>.
791. HK/@HKesvani, Twitter post, February 5, 2022, <https://twitter.com/HKesvani/status/1489933193818128386>.
792. Basit Mahmood/@BasitMahmood91, Twitter post, February 5, 2022, <https://twitter.com/BasitMahmood91/status/1489938800235196423>.
793. Hari Kunzru/@harikunzru, Twitter post, February 5, 2022, <https://twitter.com/harikunzru/status/1490093023425925123>.
794. Nick Timothy/@NJ_Timothy, Twitter post, February 6, 2022, https://twitter.com/NJ_Timothy/status/1490427789346066436.
795. Dr Asim Qureshi/@AsimCP, Twitter post, February 6, 2022, <https://twitter.com/AsimCP/status/1490288594640068609>.
796. Usaama al-Azami/@DrUsaama, Twitter post, February 6, 2022, <https://twitter.com/DrUsaama/status/1490329298431008768>.
797. Sahar Ghumkhor/@theprimalplot, Twitter post, February 6, 2022, <https://twitter.com/theprimalplot/status/1490278439428890631>.
798. AssedBaig/@AssedBaig, Twitter post, February 6, 2022, <https://twitter.com/AssedBaig/status/1490348854285418500>.
799. Stephen H. Jones/@StphnHwrdJns, Twitter post, February 6, 2022, <https://twitter.com/StphnHwrdJns/status/1490387970976800773>.
800. Sayeeda Warsi/@SayeedaWarsi, Twitter post, February 7, 2022, <https://twitter.com/SayeedaWarsi/status/1490634293391073281>.
801. Dr Asim Qureshi/@AsimCP, Twitter post, February 7, 2022, <https://twitter.com/AsimCP/status/1490663318452899842>.
802. MPACUK/@MPACUK, Twitter post, February 7, 2022, <https://twitter.com/MPACUK/status/1490666417695436804>.
803. Dr Louise Raw/@LouiseRawAuthor, Twitter post, February 7, 2022, <https://twitter.com/LouiseRawAuthor/status/1490752687293575172>.
804. Dr. Rizwaan Sabir/@RizwaanSabir, Twitter post, February 8, 2022, <https://twitter.com/RizwaanSabir/status/1490971588665442308>.
805. Roshan M Salih/@RmSalih, Twitter post, February 9, 2022, <https://twitter.com/RmSalih/status/1491340402770604032>.
806. MPACUK/@MPACUK, Twitter post, February 9, 2022, <https://twitter.com/MPACUK/status/1491426664248758280>.

05/02/22	Shiv Ramdas, ⁷⁹⁰ writer. Attacks the “British establishment” and Rizvana Darr.	Freelance.
05/02/22	Hussein Kesvani, ⁷⁹¹ journalist. Tweet links to a Guardian article on Trojan Horse attacking Michael Gove.	Freelance.
05/02/22	Basit Mahmood, ⁷⁹² journalist. Claims “entire communities and careers” were ruined by fake claims.	Editor of the website Left Foot Forward.
05/02/22	Harry Kunzru, ⁷⁹³ writer. Connects Trojan horse to the war on terror.	Freelance.
06/02/22	Nick Timothy, ⁷⁹⁴ political advisor. That there were problems in Birmingham schools was established.	Conservative party.
06/02/22	Asim Qureshi, ⁷⁹⁵ Research Director. States he will not “move on” from Trojan Horse.	CAGE.
06/02/22	Usaama Al Aazmi, ⁷⁹⁶ academic. Praises podcast, states Trojan Horse “haunts” British Muslims today.	University of Oxford.
06/02/22	Sahar Ghumkhor, ⁷⁹⁷ academic. Positions Trojan Horse in terms of Islamophobia.	University of Melbourne.
06/02/22	Assed Baig, ⁷⁹⁸ journalist. Never believed there was a plot, and that would have been noticed if newsrooms were more diverse.	Al Jazeera English.
06/02/22	Stephen Jones, ⁷⁹⁹ academic. Twitter thread endorsing the podcast.	Department of Theology and Religion, University of Birmingham.
07/02/22	Baroness Warsi, ⁸⁰⁰ politician. Pushes the podcast and a Guardian article criticising Michael Gove.	Conservative peer in the House of Lords.
07/02/22	Asim Qureshi, ⁸⁰¹ Research Director. Argues Trojan horse was a “full-spectrum assault on Muslims in the UK.	CAGE.
07/02/22	MPACUK, ⁸⁰² Muslim Public Affairs Committee UK. Tweet links to comment by Prevent Watch on Trojan Horse.	Representative organisation.
07/02/22.	Dr Louise Raw, ⁸⁰³ Tweet links to an article in Socialist Worker, denouncing Michael Gove.	Historian.
08/02/22	Dr Rizwaan Sabir, ⁸⁰⁴ academic. Links to the NYT podcast.	Liverpool Hope University.
09/02/22	Roshan Salih, ⁸⁰⁵ journalist. Tweet announces he has interviewed three of the teachers involved in the controversy.	5 Pillars.
09/02/22	MPACUK, ⁸⁰⁶ Muslim Public Affairs Committee UK. Tweet contains an image they have produced denouncing Michael Gove.	Representative organisation.

09/02/22	Azru Merali, ⁸⁰⁷ IHRC. The podcasts spoke to her as a “minoritised” person.	Co-Editor of the IHRC’s “Long View” publication.
10/02/22	Iram Ramzan, journalist. Podcast is one sided, and one host does not even pretend to be impartial.	Daily Mail.
10/02/22	Roshan Salih, ⁸⁰⁸ journalist. Tweet links to his interviews with Jahangir Akbar, Razwan Faraz and Inam Malik.	5 Pillars.
10/02/22	5 Pillars, ⁸⁰⁹ a further tweet promoting the Roshan Salih interviews.	UK based Islamic website.
10/02/22	MCB, ⁸¹⁰ press release, calling for an independent public inquiry.	Representative organisation.
10/02/22	Zara Mohammed, ⁸¹¹ repeats call for a public inquiry.	Secretary General, MCB.
10/02/22.	Poonam Teneja, ⁸¹² journalist. Retweets MCB call for a public inquiry.	BBC investigative reporter.
10/02/22.	Ash Sarkar, ⁸¹³ journalist. Criticises journalists who have commented on the podcast without listening to it all.	Contributing editor, Novara Media.
10/02/22	Areeb Ullah, ⁸¹⁴ journalist. Criticisms of Hamza Syed show the problems Muslim journalists face.	Middle East Eye.
10/02/22	Shazam Mahmood, ⁸¹⁵ teacher. A thriving community has been ruined by lies.	Assistant Head Teacher, Marston Vale Middle School, Bedford.
11/02/22	Sonia Sodha, ⁸¹⁶ journalist. Sees NYT podcast as one-sided, recommends Muslim Women’s Network comments from 2014.	Guardian.
11/02/22	Lowkey, ⁸¹⁷ rapper. Argues an Armed Forces Cadet unit was brought in to enforce British values, post Trojan Horse.	
11/02/22	Roshan M Salih, ⁸¹⁸ journalist. Attacks Michael Gove and Rizvana Darr.	5 Pillars.
11/02/22	Waqas Tufail, ⁸¹⁹ academic. Connects events in Birmingham to the war on terror.	Leeds Beckett University.
11/02/22	Dom Joly, ⁸²⁰ comedian. Tweets Michael Gove for his comments on Trojan Horse.	
11/02/22	5 Pillars, ⁸²¹ a tweet promoting an article about the MCB’s call for a public inquiry.	UK based Islamic news site.
11/02/22	Roshan M Salih, ⁸²² journalist. Argues the media propagated false stories durin the controversy.	5 Pillars.
11/02/22	TRT World ⁸²³ News feature that includes calls from the MCB for a new inquiry.	Turkish state media.
11/02/22	Asim Qureshi, ⁸²⁴ Research Director. His review of the podcast for the Arab News website.	CAGE.

807. Arzu Merali/@arzumerali, Twitter post, February 9, 2022, <https://twitter.com/arzumerali/status/1491538667608883200>.

808. Roshan M Salih/@RmSalih, Twitter post, February 10, 2022, <https://twitter.com/RmSalih/status/1491718710024933376>.

809. 5Pillars/@5Pillarsuk, Twitter post, February 10, 2022, <https://twitter.com/5Pillarsuk/status/1491739455119630336>.

810. MCB/@MuslimCouncil, Twitter post, February 10, 2022, <https://twitter.com/MuslimCouncil/status/1491752473194868740>.

811. Zara Mohammed/@ZaraM01, Twitter post, February 10, 2022, <https://twitter.com/ZaraM01/status/1491758894275833860>.

812. Poonam Taneja/@ReporterTaneja, Twitter post, February 10, 2022, <https://twitter.com/ReporterTaneja/status/1491883737692397573>.

813. Ash Sarkar/@AyoCaesar, Twitter post, February 10, 2022, <https://twitter.com/AyoCaesar/status/1491812993226661891>.

814. Areeb Ullah/@are_eb, Twitter post, February 10, 2022, https://twitter.com/are_eb/status/1491814207968403459.

815. Shazam Mahmood/@ShazamMahmood, Twitter post, February 10, 2022, <https://twitter.com/ShazamMahmood/status/1491862957097205763>.

816. Sonia Sodha/@soniasodha, Twitter post, February 11, 2022, <https://twitter.com/soniasodha/status/1492184955618832385>.

817. Lowkey/@LowkeyOnline, Twitter post, February 11, 2022, <https://twitter.com/LowkeyOnline/status/1492063000248913920>.

818. Roshan M Salih/@RmSalih, Twitter post, February 11, 2022, <https://twitter.com/RmSalih/status/1492067355215732737>.

819. Waqas Tufail/@_WaqasTufail, Twitter post, February 11, 2022, https://twitter.com/_WaqasTufail/status/1492072875058155525.

820. Dom Joly/@domjoly, Twitter post, February 11, 2022, <https://twitter.com/domjoly/status/1492125290730070017>.

821. 5Pillars/@5Pillarsuk, Twitter post, February 11, 2022, <https://twitter.com/5Pillarsuk/status/1492142416354234369>.

822. Roshan M Salih/@RmSalih, Twitter post, February 11, 2022, <https://twitter.com/RmSalih/status/1492143379379109888>.

823. TRT World/@trtworld, Twitter post, February 11, 2022, <https://twitter.com/trtworld/status/1492156470963720196>.

824. Dr Asim Qureshi/@AsimCP, Twitter post, February 11, 2022, <https://twitter.com/AsimCP/status/1492169016944771076>.

825. Khadijah Elshayyal/@DrKElshayyal, Twitter post, February 11, 2022, <https://twitter.com/DrKElshayyal/status/1492247104059854855>.
826. Jon Stone/@jonstone, Twitter post, February 12, 2022, <https://twitter.com/jonstone/status/1492425197718327299>.
827. Yair Wallach/@YairWallach, Twitter post, February 12, 2022, <https://twitter.com/YairWallach/status/1492442865192120322>.
828. Basit Mahmood/@BasitMahmood91, Twitter post, February 12, 2022, <https://twitter.com/BasitMahmood91/status/1492451784492826624>.
829. CAGE/@UK_CAGE, Twitter post, February 12, 2022, https://twitter.com/UK_CAGE/status/1492484041400070146.
830. Laura Murphy-Oates/@lauramoates, Twitter post, February 13, 2022, <https://twitter.com/lauramoates/status/1492787294113198080>.
831. Lester Holloway/@brolezholloway, Twitter post, February 13, 2022, <https://twitter.com/brolezholloway/status/1492888394116079619>.
832. Brian Reed/@BriHReed, Twitter post, February 13, 2022, <https://twitter.com/BriHReed/status/1492924398386483204>.
833. The Surviving Society Podcast/@survivesocpod, Twitter post, February 13, 2022, <https://twitter.com/survivesocpod/status/1492949960224038914>.
834. Patrick Radden Keefe/@praddenkeefe, Twitter post, February 13, 2022, <https://twitter.com/praddenkeefe/status/1492957335626604544>.
835. Tarek Younis/@Tarek_Younis_, Twitter post, February 14, 2022, https://twitter.com/Tarek_Younis_/status/1493164703358623749.
836. Gurminder K Bhambra/GKBhambra, Twitter post, February 14, 2022, <https://twitter.com/GKBhambra/status/1493173719715434496>.
837. MEND Community/@mendcommunity, Twitter post, February 14, 2022, <https://twitter.com/mendcommunity/status/1493211948527280131>.
838. Peter Osborne/@OsborneTweets, Twitter post, February 14, 2022, <https://twitter.com/OsborneTweets/status/1493247123504173057>.
839. Helen Monks/@Helen_Monks, Twitter post, February 14, 2022, https://twitter.com/Helen_Monks/status/1493252023956951046.
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841. CAGE/@UK_CAGE, Twitter post, February 14, 2022, https://twitter.com/UK_CAGE/status/1493336248605417487.

11/02/22	Dr Khadijah Elshayyal, ⁸²⁵ academic. Criticises Nick Timothy’s positions on Trojan Horse.	University of Edinburgh.
12/02/22	Jon Stone, ⁸²⁶ journalist. Praise for the podcast.	Policy correspondent, Independent.
12/02/22	Yair Wallach, ⁸²⁷ academic. Compares Trojan Horse to the Protocols of the Elders of Zion.	Senior lecturer in Israeli Studies, SOAS University of London.
12/02/22	Basit Mahmood, ⁸²⁸ journalist. Condemns media reaction to the podcast, which smeared an “entire community.”	Editor, Left Foot Forward.
12/02/22	CAGE, ⁸²⁹ Tweet links to Asim Qureshi’s article in the New Arab.	NGO.
13/02/22	Laura Murphy-Oates, ⁸³⁰ journalist. Argues it is much harder for ethnic minority journalists to work, than others.	Guardian USA.
13/02/22	Lester Holloway, ⁸³¹ newspaper editor. Non-Muslim communities need to “de-programme” their anti-Muslim narratives.	The Voice.
13/02/22	Brian Reed, ⁸³² journalist. Found it difficulty doing the podcast in a country, the UK, that does not have the first amendment, so felt his work as a journalist was less protected.	NYT podcaster.
13/02/22	The Surviving Society Podcast. ⁸³³ Tweet promotes a previous interview with Dr John Holmwood on Trojan Horse.	Podcast run by Dr Chantelle Lewis, of Oxford University.
13/02/22.	Patrick Radden Keefe, ⁸³⁴ journalist. Praises, and links to, the podcast series.	New Yorker.
14/02/22	Tarek Younis, ⁸³⁵ academic. Links to a series of tweets by Asim Qureshi, criticising two of the whistle blowers in Birmingham.	Senior Lecturer in Psychology, Middlesex University.
14/02/22	Gurminder K Bhambra, ⁸³⁶ academic. Tweets a thread promoting the NYT podcast, then connects Trojan Horse to Prevent, and advertises the “People’s’ review of Prevent”.	Professor of Post-Colonial and Decolonial Studies, University of Sussex.
14/02/22	MEND. ⁸³⁷ Tweet promotes their own Twitter space event, with former teachers from Park View school, and the NYT podcast.	NGO.
14/02/22	Peter Osborne, ⁸³⁸ journalist. Tweet asking journalists who covered Trojan Horse in 2014 if they have now changed their views.	Middle East Eye.
14/02/22	Helen Monks, ⁸³⁹ co-artistic director. Thread promoting the NYT podcast, the People’s Review of Prevent, and Lung Theatre’s play opposing the policy.	Lung Theatre.
14/02/22	Ash Sarkar, ⁸⁴⁰ journalist. Thread questioning Michael Gove’s role in the affair.	Novara media.
14/02/22	CAGE. ⁸⁴¹ Criticism of Michael Gove over Trojan Horse.	NGO.

15/02/22	Nick Timothy, ⁸⁴² political advisor. Supportive tweet posting a letter from Khalid Mahmood MP in <i>The Times</i> , condemning the NYT's failure to address extremism.	Conservative.
15/02/22	Nusrat Ghani, ⁸⁴³ MP. Retweets Nick Timothy, who supports Khalid Mahmood's letter to <i>The Times</i> , criticising the campaign to rubbish the Clarke report.	Conservative MP for Wealdon.
15/02/22	Ilyas Nagdee, writer. ⁸⁴⁴ Encourages everyone who has listened to the NYT podcast, to read the People's Review of Prevent.	Freelance.
15/02/22	Rachel Shabi, ⁸⁴⁵ journalist. Twitter thread promoting the NYT podcast.	Freelance for <i>The Guardian</i> .
15/02/22	Simon Hooper, ⁸⁴⁶ journalist. Tweet linking to article covering the podcast "Trojan Horse Hoax" and Peoples Review of Prevent.	Middle East Eye.
15/02/22	Hamza Ali Shah, ⁸⁴⁷ journalist. States the podcast shows Islamophobia as government policy.	Freelance for Tribune, Left Foot Forward, Byline Times, Ceasefire, New Arab.
15/02/22.	Ash Sarkar, ⁸⁴⁸ journalist. Tweet criticising Michael Gove and Nick Timothy over Trojan Horse.	Novara Media.
15/02/22.	5 Pillars. ⁸⁴⁹ Tweet links to an article on their site by Dr Layla Aitlhadj of Prevent Watch, discussing the NYT podcast and the People's review of Prevent.	UK based Islamic website.
15/02/22	Roshan M Salih, ⁸⁵⁰ journalist. Criticises UK media for not following up on NYT podcast.	5 Pillars.
16/02/22	Peter Osborne, ⁸⁵¹ journalist. Praises NYT podcast and criticises British journalism.	Middle East Eye.
16/02/22	Rob Carter, journalist. ⁸⁵² Tweet demands justice to Muslim "victims" and links to a Press TV report.	Press TV.
16/02/22.	Ash Sarkar, ⁸⁵³ journalist. Condemns Nusrat Ghani MP for criticising the NYT podcast.	Novara media.
16/02/22	Anwar Akhtar, ⁸⁵⁴ film maker and journalist. Uses the Trojan Horse podcast to refer to criticisms of Prevent.	Director of The Samosa.
16/02/22	Asim Qureshi, ⁸⁵⁵ Research Director. Following the podcast, cites six books to help people "understand" the trojan Horse affair.	CAGE.
16/02/22	Imrana Mahmood, ⁸⁵⁶ Tweet praising the MEND twitter space event.	Project manager, Hertfordshire Cultural Education Partnership.
16/02/22	Bushra Shaikh, ⁸⁵⁷ celebrity. Praises the MEND twitter space and the ex-teachers involved in it.	Former candidate in The Apprentice.

842. Nick Timothy/@NJ_Timothy, Twitter post, February 15, 2022, https://twitter.com/NJ_Timothy/status/1493517455964221443.

843. Nus Ghani MP/@Nus_Ghani, Twitter post, February 15, 2022, https://twitter.com/Nus_Ghani/status/1493538044129034240.

844. Ilyas Nagdee/@ilyas_nagdee, Twitter post, February 15, 2022, https://twitter.com/ilyas_nagdee/status/1493562156104785922.

845. rachel shabi/@rachshabi, Twitter post, February 15, 2022, <https://twitter.com/rachshabi/status/1493557489710903299>.

846. Simon Hooper/@simonbhooper, Twitter post, February 15, 2022, <https://twitter.com/simonbhooper/status/1493566492515971079>.

847. Hamza/@Hamza_a96, Twitter post, February 15, 2022, https://twitter.com/Hamza_a96/status/1493571293844750338.

848. Ash Sarkar/@AyoCaesar, Twitter post, February 15, <https://twitter.com/AyoCaesar/status/1493581373420064773>.

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850. Roshan M Salih/@RmSalih, Twitter post, February 15, <https://twitter.com/RmSalih/status/1493620150842675200>.

851. Peter Osborne/@OsborneTweets, Twitter post, February 16, <https://twitter.com/OsborneTweets/status/1493857453708042242>.

852. Robert Carter/@Bob_cart124, Twitter post, February 16, https://twitter.com/Bob_cart124/status/1493873851284996101.

853. Ash Sarkar/@AyoCaesar, Twitter post, February 16, <https://twitter.com/AyoCaesar/status/1493884909806620672>.

854. Anwar Akhtar/@aakhtar, Twitter post, February 16, <https://twitter.com/aakhtar/status/1493911293161619463/>.

855. Dr Asim Qureshi/@AsimCP, Twitter post, February 16, <https://twitter.com/AsimCP/status/1493969783372591108>.

856. Imrana Mahmood/@Imrana_Mahmood, Twitter post, February 16, https://twitter.com/Imrana_Mahmood/status/1494059160081731586.

857. Bushra Shaikh/@Bushra1Shaikh, Twitter post, February 16, <https://twitter.com/Bushra1Shaikh/status/1494062027605786631>.

858. Fatima Rajina/@DrFRajina, Twitter post, February 16, <https://twitter.com/DrFRajina/status/1494064519743639553>.
859. Fatima Said/@fatimazsaid, Twitter post, February 16, <https://twitter.com/fatimazsaid/status/1494067663471095817>.
860. KK/@khadijahkhat, Twitter post, February 16, <https://twitter.com/khadijahkhat/status/1494070056237555722>.
861. The Mehdi Hasan Show/@Mehdi-HasanShow, Twitter post, February 17, <https://twitter.com/MehdiHasanShow/status/1494122016189915137>.
862. Media Lens/@medialens, Twitter post, February 16, <https://twitter.com/medialens/status/1493871179635085313>.
863. Lowkey/@LowkeyOnline, Twitter post, February 17, <https://twitter.com/LowkeyOnline/status/1494250069645836293>.
864. Roshan M Salih/@RmSalih, Twitter post, February 17, <https://twitter.com/RmSalih/status/1494262893788999680>.
865. Unzela Khan/@unzela_, Twitter post, February 17, https://twitter.com/unzela_/status/1494282940452327438.
866. Nesrine Malik, Twitter post, February 17, 2022, <https://twitter.com/NesrineMalik/status/1494285426877739011>.- original post removed but captured on the same day at: <https://web.archive.org/web/20220217122206/https://twitter.com/NesrineMalik/status/1494285426877739011>.
867. Robert Carter/@Bob_cart124, Twitter post, February 17, https://twitter.com/Bob_cart124/status/1494384109279449091.
868. Dr Fauzia Ahmad/@brisofa, Twitter post, February 17, <https://twitter.com/brisofa/status/1494371005074186249>.
869. James Rodger/@jamesdrodger, Twitter post, February 18, <https://twitter.com/jamesdrodger/status/1494567666853597212>.
870. Usaama al-Azami/@DrUsaama, Twitter post, February 18, <https://twitter.com/DrUsaama/status/1494630120765595650>.
871. Brian Reed/@BriHReed, Twitter post, February 18, 2022, <https://twitter.com/BriHReed/status/1494668309316448258>.
872. Novara Media/@novaramedia, Twitter post, February 18, 2022, <https://twitter.com/novaramedia/status/1494686937168371717>.
873. Roshan M Salih/ @RmSalih, Twitter post, February 18, 2022, <https://twitter.com/RmSalih/status/1494718392795815938>.
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875. Aaron Bastani/@AaronBastani, Twitter post, February 18, 2022, <https://twitter.com/AaronBastani/status/1494718730059845634>.
876. Roshan M Salih/@RmSalih, Twitter post, February 18, 2022, <https://twitter.com/RmSalih/status/1494718830022639619>.

16/02/22	Dr Fatima Rajina, ⁸⁵⁸ academic. Praises the ex-teachers in the MEND twitter space on Trojan Horse.	Research Fellow, Stephen Lawrence Research Centre, Leicester De Montford University.
16/02/22	Fatima Said, ⁸⁵⁹ activist. Trojan Horse thread that links to the MEND twitter space, and condemns Islamophobia.	
16/02/22	Khadijah Khat, ⁸⁶⁰ communications professional. Comment thread that calls for an inquiry and praises the representatives of the Muslim community involved in the MEND twitter space.	Muslim Women Connect and ParliReach.
16/02/22	Medhi Hasan Show, ⁸⁶¹ interview between Hasan, Hamza Syed and Brian Reed.	US chat show.
16/02/22	Media Lens. ⁸⁶² Link to Peter Osborne tweet and article praising the Trojan Horse podcast.	Website devoted to critiquing the corporate media.
17/02/22	Lowkey, musician. ⁸⁶³ Supportive comment about Hamza Syed, and critical of the media.	
17/02/22	Roshan M Salih, journalist. ⁸⁶⁴ Claims the Trojan Horse schools improved teaching standards by celebrating Muslim children's backgrounds.	5 Pillars.
17/02/22	Unzela Khan, ⁸⁶⁵ journalist. Tweet promoting her own article on the podcast.	Race and Diversity correspondent, My London.
17/02/22	Nesrine Malik, ⁸⁶⁶ journalist. Describes the podcast as a "masterpiece".	Guardian.
17/02/22	Robert Carter, ⁸⁶⁷ journalist. Claims four British schools have stopped Muslim pupils praying, and this is connected to Trojan Horse.	Press TV.
17/02/22	Dr Fauzia Ahmad, ⁸⁶⁸ academic. Images related to Trojan Horse from a UCU picket line event.	Sociology Department, Goldsmiths University of London.
18/02/22	James Rodger, journalist. ⁸⁶⁹ Tweet linking to article covering the MCB's demand for a public inquiry.	Birmingham Live.
18/02/22	Dr Usaama Al Aazmi, ⁸⁷⁰ academic. Link to his interview with Tahir Alam.	University of Oxford.
18/02/22	Brian Reed, ⁸⁷¹ journalist. Link to supportive tweets from a fan of the podcasts.	NYT Podcasts.
18/02/22	Novara Media. ⁸⁷² Interview between Ash Sarkar, Hamza Syed and Brian Reed.	Website.
18/02/22	Roshan Salih, ⁸⁷³ journalist. Compares Trojan Horse to the Dreyfus affair.	5 Pillars.
18/02/22	Middle East Eye, ⁸⁷⁴ website. Link to article by Shereen Fernandez and Khadijah Elshayyal.	
18/02/22	Aaron Bastani, ⁸⁷⁵ journalist. Link to interview between Ash Sarkar, Hamza Syed and Brian Reed.	Novara Media.
18/02/22	Roshan M Salih, ⁸⁷⁶ journalist. The authorities and media are keeping quiet about Trojan Horse to save their reputations.	5 Pillars.

18/02/22	5 Pillars. ⁸⁷⁷ Link to article by Jahangir Mohammed of the Ayaan Institute, rooting Trojan Horse in racism.	UK based Islamic website.
18/02/22	CAGE. ⁸⁷⁸ Link to the My London article (above) by Unzela Khan.	NGO.
18/02/22	Aydin Dikerdem, ⁸⁷⁹ politician. Reports crying on the bus during the podcast.	Labour councillor for Queenstown, Wandsworth council.
18/02/22	Mariya Bint Rehan, ⁸⁸⁰ writer. An article for Muslim Matters reviewing the podcast.	Freelance.
18/02/22	Nafisah Bakkar, ⁸⁸¹ media CEO. Describes Trojan Horse as an “inside job.”	Amaliah.
19/02/22	Press TV, ⁸⁸² interview with Yvonne Ridley, Sec Gen of the European Muslim League. Describes Trojan Horse as a hoax.	
19/02/22	Aaron Bastani, ⁸⁸³ journalist. Link to interview between Ash Sarkar, Hamza Syed and Brian Reed.	Novara Media.
19/02/22	Matthew Willis, ⁸⁸⁴ writer. Link to Novara media podcast on Trojan Horse.	Freelance.
19/02/22	Robert Carter, ⁸⁸⁵ journalist. Interviews with Trojan Horse teachers, requesting an inquiry, compensation and an apology.	Press TV.
19/02/22	Harry Brighthouse, ⁸⁸⁶ academic. Son of Sir Tim Brighthouse. Praises the NYT and his father, who criticised OFSTED in 2014.	Department of Philosophy, University of Wisconsin-Madison.
19/02/22	Ashok Kumar, ⁸⁸⁷ academic. Argues Trojan Horse podcast could not have been made in the UK as our media is so poor.	Senior Lecturer in Political Economy, Birkbeck University of London.
20/02/22	Shaista Gohir, activist. ⁸⁸⁸ Tweet promoting Sonia Sodha’s Observer article criticising the NYT podcast.	Muslim Women’s Network.
20/02/22	Abraham Gutman, ⁸⁸⁹ journalist. Praises the NYT for moving on from American concepts of “objectivity”.	Philadelphia Inquirer.
20/02/22	Novara media, ⁸⁹⁰ tweet promoting Ash Sarkar’s interview with Hamza Syed and Brian Reed.	Website.
20/02/22	Stephen H Jones, ⁸⁹¹ academic. Thread critiquing Sonia Sodha’s intervention on Trojan Horse.	Department of Theology and Religion, University of Birmingham.
20/02/22	Sahar Ghumkhor, ⁸⁹² academic. Praises podcast, criticises Sonia Sodha.	School of Social and Political Sciences, University of Melbourne.
20/02/22	Fatima Rajina, ⁸⁹³ academic. Tweet promoting podcast, and accusing Sonia Sodha of a “strawman” argument.	Stephen Lawrence Research Centre at De Montford University, Leicester.
20/02/22	Chris Bertram, ⁸⁹⁴ academic. Condemns Sonia Sodha’s intervention, and praises the podcast.	Professor of Social and Political Philosophy at the University of Bristol.
20/02/22	Ash Sarkar, ⁸⁹⁵ journalist. Further tweet promoting her interview with Syed and Reed, and accusing British media of “closing ranks”.	Novara Media.

877. 5Pillars/@5Pillarsuk, Twitter post, February 18, 2022, <https://twitter.com/5Pillarsuk/status/1494726110600478722>.

878. CAGE/@UK_CAGE, Twitter post, February 18, 2022, https://twitter.com/UK_CAGE/status/1494747024771756034.

879. Aydin Dikerdem/@AydinDikerdem, Twitter post, February 18, 2022, <https://twitter.com/AydinDikerdem/status/1494758826393935875>.

880. Mariya/@UmmKhadijah13, Twitter post, February 18, 2022, <https://twitter.com/UmmKhadijah13/status/1494760933222141960>.

881. Not Here 🇬🇧 Nafisa Bakkar/@NafisaBakkar, Twitter post, February 19, 2022, <https://twitter.com/NafisaBakkar/status/1494823416368615426>.

882. TPress TV/@PressTV, witter post, February 19, 2022, <https://twitter.com/PressTV/status/1494858225627414536>.

883. Aaron Bastani/@AaronBastani, Twitter post, February 19, 2022, <https://twitter.com/AaronBastani/status/1495020946889060355>.

884. Matthew Willis/@NavalAirHistory, Twitter post, February 19, 2022, <https://twitter.com/NavalAirHistory/status/1495065860096106507>.

885. Robert Carter/@Bob_cart124, Twitter post, February 19, 2022, https://twitter.com/Bob_cart124/status/1495090054229897218.

886. Harry Brighthouse/@HarryBrighthouse1, Twitter post, February 19, 2022, <https://twitter.com/HarryBrighthouse1/status/1495110511792381953>.

887. ashok kumar 🇮🇳@broseph_stalin, Twitter post, February 19, 2022, https://twitter.com/broseph_stalin/status/1495138131221307392.

888. Baroness Gohir OBE/@ShaistaGohir, Twitter post, February 20, 2022, <https://twitter.com/ShaistaGohir/status/1495384453807489028>.

889. Abraham – Gutman/@abgutman, Twitter post, February 20, 2022, <https://twitter.com/abgutman/status/1495205925149360130>.

890. Novara Media/@novaramedia, Twitter post, February 20, 2022, <https://twitter.com/novaramedia/status/149530728384844185>.

891. Stephen H. Jones/@StphnHwrdJns, Twitter post, February 20, 2022, <https://twitter.com/StphnHwrdJns/status/1495424041871683589>.

892. Sahar Ghumkhor/@theprimalplot, Twitter post, February 20, 2022, <https://twitter.com/theprimalplot/status/1495378675562266625>.

893. Fatima Rajina/@DrFRajina, Twitter post, February 20, 2022, <https://twitter.com/DrFRajina/status/1495354468522774531>.

894. Chris Bertram/@crookedfootball, Twitter post, February 20, 2022, <https://twitter.com/crookedfootball/status/1495335474369544199>.

895. Ash Sarkar/@AyoCaesar, Twitter post, February 20, 2022, <https://twitter.com/AyoCaesar/status/1495345304463450112>.

	20/02/22	Roshan M Salih, ⁸⁹⁶ journalist. The truth about Trojan horse will be admitted when it no longer matters.	5 Pillars.
896.	20/02/22	Roshan M Salih/@RmSalih, Twitter post, February 20, 2022, https://twitter.com/RmSalih/status/1495359929368158209 .	London School of Economics.
897.	20/02/22	Shereen Fernandez/@ShereenFDZ, Twitter post, February 20, 2022, https://twitter.com/ShereenFDZ/status/1495364955746578434 .	Freelance for Tribune, Left Foot Forward, Byline Times, Ceasefire, New Arab.
898.	20/02/22	Hamza/@Hamza_a96, Twitter post, February 20, 2022, https://twitter.com/Hamza_a96/status/1495369092999569413 .	Editor of the website Left Foot Forward.
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21/02/22	Above and Beyond Education. Founder, Alison Kriel, ⁹¹⁹ quoted in the My London article of 17/02/22 by Unzela Khan, and stresses the importance of diversity.	Online community for education workers.
21/02/22	Nicholas Guyatt, ⁹²⁰ academic. Tweet criticising “liberal journalists” opposition to the NYT podcast.	Professor in North American History, Jesus College, Cambridge.
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21/02/22	Ash Sarkar, ⁹²³ journalist. A further tweet criticising Khalid Mahmood over Trojan Horse.	Novara media.
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Appendix 2

Implementation of recommendations from “Report into allegations concerning Birmingham schools arising from the ‘Trojan Horse’ letter – July 2014”⁹³⁴

Department for Education

January 29, 2015

	Peter Clarke report recommendations	Our action	Status
1	The Department for Education should review the process by which schools support individuals to gain and award Qualified Teacher Status to ensure that there are no systemic vulnerabilities to abuse.	The department strengthened the advice for initial teacher training providers in September 2014 to emphasise the need for rigour in the trainee assessment process. The accredited provider remains accountable for all assessment judgements and recommendations, and should ensure that this is understood across the partnership through the partnership agreement.	Complete
2	The Department for Education should ensure that the governing body of every school extends the responsibilities of the teacher designated Child Protection Officer to include Prevent within his/her role. The mandatory Child Protection bi-annual update training undertaken by these responsible teachers should include the Prevent Strategy. This training should then be cascaded by the Child Protection Officer to every member of staff, governor or volunteer as an adult involved in the protection of children at the school.	<p>This recommendation will be addressed later this year in planned changes to the department’s statutory guidance, “Keeping Children Safe in Education”, which sets out the role of the Designated Safeguarding Lead.</p> <p>The Counter Terrorism and Security Bill proposes a statutory duty for schools, among other bodies, to have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism. Draft guidance on the duty which has been published for consultation makes clear that senior management and governors in school should make sure that staff have training that gives them the knowledge and confidence to identify children at risk of being drawn into terrorism and challenge extremist ideas.</p>	Underway

934. Sourced from: “Implementation of recommendations from ‘Report into allegations concerning Birmingham schools ...’”, DEP2015-0126, House of Commons, January 29, 2015, <https://depositedpapers.parliament.uk/depositedpaper/2275513/files>.

3	<p>The Department for Education should consider taking action against teachers who may have breached the teacher standards.</p>	<p>Interim prohibition orders are in place for two individuals and further examination of evidence is ongoing in relation to a number of other teachers.</p> <p>A number of staff have been suspended through the relevant trust's own internal disciplinary processes, which continue in parallel with the National College for Teaching and Leadership (NCTL) considerations.</p>	Underway
4	<p>Birmingham City Council should review its systems, processes and policies regarding the support it provides to maintained schools to ensure that they are more strategic and joined-up across the range of functions (including HR, governor support and school improvement). In particular, it should ensure that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • concerns are considered not just on a case by case basis, but reviewed to ensure that any emerging trend is identified and addressed; • intervention is considered in all cases; • the appropriate balance is struck in all cases where there is an actual or perceived tension between community cohesion concerns and educational or safeguarding issues, and that decision-making is not overly influenced by a vocal minority; and • there is effective information sharing – including on criminal issues and safeguarding concerns – between all parts of Birmingham City Council and with other agencies such as the police, the Education Funding Agency and the Department for Education. 	<p>Sir Mike Tomlinson has been appointed as Education Commissioner (announced by the Secretary of State on 25 September 2014), and his tenure has now been extended to March 2016.</p> <p>Birmingham City Council's single integrated improvement plan was signed off on 1 December and is underpinned by a detailed programme of work, which is being overseen by the Commissioner.</p>	Review completed Implementation underway
5	<p>Birmingham City Council, the Department for Education, the Education Funding Agency and Ofsted should review their respective existing channels for raising issues of concern and ensure that they:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • are robust, responsive and provide proper protection for those coming forward with sensitive concerns; and • judge properly whether there are indicators of extremism, and refer the cases to the relevant authority to consider. <p>In particular, Birmingham City Council should consider the establishment of an independent process for teachers and governors to raise concerns. The Department for Education should ensure that the receipt of sensitive complaints forms part of the new Regional Schools Commissioners' responsibilities, and that the Regional Schools Commissioners are able to refer complaints and concerns to the relevant agency for further investigation.</p>	<p>Ofsted is reviewing its arrangements for handling all forms of complaint.</p> <p>The department is planning improvements to the process for school staff and the general public to contact the department to help ensure safeguarding concerns, including radicalisation and extremism, are acted on promptly.</p> <p>The department intends to extend the legal protections in the Public Interest Disclosure Act 2013 (PIDA) so that school staff making whistleblowing allegations regarding extremism concerns to the department are protected, through the regulations owned by BIS in relation to designated bodies under PIDA.</p> <p>Regional Schools Commissioners (RSCs) do not have a direct role in tackling extremism but are adding local intelligence to strengthen the DfE due diligence process. All eight RSCs understand how to handle safeguarding concerns, which may include extremism, and have the structures and systems in place within their offices to respond promptly. RSCs report all complaints or concerns about extremism to the Due Diligence and Counter Extremism Group (DDCEG). RSCs are also working with local authorities, Ofsted and others to ensure all complaints are concerns are identified and reported to the DfE. RSCs immediately report cases where there is a <i>child at immediate risk of danger or harm</i> to the Education Funding Agency (EFA) Territorial Director and the department's Children Services Team who will inform the Local Authority (LA) and request receipt of the case.</p>	Underway

6	Birmingham City Council should review all compromise agreements signed with head-teachers in the last five years to consider whether they were appropriate and whether Birmingham City Council should have done more to exercise their duty of care.	Birmingham City Council is reviewing the compromise agreements and Sir Mike Tomlinson will ensure lessons are learnt from the process.	Underway
7	The Department for Education should review the process by which schools are a) able to convert to academy status; and b) become Multi Academy Trusts, to ensure that appropriate checks are conducted on the group and key individuals and that there is an accurate assessment of the trust's capability and capacity. It should also consider urgently how best to capture local concerns during the conversion process, and review the brokerage (and re-brokerage) system through which schools are matched with academy sponsors to ensure that the process is transparent and understood by all parties.	There are robust processes in place to assess applications for academy status and for potential sponsors. Since 2014 RSCs now take decisions on academy convertor applications and with the help of their Head Teacher Boards they can bring to bear local intelligence on capacity and suitability. Organisations wishing to sponsor another school have to be formally approved. This involves an assessment of their capacity to bring about educational improvement and to run an organisation successfully; it also involves due diligence checks on the background of key individuals leading the proposed sponsor organisation. Checks are carried out on individuals who wish to be members or directors of a school converting to become an academy on a risk-based approach.	Complete
8	The Department for Education should consider the benefits of requiring academies to notify changes in the governing body to the Department along with stronger powers for the Secretary of State to bar an individual from taking part in the management of any type of school (including maintained schools and academies).	<p>Academies are required to provide the following information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • academy trust annual accounts include disclosure of the names of serving trustees and members, including in-year changes; • the academies model funding agreement requires that trusts must notify the department of changes of members, and free schools must notify us of changes to members and trustees; • the Academies Financial Handbook requires trusts to inform the EFA of changes in chair of trustees, accounting officer and chief financial officer. <p>We have introduced new regulations for independent schools, including academies, enabling the Secretary of State to bar governors who have engaged in conduct aimed at undermining fundamental British values. We have also amended the disqualification schedule for maintained schools, so an individual who is barred from the management of an independent school is automatically disqualified from holding a governor post at a maintained school.</p>	Complete

9	<p>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. It should also ensure that headteachers' responsibility for ensuring that bi-annual Child Protection training is undertaken is reflected in the inspection process.</p>	<p>Changes to the Ofsted inspection framework were made in July 2014. This includes checking that schools are actively promoting fundamental British values and, that they offer a broad and balanced curriculum that prepares pupils for life in modern Britain. The assessment of governance considers whether they carry out their statutory duties, including on safeguarding. Ofsted has also widened its criteria for deciding when to undertake unannounced inspections and undertook 35 inspections without notice in the autumn term. The proposed duties in relation to Prevent and Channel contained in the Counter Terrorism & Security Bill will, if made law, be covered in future inspections as part of the wider consideration of whether a school is meeting all its statutory duties, including in relation to safeguarding.</p> <p>The department has set out safeguarding roles and responsibilities in the documents "Keeping Children Safe in Education" and "Working Together to Safeguard Children" ensuring that all bodies are clear about their role and responsibilities. This will be clarified further in the forthcoming revision of "Working Together".</p>	Complete
10	<p>Birmingham City Council should take immediate steps to improve the running of its governor support services, so that it makes effective appointments following a suitable vetting process, and provides effective support to governing bodies where issues arise. In particular, it should ensure that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • training is suitable and delivered by appropriate individuals, so that new governors in particular understand the role of the governing body in setting the strategic direction of the school and holding the head to account in appropriate ways; and • it is able to intervene effectively where the governing body is failing to conduct itself in the expected manner, including where it is making unrealistic demands on the headteacher or seeking to make fundamental changes to the character of the school without proper consultation with relevant parties or statutory permission. <p>This work should be completed before it reinstates the process for making Local Authority governor appointments.</p>	<p>Birmingham City Council has revised the process for recruitment, appointment and training of governors using expertise of the National Governors Association. Induction training for new governors now incorporates the Code of Conduct for Governors and the Nolan principles. 600 governors have been trained so far.</p>	Underway
11	<p>The Department for Education should review guidance on governor appointments to make clear the expectations of the role, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the difference between setting the strategic direction and running the school; and • the skills and expertise required, and what appropriate training to improve these skills should look like. <p>The Department should also consider the benefits of an accreditation scheme for governor training providers.</p>	<p>The Governor's Handbook was revised in light of the Peter Clarke report to ensure that governors are aware of their responsibilities and the skills required for the position. This includes identifying a governor in each organisation responsible for training needs. The Handbook promotes the training and resources provided by the National College; the use of skills audits to identify skill gaps and training needs; and the suspension of governors who fail to undertake the training they needed to be effective, given this may bring the governing body into disrepute.</p>	Complete

12	<p>Unless there are genuinely exceptional circumstances, there should be a presumption that an individual will only be a governor at a maximum of two schools at any one time. All local authorities and multi-academy trusts should review their current governor arrangements, and where they identify an individual holding multiple positions they should consider the appropriate steps to ensure that a wider range of people are able to hold governor positions and that no single individual has undue influence over a number of schools.</p>	<p>The Governor's Handbook was amended in September 2014 to now advise that prospective governors should have sufficient capacity to serve as a governor, especially if they are already a governor at other schools or academies. It recommends that the Chair takes references on new governors from any governing bodies on which they already serve, to be sure that they have the right skills and the capacity to take on the new role. It also recommends that chairs and strong governors move to a new school after a reasonable time (e.g. two terms of office) so that expertise can be shared and spread more widely.</p>	Complete
13	<p>All schools should include details on their website of their governing body. This should include the full name of the individuals, along with any committees they attend; the method of appointment (e.g. whether a local authority appointment or an elected parent governor); and the expected period of the appointment, in order to promote transparency over the running of schools.</p>	<p>The Governors' Handbook now advises all schools to publish this information on their website. Academies are required to publish details of their trustees and members in their annual accounts, and we are consulting on formalising a requirement through amended statutory guidance for maintained schools to publish these details on their websites.</p> <p>The Academies Financial Handbook was amended in September 2014 to require academies to also publish their register of relevant business interests and details of any other educational institutions they are governors or trustees of. We are consulting on a proposal to place a similar requirement on maintained schools.</p>	Complete
14	<p>The Department for Education should consider whether there is a case for preventing certain individuals from being involved in the management of schools.</p>	<p>New regulations were made in September 2014 to allow the Secretary of State to make directions barring individuals from taking part in the management of independent schools, including academies and free schools, whether as a governor or employee. Regulations to disqualify people subject to such a bar from being a governor of a local authority maintained school were made last year and, similarly, came into force in September. The department is currently considering the evidence in order to take action against governors who were implicated in the 'Trojan Horse' allegations.</p>	Underway
15	<p>The Department for Education should continue to review and analyse the evidence gathered during the investigation; take further steps to understand issues of concern (including potential financial malpractice); and consider appropriate further actions. It should also consider whether other areas of the country may be similarly vulnerable, and respond promptly and effectively if concerns are raised, ensuring that there is sufficient resource and capacity to do so.</p>	<p>The department is continuing to analyse and review the evidence from the investigation and has discussed the preventative strategies of a number of local areas with the senior leadership teams of the relevant local authorities. It has found no area to have the same extent of vulnerabilities in its state schools as Birmingham, but it has emphasised that active local leadership is required constantly to assess and act on risk.</p> <p>DDCEG is now building its capacity, including through external recruitment, and setting an outward looking, proactive culture within the Group and the wider department.</p>	Underway

Appendix 3:

“Islamisation of Knowledge: the concept, the process and the outcomes”⁹³⁵

MAK Cheema and Musharraf Hussain

February 19, 2007

935. Originally published by the Karimia Institute on February 19, 2007 at: <http://www.karimia.com/Islamisation%20curriculum.pdf>. This page is no longer active, but an archived copy of the document's landing page is viewable here: https://web.archive.org/web/20070219042212/www.karimia.fortnet.co.uk/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=245&Itemid=2.

Islamisation of Knowledge:

The concept, the process and the outcomes

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Islamisation of the National Curriculum; The concept, the process and the outcomes

MAK Cheema and Musharraf Hussain

The concept of Islamisation

The Islamisation of knowledge has been going on since the birth of Islam. As an issue it is undoubtedly the most promising intellectual agenda of Islamic resurgence and one of the most controversial issues that has captured the imagination and elicited strong reaction from Muslim intellectuals and activists across the globe. Since the second half of the 1970s it has taken more of a central position in the hearts and minds of the concerned Muslim educators and educationalists.

Islamisation of knowledge has become a very popular term and has taken on an identity of its own such that sometimes the semantics are debated without dealing with the underlying concepts. To some Islamisation is a process of recasting the corpus of human knowledge to conform to the basic tenets of *aqidat al tawhid*.

When we talk about Islamic or Islamised knowledge we should be careful not to imply that there is knowledge that is not Islamic. All true knowledge whatever its kind and source is Islamic. Islamic knowledge has no time or space constraints because Islam is universal, being suitable for every place and time. Islamised knowledge should be for the benefit of all humanity and should not be seen as applicable to or monopolised by Muslims. The process of Islamisation does not call for re-invention of the wheel of knowledge but calls for enrichment of knowledge with an Islamic perspective through reform, correction, and/or re-orientation.

Reform, correction and/or re-orientation does not imply that all that is in the ‘subjects’ being taught or ‘disciplines’ on offer is un-Islamic. It is obvious that there are many good and true things accepted by Islam in many of the so-called ‘modern’ disciplines. Reform, correction and/or re-orientation is not about ‘theologizing’ knowledge since Islam is universal, all inclusive and all-embracing; it should not seek to ‘parochialise’ knowledge and tailor it to a particular culture or place. The reform, correction and/or re-orientation we have in mind are of paradigms, methodology and uses of knowledge and not just its contents. Content is changing so rapidly that reforming, correcting and/or re-orientating it to give it an Islamic perspective is clearly a huge undertaking which is likely to prove futile and the resource implications are enormous.

Islamization is an evolutionary and not revolutionary movement, although it is described as an “epistemological revolution” by Prof Naquib al-Attas.

It is feared by those who have not understood, or misunderstood or caricatured its real meaning and significance. There are those who think that this issue would push Muslims backwards instead of allowing us to fully participate in the ‘modern’ world and improving our quality of life.¹

¹ Pervez Hoodbhoy, *Islam and Science; Religious Orthodoxy and the Battle for Rationality*. 1992. Bassam Tibi, “Culture and Knowledge: The Politics of Islamisation of Knowledge as a Postmodern Project? The Fundamentalist Claim to De Westernization” in *Theory, Culture & Society*, Vol. 12, No. 1 Feb 1995. A Karim Soroush, “The Possibility of Islamisation of Knowledge”

Historical background

Since the Renaissance (15th Century) in Europe what is considered to be important or essential knowledge has been gradually secularised i.e. the centrality of God as the source of all knowledge and the universality of the Divine as the source of essential knowledge has been pushed back into insignificance together with the need for 'religion'. Both the term "science" and its adjective "scientific" have come to mean different things to different people, particularly since the 17th Century. According to some historians of science, this period was the high watermark in the discussion on the nature and division of sciences. The translated works of Muslim scholars, particularly al-Farabi, have played a far more significant role in this development than is often appreciated.

Robert Kilwardby (mid 13th Century) divided science into the human and the divine. The divine sciences are those of the Old and the New Testament, while all the human sciences whether speculative or practical and are the product of philosophy.² Modern science, although inseparable from the unconscious and unstated philosophical and religious assumptions, is consciously declared to be different from the two since the 17th century. The scientific method as understood since then is reduced to that of the empirically valid and experimentally provable. It is well known that the popularity of this conception has forced many other branches of knowledge, such as sociology, education, psychology, economics, and even philosophy and religion, to seek legitimacy and academic acceptance through the methods of the narrow interpretation of science.³

"Natural" sciences are said to be founded on empiricism and reason and therefore are regarded as objective. However, on the other hand behavioural sciences (Psychology, Sociology, Philosophy and Anthropology) despite borrowing heavily from methodology of natural sciences are based on the secularism of hedonism, narcissism, nihilism, liberalism and other isms, which are peculiar product of Roman and Hellenic legacy. Where these isms promote selfishness and carnal desires Muslims and believers of the other world faiths find much of it to be totally unacceptable:-

The Islamisation process is about embedding the National Curriculum in the matrix of Islam. By matrix⁴ I mean an Islamic environment (organisation structures, management procedures, administration, human and material resources, personal and professional support, notice boards, spaces etc) and context or ethos where knowledge would nurture Taqwa – God consciousness.

The prerequisite for Islamisation is to increase the Islamic knowledge and understanding of the teacher as an educator and to enhance the skills and competence through the knowledge of the Quran and Sunnah. This will successfully engage them in the process of Islamisation a spin off will be raising of standards and a more proactive contribution to community cohesion.

² Ibid., pp 474-480

³ F A Hayek, *The Counter-Revolution: Studies on the Abuse of Reason* (Indiapolis: Library Press, 1979, pp. 19-25.

⁴ Matrix: The mould in which is cast or shaped. An environment in which someone is developed.

Why Islamisation?

The content of a lesson is the least important thing about learning. As John Dewey wrote in, 'Experience and Education'. "Perhaps the greatest of all pedagogical fallacies is the notion that a person learns only what he is studying all the time. Collateral learning in the way of formation of enduring attitudes... maybe and often is more important than the spelling lesson or lesson in geography or history... for their attitudes are fundamentally what count in the future". That is why the context, manner of teaching and the contextualising the subject in Islamic framework is essential.

- a) To enrich the curriculum with an Islamic perspective which accurately reflects the contribution of Islam and Muslims to civilisation for all learners and to ensure that the universal vision of quality education is an entitlement for all.
- b) Thus unifying the educational system in which Islam is the motivation and guiding principle and to remove the dualism of sacred and secular from education.
- c) To ensure that all students gain knowledge and understanding of the Islamic legacy, its spirit and history and be proud of their ancestors.
- d) To be able to distinguish themselves from others and feel proud of this distinction and anxious to preserve. Thus becoming self-conscious of their true identity.
- e) A true vision of Islam will stop Muslims being influenced by Godless ideologies.
- f) To realise that Islam is a comprehensive religion and its teachings are relevant to every aspect of life and every 'subject' of the curriculum

The secular system is based on:

1. The sovereignty of man, as though he is supreme.
2. Factual Knowledge is acquired only through human reasoning and experience (empirical).
3. Unrestricted freedom of thought and expression.
4. Unwillingness to accept metaphysical truths.
5. Individualism, relativism and materialism.

On the other hand the aim of Islamic education is:

"To develop a balanced personality, pleasing to God and to fellow humans, who promote and encourage ma'ruf (good) and fight munkar (evil)" (Al- Attas)

The purpose Islamisation is therefore to counter these five foundations of secularism and replace it with a system that develops:

1. Future generations as Khalifatullah.
2. Promote ma'ruf and counter munkar.
3. Bring about a balanced personality.
4. Promote physical, mental, moral and spiritual development. Social, emotional, cultural
5. To train to live simply with austerity.

The Framework for Islamisation

Past sciences or disciplines of knowledge have been mostly Islamized by various authoritative scholars and sages who had undergone the educational program which integrated the two categories of *fard ayn* and *fard kifayah* and had mastered the relevant sciences. Among them the philosophers such **al-Kindi**, **al-Farabi** and **Ibn Sina** were the least successful in their glorious attempt worldview of Islam. Hence traditional Muslim thinkers, in their various degrees of intellectual sophistication and acumen, attempted to refute these ideas, the most profound being **Abu Hamid al-Ghazali** and some of his followers such as **Fakhr al-Din al-Razi**. Here we examine three elements of Islamisation.

1. Belief in oneness of God: Tawhid

This is beautifully and succinctly summarised in Surah Ikhlas:

“Say He is one God: God the eternal, the uncaused cause of all that exists. He begot none neither is he begotten;
and there is nothing that could be compared with Him.”

The word ‘as samad’ alludes the eternal and independent nature of God and that all others are dependent on Him. The belief in Tawhid is adequately summarised by Imam Nasafi (d.537 AH) as follows:

1. The Creator of the universe is Allah, the One, Eternal, All-Powerful, All Living, Omniscient, All-Seeing, All-Hearing, The All-Willing and Desirous.
2. Allah is neither an element nor a property, nor does He have a form or a body.
3. He is neither limited, nor numbered. He neither consists of parts, nor is He an organism and He is not a finite being.
4. He cannot be ascribed a nature, nor a state, nor a place, nor a time.

(Aqid An-Nasafi)

The belief in Allah as our creator, sustainer and guardian leads to the idea of us being indebted to him. The whole purpose of life then becomes an attempt by man to repay that debt through devotion and service. Man lives to seek Divine pleasure and fulfil Divine purpose.

2. Man is Khalifatullah: Vicegerent

Man is crown of Allah’s creation and has been vested with the epithet of Khalifah: the deputy, the vicegerent, pointing to man’s supremacy on earth; since God had made him everything subservient to him. In other words he is capable of enjoying these worldly gifts, and being responsible for them.

As a vice gerent man is expected to willingly to submit to divine commands, religious laws and moral virtues. This role of man leads to a holistic approach to life as a unity and not to treat it as a duo of sacred and secular.

3. The complimentary nature of revelation and reason

The two sources of knowledge are the revelation and reason. The revelation provides knowledge and understanding of the unseen world, that which is beyond human perception and imagination; heaven and hell, day of judgement, the life in the grave, angels etc. as well as guidelines for living a successful life. The revelation underpins the norms of intellectual behaviour, social relations and personal development.

Human reason is one of the greatest Divine gifts to mankind through which he can establish the truth. Discern right and wrong, be just and kind. In Islam therefore there is no contradiction between revelation and reason both complement one another.

However despite the enormous potential of human reason it needs divine revelation. Why? “Through chosen messengers Divine revelation endows reason with concepts of governing his social relationships that are essential to guide his conduct so that he may realise his aims in life.

The role of school ethos in Islamisation

Islamisation of the NC is only one aspect of the entire process of Islamisation of education. The latter requires a thorough ecological change in an educational institution where:

- (1) “Excellence (Ihsan) in living and learning” is the motto.
- (2) The entire environment is permeated by the fragrance of Islamic moral, manners and etiquettes and reverberates with ‘God and his Messenger said’.
- (3) Extra-curricular and informal educational activities (sometimes referred to as the hidden curriculum) are also directed by Islamic precepts.
- (4) The instructional process is inclusive of the Quranic and Prophetic methods and the quality of teaching & learning reflects the Islamic perspective.
- (5) Creativity and perception (Fu’ad) are emphasized.
- (6) “Learning by doing”, using the community as a learning laboratory is underscored.
- (7) Social service and community development is an essential requirement.
- (8) The relationship between teachers, pupils, administrators and staff are based upon Islamic concepts of okhowwa (brotherhood), Shura (consultation) Adl (justice), equality, sacrifice and Ihsan (beyond the call of duty).
- (9) Teachers and administrators present the best possible behavioural model for their pupils.
- (10) Education is mission oriented and child centred rather than subject-centred.

Some superficial approaches to Islamisation

The following approaches have been used to Islamize education and are considered to be marginally successful because they did not address the core issues of the paradigms and methodology of disciplines or ‘subjects’:

- (1) ‘Insertion’ of Quranic verses and hadiths in an otherwise ‘European’, ‘Western’ or ‘non-Muslim’ piece of writing;
- (2) Searching for ‘scientific’ facts in the Qur’an; Quranic proof of ‘scientific’ facts;
- (3) Searching for Quranic ‘scientific’ miracles;
- (4) Searching for parallels between Islamic and ‘European’, ‘Western’ or ‘non-Muslim’ concepts;

- (5) Using Islamic in place of 'European', 'Western' or 'non-Muslim' terminologies;
- (6) Adding supplementary ideas to the 'European', 'Western' or 'non-Muslim' corpus of knowledge; and
- (7) Adding Islamic subjects to 'European', 'Western' or 'non-Muslim' school or university curricula.

Some successful approaches to Islamisation

Here is a list of examples of some of the approaches, which have been adopted to embed the National Curriculum into an Islamic matrix:

1. Giving an Islamic context and an Islamic perspective to the subject or discipline under study.
2. Islamic critique of basic paradigms of various disciplines or subjects
3. Mentioning relevant attribute of Allah at every opportunity. (The creator, protector, sustainer, merciful, compassionate, loving etc.)
4. Publication and testing of new school textbooks
5. Relating all aspects of the teaching and learning to the example of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).
6. Clarification of basic epistemological issues and relations: wahy and aql, ghaib and shahaadah, 'ilm and iman,
7. Comparing or contrasting with moral and spiritual values.
8. Publication of Islam friendly or Sharia compliant teaching materials
9. Establishment of specialised research institutions
10. Carefully assessing the validity of reason and rational arguments and empirical data.
11. Clarifying and collaborating scientific facts with Quranic verses and Ahadith.
12. Stressing the sacred nature of all knowledge.
13. Reading Qur'an and Sunnah with understanding of the changing time-space dimensions, while at the same time knowing limitations of literal reading and interpretations.

Examples of Islamisation in Muslim Schools

Here are practical examples which Muslim educators have tried, and are still trying and some of the more creative ones are still involved in developing as they progress. Examples that come to mind through our IBERR and AMS work are:

1. Nigerian model, which they call the Islamic Perspective approach – Sister Aisha Lemu & Sh Ahmad Lemu in Mina.
2. Islamisation of books & teaching materials like the IQRA Chicago Drs Taslima & Abdullah Ghazi – their work in Indonesia based on the American publications is worth looking at.
3. The Islamia Primary school – Brent in London (Ex Yusuf Islam) early guidance (1997) we did on how to Islamise the National Curriculum.
4. the IBERR 'Islamic Studies' course development and the latest 'Skills for Life' course development which tries to define the 'citizenship' approach based on the Quran and Sunnah – world citizenship with Tarbiyah, Fard Ayn, Fard Kifayah and the 'latest advanced technology and effective methods of teaching and learning' incorporated or embedded in the holistic material – for teachers, parents and the child.

5. The Middle Eastern Model where because of their wealth they ‘buy’ expertise by recruiting good ‘qualified’ teachers from UK, USA, South Africa, India, neighbouring ‘Arab’ countries etc– where everything that is ‘Western’ goes with a little bit of tweaking towards Islamisation or more accurately towards ‘Arabisation’ because its thought to be the best – technology, philosophy, subject orientation, curriculum, management structures ets all mixed up – no well though out direction but what I would describe as “looking to the West for the Best” approach..
6. The South African model (1996 Islamic Conference) rather like the Islamia Brent approach but much more in depth – a whole set of books is still available on the IBERR website
7. Apart from these the Muslim schools in UK are trying different approaches e.g.
 - Islamic studies periods with the professional help of Aalimas/Aalims
 - Appointment of Aalims/Aalimas as full time members of staff for various subjects
 - Appointment of an Imam – like Islamia Nottingham (Dr Musharaf) & Islamia Brent (Sh Ahmad Babikir)
 - Appointment of dedicated, committed and experienced personnel in senior positions of responsibility (e.g Ibrahim Hewitt in Al-Aqsa school, Leicester, Ibrahim Lawson in Al-Rissalah school, Tooting, South London, Israr Khan in Hamd school, Birmingham, Sister Mona Muhammad in Manchester, Sister Zahida Hussain in Al-Furqan school, Birmingham etc.)
 - Many of our schools are experimenting with appointing only Muslim qualified (QTS) teachers, Non-Muslim but competent (QTS + experienced and in their eyes ‘best suited’ for the Deputy Head Teachers like in Feversham College, Bradford.

The Priorities Among subjects

The following is the order of priority for subject reform: natural sciences, social sciences, humanities, applied sciences and technology, and Islamic sciences. Natural sciences are trend-setters both in the field of methodology and social change. Social sciences will be easier to reform because they have now largely adopted the empirical methodology of the natural sciences. Humanities need to be recast using the Quranic methodology of analyzing the growth and decline of human civilizations and societies. Islamic sciences became fossilized over the centuries when ijthad was limited; they need a major revival..

The role of the teacher in Islamisation

There are at least three responsibilities of a teacher:

1. For a teacher to successfully Islamise his’/her ‘subject’ or ‘discipline’ she must be able to read the Glorious Quran properly with tajweed, memorise passages, surahs, ayahs. She must also have a basic understanding of usul ul fiqh, hadith, and tafseer. A minimum study of three hours per week is recommended for any one who is serious about Islamisation.
2. There is need to develop commitment to the discipline reform process. Teachers need to master their discipline well; since you cannot reform or improve what you do not know. If you did not get a traditional Islamic education, endeavour to get the minimum essential knowledge of usul al fiqh, Qur’an and hadith

methodology. Critique your discipline on the basis of Tawheed and the universal and perennial values of Islam. Orient your research and teaching to Islamisation priorities.

3. Write and publish your ideas and experiences. Network with others who hold similar views and are engaged in similar endeavours. Teach and inspire others to take up the challenge of educational reform.

The role of the Head Teacher in Islamisation

The well-known statement of Stenhouse (1975) “There can be no curriculum development without teacher development” needs the additional corollary and there can be no teacher development without headteacher development!” Any effort to Islamise education must begin with the head teachers of the school who needs to be fully convinced about the rationale for and the benefits of the process. The head teacher is in a pivotal position to take a lead in helping to formulate the Islamic vision of the school, to shape the school’s culture and ethos and to provide leadership and direction to secure teacher, pupil, and parent commitment for the Islamic attitudes, approaches and behaviour that should characterise all the activities of the school. Scholars, policy makers and curriculum developers can provide only the framework for Islamisation of education but it is the head teacher in each school who provides individual direction for implementing the framework. Head teachers have the responsibility for creating an Islamic school culture that will move the school towards excellence or maintain and further the excellence that may already be there. The head teacher has the responsibility to transmit and share Islamic goals, values and norms with the assistance of the SMT, the teachers, the pupils and the parents. Such leadership (imamat) requires the head teacher to be more of a philosopher and a visionary than a technician or specialist. What is needed is for the head teacher to combine managerial tasks with symbolic functions and actions, to be simultaneously an efficient manager and an effective leader and to see his role as providing an essential service rather than just control. In the past, many reform efforts have failed simply because staff members were not involved in the development of the change and yet were expected to be totally responsible for its implementation. A key to helping teachers accept change and develop new attitudes is for the head teacher to view his role as facilitating the development of the changes needed in existing practices rather than telling teachers what they should do. The introduction of a programme of Islamisation of education is primarily headteacher function and a process that needs to be clearly understood by all the stakeholders.

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Small Group Activity 1

If your School is regarded primarily as a place for nurturing Islamic morals, manners and worship (Ibadat & Akhlaq), rather than a National Curriculum SATS/GCSE factory, what would be the new curriculum? What would we want to teach? And how? If our aim was to produce good citizens? (Exam success might be part of this for some, and an added bonus but a secondary priority, such as Akhlaq is viewed as an essential part of education now).

What are our values? What knowledge, understanding, skills and attitudes would we want the pupils to acquire? (Syllabus)

How would we achieve this in terms of full variety of teaching and learning activities? (Curriculum)

How would this differ from what we are doing at the moment? (As a school we have put a lot of resources into delivery of National Curriculum)

How much are we doing at the moment?

What still needs to be done for further development?

Formulate the development of worship and moral policy

Draw up a development action plan for this policy

Small Group Activity 2

Discuss the following statements in your small groups and arrive at a consensus giving persuasive reasons as to what aspects are essential in order to embark on a successful process of Islamisation.

Present your case for Islamisation in practical terms i.e. in the list of actions which you consider to be essential in order to achieve the desired outcome which of them is the most important and which the least important.

- The school curriculum must include an Islamic Studies slot, which must be slotted into a prominent part of the timetable and must be taught by an appropriately qualified Aalim or Aalima.
- The school must appoint a properly qualified Imam, with a job description which takes into account the needs of the teaching staff, non-teaching staff, the learners, the parents and the governing body as well as the other stakeholders i.e. the wider community.
- It is important to appoint only Muslim teachers with appropriate experience.
- Every lesson must begin in the name of Allah and end with an appropriate dua.
- The Head Teacher and the senior teachers must be practicing Muslims.
- All staff must be recruited with the essential requirement of acting as a role model for the learners.
- Only families with an Islamic ethos and a clear vision of Islamic principles must be allowed to send their children to the school.
- There must be a clear code of discipline and sanctions if the students do not adhere to these.
- Schools should ensure that policies and schemes of work reflect the mission statement and an Islamic ethos.



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