



▲ Amanda Spielman,
 Head of Ofsted since Jan 17

Examining Ofsted's failures

There has now been a litany of controversial 'British values' inspections by Ofsted. Sold to the public as a solution to extremism, instead the inspections have proved to be a tool for promoting political correctness.

Young children in Christian and Jewish schools have been asked about sexuality and 'gender identity'. Inspectors carry out such questioning behind parents' backs.

Ofsted's track record, set out in this briefing, shows a consistent pattern of behaviour affecting different types of schools in various parts of the country. Ofsted has not publicly admitted wrongdoing in any of these cases.

It was obvious from the start that Ofsted is not suited to this expansion of its role. As Nigel Genders, Chief Education Officer for the Church of England, warned in 2014, "asking Ofsted to become the schoolroom security service is a step too far".¹

Yet the Government wants Ofsted to inspect church youth activities in order to counter 'radicalisation'. Surely there needs to be a fundamental re-evaluation of Ofsted's role instead?

CONTROVERSIAL 'BRITISH VALUES' INSPECTIONS

The Department for Education has asked Ofsted to conduct 'British values' checks on schools in England since September 2014.

From the start, there have been alarming reports of inspectors riding roughshod over deeply-held religious beliefs. There is little to prevent the personal views of inspectors shaping hostile reports of schools with a religious ethos.

Despite all the controversial inspections of schools, the Government proposed that Ofsted should conduct 'British values' checks on many thousands of voluntary groups, including Christian youth work.

Negative reports could result in closing premises and banning youth group leaders from working with children.

The Government's definition of 'fundamental British values' is very vague: "democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and

mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs".

This is a broad-brush and clumsy approach. What is needed instead is a targeted, intelligence-led response to the radicalisation of children.

Ofsted actually has a track record of failing to spot clear evidence of extremism in schools. Inspectors made catastrophic mistakes in schools involved in the 'Trojan Horse' scandal in Birmingham, issuing glowing reports praising some of these schools before the media storm broke.

A poll done in January-February 2016 found that 45% of Conservative MPs do not have confidence in Ofsted.² There are few effective mechanisms for holding Ofsted to account.

ALSO READ



Out-of-school settings:
christian.org.uk/oossbriefing



GRINDON HALL CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

At Grindon Hall Christian School in Sunderland, primary school children said they were asked if they knew of any boys or girls who thought they were in the wrong body, and if they knew what gays and lesbians did.

Six-year-olds were asked if they knew anything about Diwali or if they were familiar with the Torah, and others were asked if they knew anyone with two mums or two dads.³ The

mother of one pupil stated: "The questioning was completely inappropriate, they asked her what lesbians were, and whether she felt trapped in someone else's body."⁴

The head teacher said: "Pupils were embarrassed and surprised to be asked questions about sexuality. The offer of a one-to-one meeting with an inspector, who was a complete stranger to them, in order to discuss personal matters of sexuality was also viewed with alarm by some parents."⁵

Following the inspection in November 2014, the school was rated 'Inadequate', with the draft Ofsted report stating that: "The Christian ethos of the school permeates much of the school's provision. This has restricted the development of a broad and balanced approach to the curriculum."⁶ Ofsted failed to investigate the conduct of its inspectors, and the Department for Education has now forced the school to be transferred to a secular trust.⁷



TRINITY CHRISTIAN SCHOOL



In October 2014 an Ofsted inspector told Trinity Christian School, a fee-paying independent school in Reading, that it needed to show it "actively promoted other faiths" in the curriculum. The school was told that it should do this by asking representatives of other faiths, such as imams, to lead assemblies and lessons.⁸

OTHER EXAMPLES

Understandably some schools harshly treated by Ofsted prefer to remain anonymous.

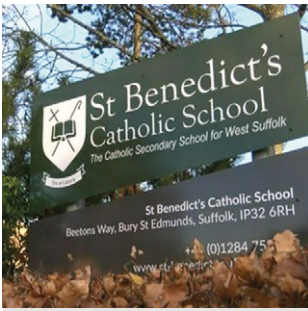
It is alleged that teachers at one Christian school were systematically questioned about their personal views on same-sex marriage.

A 2015 Ofsted report on an independent Christian school stated: "Pupils do not experience a balance of differing views on certain matters including the 'protected characteristics' (for example, relating to: age, disability, gender, marriage and civil partnerships,

religion or belief, sexual orientation) of the Equality Act 2010. This all means that they are insufficiently prepared for life in modern Britain. This also means that leaders have not effectively promoted all forms of equality".

A third Christian school was rated 'Inadequate' on the basis of only 35 minutes of lesson observation.





ST BENEDICT'S

St Benedict's, a Roman Catholic school in Bury St Edmunds, was ranked in 2013 as one of the best state schools in the country for sending pupils to Oxbridge.⁹

But Ofsted inspected at no notice in September 2014 and downgraded the school from 'Good' to 'Requires Improvement'. The report stated that pupils "show less awareness of the dangers of extremism and radicalisation" and that it is "not made clear how all students are prepared for life and work in modern Britain"¹⁰ – in other words, how the school delivered 'British values'.

Ofsted later withdrew the original inspection report after media coverage of the case,¹¹ but went on to publicly criticise the school alongside others. The head teacher said: "The continuing accusation that this school is one of a handful identified with radicalisation and extremism concerns is hugely disturbing".¹²

JEWISH SCHOOLS

Inspectors investigating 'British values' at Orthodox Jewish schools in September 2014 asked secondary school girls intrusive questions such as 'Have you got a boyfriend?' and 'Do you know two men can marry?'

At one Orthodox Jewish primary school, girls aged nine were asked if they understood how babies were made and whether they knew any gay people.¹³ One of the schools – Beis Yaakov High School Academy – was placed into special measures

and rebuked by Ofsted for failing to promote 'British values'.¹⁴

In 2015, a Jewish rabbi who also conducted inspections for Ofsted, told a group of Jewish primary school teachers that Ofsted wants to clamp down on any schools that "don't conform to their ideology". Rabbi Nathaniel Lieberman also claimed that Ofsted has "an agenda to knock down" Jewish schools, and is "looking for a pretext for inspectors just to turn up".¹⁵



▲ Display of work from Beis Yaakov High School Academy

COMMENT BY COLIN HART, DIRECTOR

Ofsted has arguably played a part in driving up education standards. But the 'British values' agenda has seen inspectors stray into areas they are simply not competent to assess.

The Government White Paper in March 2016 suggested it would place more emphasis on schools' exam results and also proposed that Ofsted stop grading schools on teaching and learning. The irony is that this could lead to inspections placing even greater emphasis on non-exam issues such as compliance with 'British values'.

Many inspectors lack the religious literacy to understand Christian beliefs. Others who are hostile to Christian views have not been reined in. Even a few Ofsted inspectors have stated that they believe there is an 'anti-faith' agenda within Ofsted, which is riding on the back of 'British values' inspections.



'TROJAN HORSE' SCHOOLS, BIRMINGHAM

Ofsted's role should not be expanded because its inspectors have conspicuously failed to spot real extremism where it has taken place. Before the 2014 media storm, Ofsted made major errors in schools involved in the 'Trojan Horse' scandal in Birmingham, issuing glowing reports of some of these schools.¹⁶ We now know that concerning incidents go back to 1992, including teachers leading

pupils in anti-Christian chanting in assembly in recent years.¹⁷ But one of Sir Michael Wilshaw's first acts on being appointed Head of Ofsted in 2012 was to visit Park View



Academy in Birmingham, the school at the centre of the scandal. With press in tow, he showcased it as an example for other schools to follow.¹⁸ Even when inspectors were sent back specifically to look for evidence of problems, they initially rated the school 'Outstanding' again.¹⁹ A fortnight later inspectors finally came to the opposite conclusion, rating it 'Inadequate'.²⁰

School	Pre-Trojan Horse	Trojan Horse (March/April 2014)
Oldknow Academy <i>(now Ark Chamberlain Primary Academy)</i>	Outstanding (2013)	Inadequate leadership and safety of pupils (' <i>Outstanding</i> ' achievement and quality of teaching)
Park View School Academy of Mathematics and Science <i>(now Rockwood Academy)</i>	2014 report says previous inspection was Outstanding	Inadequate leadership and safety of pupils (' <i>Good</i> ' achievement and quality of teaching)
Regents Park Community Primary School	Outstanding (2013)	Leadership Requires Improvement <i>(Inspection in November 2014 downgraded the school from 'Outstanding' to 'Requires Improvement')</i>

MIDDLE RASEN, LINCOLNSHIRE

The Daily Telegraph reported in November 2014 that Middle Rasen Primary School in rural Lincolnshire was marked down by Ofsted for being 'too white'.²¹ Inspectors said it was "not yet an outstanding school" because pupils' cultural development was limited by a "lack of first-hand experience of the diverse make up of modern British society", although the report did make other criticisms of the school as well.²²

Learning nothing from their previous experience in Middle Rasen, Ofsted inspectors were back in 2016 to criticise Town and Country Kiddies nursery for not having enough pictures of black and Asian people on the walls and not teaching under-fives enough about ethnic diversity.²³

OFSTED'S LACK OF ACCOUNTABILITY

There is no proper external oversight of Ofsted's actions. The body's complaints system is secretive and, in the words of one head teacher, "constructed around a deep and dutiful need for self-protection".²⁴

Despite promises to do so, Ofsted continues to refuse to release the 'evidence base' underpinning inspection judgements.²⁵

Christian school ‘must invite imams to lead its assemblies’

The Times, Oct 14

The Guardian, Oct 14

Jewish schools complain over ‘hostile’ Ofsted inspections

The Times, Jan 15

Do you know what lesbians do, Ofsted asked 10-year-olds

Headteacher slams ‘hostile’ Ofsted visit

The Sunderland Echo, Jan 15

Church accuses Ofsted of being ‘secret police’ over British values

The Daily Telegraph, Nov 14

“It appears to be guilty of trying to enforce a kind of state-imposed orthodoxy on certain moral and religious questions... We have to ask whether we can any longer have confidence in Ofsted’s reports. Ofsted’s own director of schools, Sean Harford, has admitted that the reliability of inspections is a problem.”²⁶ (March 2015)



Sir Edward Leigh MP (Con)



Peter Kyle MP (Lab)

“As anyone involved in running schools knows, there are gross inconsistencies in how Ofsted inspects between schools.”²⁷ (June 2015)

“I respect Scientologists, but I do not respect Scientology. This confusion is very real. It appears in inspectors’ minds. Her Majesty’s chief inspector of schools, Sir Michael Wilshaw, wrote of schools teaching ‘respect for...various faiths’, making no distinction between the believers and the beliefs. I understand that a Jewish Ofsted inspector has said that Ofsted wants to clamp down on schools that ‘don’t conform to their ideology’.”²⁸ (March 2015)



Fiona Bruce MP (Con)

THE DURHAM FREE SCHOOL

Ofsted launched its hostile inspection of The Durham Free School in November 2014. One eleven-year-old says she was asked if she was a lesbian and whether she thought she was in the wrong body. Another says an inspector asked if she was comfortable in her own body or whether she wanted to change sex. A 12-year-old boy said he was asked if he was gay and if he had lost his virginity. This took place when he was on his own with an inspector in a room with the door shut.

These allegations are contained in written statements made by the students.²⁹ Ofsted was made aware of them but did not speak to the teachers, pupils or their parents to investigate.³⁰

Ofsted's report on the school criticised it in almost every possible area, despite previous monitoring visits being overwhelmingly



positive.³¹ In January 2015 the Secretary of State for Education, Nicky Morgan, announced that she was withdrawing funding for the school, citing the critical Ofsted report.

In response to the outrage expressed by many pupils and parents, Ofsted now claims that serious homophobic bullying was going on at the school, but a lesbian parent strongly defended the school and said that her daughter had not faced any bullying there.³² Following the Government's withdrawal of funding, the school was forced to close in March 2015.

WHAT CAN WE DO?

A teacher, parent or school affected by a hostile Ofsted 'British values' inspection can contact The Christian Institute for advice.

Parents should raise concerns with their local MP.

Schools must make an accurate record of what happened. It is important to obtain statements from any children subjected to intrusive questioning.

REFERENCES

christian.org.uk/ofstedbrief-ref

GOING BEHIND PARENTS' BACKS

There are now many accounts of Ofsted inspectors asking schoolchildren questions about personal and sensitive issues – such as same-sex marriage and transsexualism – without parents' knowledge or consent.

At their worst, inspectors' questions have been highly intrusive and raise safeguarding concerns which will alarm parents. For example, asking ten and eleven-year-old girls if they felt comfortable in their own bodies, as pupils at two schools allege.

This is completely different to the normal discussions with pupils of routine matters about their school.

Apart from the distress caused by such interrogation, it is highly unlikely to provide reliable information as children struggle to come up with answers to such unexpected questions from an unfamiliar adult.



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