

TROJAN HORSE JOINT SCRUTINY BOARD

Tuesday 9 September 2014, 2pm

***Presentation by Dr Mashuq Ally,
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Cohesion &
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Background

- Small groups of meetings were held comprised of Muslim males and females aged between 18-35. The majority were practising Muslims which included mothers, some of whom had children of primary school age. This presentation captures themes discussed by the groups: schools and British Muslim identity; response to the debate on British values; and perceptions on integration



Schools and British Muslim Identity

- On allegations of extremism in Birmingham schools, participants stated that even if a small number of individuals were in the wrong the media response has been grossly disproportionate
- 'Operation Trojan Horse' allegations around Birmingham schools are seen as another example of scaremongering about Islamification of the UK. Both groups believed that Muslims are often unfairly singled out and vilified in the UK. Recent media stories about Halal meat were given as an additional example of this



Schools and British Muslim Identity (cont.)

- The existence of a formal plot is denied and many of the concerns raised by Ofsted are dismissed as simply the schools responding to meet the needs of local Muslims
- Relatively little blame for furore around the schools is apportioned to either the Government or any named politicians, although the apparent change in Ofsted's assessment of the school in a short period of time was cited. It is the media which they regard as principally responsible for unfair coverage of the story



Schools and British Muslim Identity (cont.)

- The female group spoke about the need for British Muslims to integrate in to UK society and were keen to remain part of the secular state school system rather than sending their children to faith schools. However, they felt the schools should reflect the Muslim communities in which they are situated, and believe that accommodation can be made for religious sensitivities on social issues within the mainstream state sector



Response to the debate on British values

- Both male and female respondents welcomed a greater focus on British values and subscribed to those laid out by the Prime Minister in his media article
- They also concur with the practical policies to advance these values: ensuring new immigrants can speak English, a greater focus on teaching British history in narrative form and promoting, rather than simply respecting, British values
- However, some note that tolerance does not always appear to extend to the treatment of Muslims, and believed that the media's framing of the story ('Cameron tells Muslims: Be more British') was offensive



Response to the debate on British values (cont.)

- They welcomed a universal debate applicable to all, and were positive about making the case that Muslims are among the “most British” citizens, precisely because their religion explicitly teaches many of the values the Prime Minister outlined. They were all at pains to stress that they have a high regard for Britain and that it is when they travel to see family abroad that they value it the most
- The female group spoke especially positively about British values of tolerance, democracy, freedom to practice their religion, equal opportunities, and education. They saw these as being in line with Muslim values



Perceptions on Integration

- There was no strong feeling in either group that response to the 'Operation Trojan Horse' allegations will adversely affect their willingness or ability to integrate into Britain. Indeed, they note that integration becomes more noticeable with every new generation
- However, they believe that there will always be some slight tensions between Islam and British society because "Islam is based on beliefs that do not change" while British society does change. They state that this religious conservatism should not be confused with extremism. As a result of these tensions, they wish to retain the right to engage with their child's education, especially on sensitive social issues



Progress on Action Plan Submitted to DfE / Secretary of State

Governance

- New process for recruitment and nomination of LA governors
- Code of conduct for governors
- Good governance guide written
- Clerking audit tool developed ready for deployment
- Programme of governor training published
- Chair of Park View no longer a member of Highfield governing body

Safeguarding

- Programme WRAP training published – 14 dates filled
- Model 'No Platform' / 'Extremism' policies developed
- Home Office funded advisor being recruited
- High response to Section 175 returns
- Consortia leads promoting training (Tapestry / FGM / WRAP)
- Safeguarding Board developed policy on FGM and Forced Marriage



Progress on Action Plan Submitted to DfE / Secretary of State

General Oversight of Schools

- New whistle blowing policy developed
- Plans being developed for new school governance post
- Recruited associate school improvement advisors
- Induction programme for head teachers being designed
- Framework of link officers for schools being developed
- Service Director met with academy sponsors and free schools

School Improvement

- Each of the RI schools provided LA link officer & linked outstanding school. Plans in place for all schools
- WRAP training delivered in 4 of 21 schools another 6 have dates in diary. Dates set aside for others.
- 'Protect Yourself' conference arranged
- Workshop to RI schools by outstanding schools delivered
- IEB in place for Saltley
- Birmingham Performance and Commissioning Group monitoring progress



Progress on Action Plan Submitted to DfE / Secretary of State

Preparing for Life in Modern Britain

- Consultation began with discussion at the Young Person's Parliament on July 12th
- Children's Society and the Innovation Unit have undertaken extensive engagement with children and families
- SACRE are working with the Council to draw up its own action plan in response to Trojan Horse



Education & Schools Strategy & Plan

Following key pieces of work being brought into single strategy and improvement plan for education:

- The Education Service Review (July 2014)
- Improvement Plan submitted to Secretary of State / DfE (June 2014)
- Report of Ian Kershaw in respect of concerns raised in the Trojan Horse letter (July 2014)
- Report of Peter Clarke into allegations concerning Birmingham schools arising from the 'Trojan Horse' letter
- Report of the Trojan Horse Review Group to the Leader of the Council (July 2014)

