The Birmingham Book

Lessons in urban education leadership and policy from the Trojan Horse affair

Edited by
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Foreword by Mick Waters

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To Birmingham school leaders who quietly
transform children's lives every day.

Foreword

I remember my feelings as I drove away from Park View Academy in November 2012. I had visited at the invitation of the head teacher, Lindsey Clark, ten years after her appointment. She had written to me following her attendance at a conference at which I had spoken:

> After your presentation I came back to work refreshed and excited as you made sense about what matters in education. I am writing to invite you to visit Park View School, a school that I know you knew. I would be interested in your observations about the journey we have travelled and suggestions about what we need to do to keep on the right tracks. I am also interested in a conversation regarding multi-academy trusts – if you are willing. Park View is now an academy and is sponsoring Nansen Primary School. We want to do it 'right' and in a way that lasts, but making sure that each and every child gets the best possible deal.

The academy had been judged outstanding following an Ofsted inspection on the new and more demanding framework introduced by Sir Michael Wilshaw in January that year.

I was in the school for an hour and a half, so I gained only a snapshot. Lindsey showed me around some classrooms and I talked with an enthusiastic team of teachers in the mathematics department, committed to teaching maths and teaching it well, inspiring children towards the joy and intrigue of the discipline. I talked with a few pupils and with Lindsey and the chair of governors, Tahir Alam. The Park View Academy Trust was thinking of expanding, and we shared an open debate about the benefits or otherwise of becoming further engaged in the national schooling development that had so few clear organisational guidelines.

I remember raising questions, in the way I do, about the rather subdued nature of several classrooms, the subtle difference between rigour and suppression. I felt there was an uneasy discipline based more on external control than self-control. I wondered whether it was me: whether children had been told to show their best image and had overcooked it. We talked about the very clerical nature of every lesson we had visited and, as in many schools, the feeling of anticlimax that many pupils must

experience at not doing what it 'says on the door': science or design technology, for example, and instead doing writing. I raised the issue of single-gender classes, but only tentatively, as I know it is a personal view that single-gender teaching in a mixed school is unsatisfactory. I am tentative because I am aware that the city prizes its single-gender foundation schools, and most of our esteemed public schools are also single-gender entry. Each of my reservations or questions was met with the trump card so often played: 'Ofsted says we are outstanding.' I sensed it wasn't, but who would I be to judge based on just a short time in the school?

As I drove away, I reflected that the school was infinitely improved from the one I had last visited in 2002. That was the day when I had been part of the panel that had appointed Lindsey Clark as head teacher. Whilst the school had been improving in the period at the start of the new millennium, it was still struggling when Lindsey took over. Now, the tone of the school was controlled as opposed to unpredictable. Building Schools for the Future had transformed the environment and created a business-like environment compared with the previously shabby secondary modern atmosphere. I respected Lindsey's efforts and assumed that Tahir would be proud of his contribution after the previous frustrations over the poor performance of the school and others in the area. I didn't think it was superb, but it had improved certainly and significantly.

I was not as effusive as I felt both Lindsey and Tahir probably wanted me to be, especially since Sir Michael Wilshaw, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector, had visited earlier in the year and used the school as a benchmark for others.

Just over a year after my visit, the Trojan Horse row broke. It is hard to believe that such a small piece of paper with no signature could cause such turmoil in a school, community and city – and even central government. The fallout was significant: a swathe of schools subject to inspection, previous success obliterated, individuals ostracised, court cases that collapsed through lack of authoritative evidence, and a confused community once more doubting its schools, its city and itself. When I was invited to contribute to this book, I was intrigued to know whether I was going to understand the events which had caused such upset and which I had watched from a distance.

However, this book does far more than revisit the turmoil and tread again the complexity explored in two major enquiries. Some of the issues are contentious, and many people tend to overlook their complexity or have

simplistic views on them. This book avoids pointing the finger and raking up bad blood. It doesn't settle scores, but nor does it turn a blind eye to the uncomfortable.

Colin Diamond offers an excellent analysis of the turbulent period that engulfed the schools, as parallel enquiries did their work against a background of political point-scoring. His introduction is followed by first-hand accounts of the efforts to rebuild both the schools and the community's belief in its schools. There are personal accounts of a harrowing time for a community alongside life stories of awareness of unfairness and underestimation. There are examples of responsibility and accountability being shifted and responsibility and accountability being accepted. It is a book about rights and wrongs that avoids recrimination and blame, and instead relates stories of hope, ambition and collaborative partnership.

This book offers a fascinating read; it is informative and revealing whilst at the same time unsettling, salutary and uplifting. The recollections in each chapter are vivid. Images of childhood half a century ago sit alongside the reflections of head teachers working to establish trust against a backdrop of suspicion. Frustration comes through the feeling of the unfulfilled potential of communities and young people, now adults, subject to historic under-expectation and underachievement within a school system unprepared for their arrival from abroad, slow to adjust and quick to rationalise shortcomings.

Reading this book, it is easy to imagine the screenplay for a film of the 'feel-good' genre. The vignettes appear so often. With the right music, a cinema audience would be carried along with a story offering an emotional switchback: funny, poignant and homely scenes set against confused and angry images of injustice, interspersed with the order and certainty of officialdom. The clichés would be there, along with a musical score and settings that would drift from the tension and wrath of the period to the rise of a community, and particularly its schools, and which would highlight certain individuals who would be overstated and over-characterised. Of course, even in this harmless observation there is an irony, for some of the main protagonists and some of those involved in the story would not want the music and would not tolerate a film.

What the book reveals is the outcome of a managerial age where organisations such as Ofsted and the Department for Education applied themselves to the challenge of their targets, tick-lists and risk assessments without looking closely enough at the reality in front of them.

Academy trusts were created to accelerate the number of academies in the education system but with little regard as to how they would work in practice. Schools were allowed to be classified as 'outstanding' and then 'fail' within a very short time, seemingly without turning the mirror to question the processes of inspection itself. The academy regime had played into the hands of people who wanted the best for their own children and had taken at face value Michael Gove's offer of autonomy at school level.

It is easy to forget that the crisis arose at a time of a tightening screw. We had a prime minister and an education secretary who had announced that they were 'declaring war' on coasting schools (*Daily Mail*, 2010) and referring to people who questioned policy as 'enemies of promise' (Gove, 2013). Gove's review of curriculum and qualifications was emphasising an intellectually demanding approach at the expense of vocational and practical aspects. The English Baccalaureate, which Gove had admitted the previous year was a 'bridge too far',[1] was becoming the currency of approach through the Progress 8 measure and schools were looking over their shoulders at the newly invigorated Ofsted. Inspectors were fixated by data to the extent that struggling schools were being visited by Her Majesty's Inspectors half-termly to look at data drops and expecting to see 'spikes' of improvement. For a community previously disappointed and frustrated with the schooling of their children, these sorts of standpoints would have convinced those involved that they were on the right path, and the political zeal would have been welcomed and used as a spur. Governors were being urged to exert influence on their schools. Would these criticised governing bodies have compared unfavourably in their determination for success with other dominating governing bodies driving their own agenda within their own community elsewhere? Don't most multi-academy trusts seek to appoint trustees who accord with their outlook?

It was also the time of the Prevent agenda, which at the time asked schools to 'respect' fundamental British values. There was a sense of contradiction for professionals, with an evolving shift away from the community cohesion agenda that schools had been expected to address in previous years.

1 See Hansard, HC Deb vol. 558, col. 441 (7 February 2013). Available at: https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2013-02-07/debates/13020759000004/CurriculumAndExamReform.

The label of 'social deprivation', along with the accompanying poor results at GCSE and low positions in league tables, was distorting the way that children in schools in such areas had been treated. Someone else had decided they were socially deprived and that they were inadequate in terms of results. Yet, when those results had been addressed, the schools initially acclaimed by inspection were now seen to be not addressing the right issues.

Much was made of the lack of cultural opportunities for these pupils, and that a narrowed curriculum restricted opportunity for the arts. It is easy to forget that, at the time, it would have been relatively easy to find a school where the curriculum focus was on a narrowing range of supposedly academic subjects, to the detriment of arts and culturally based disciplines. There is considerable reference to the work done by school leaders in encouraging communities to embrace a wider landscape, as well as examples of teenagers who had never ventured into their city centre. Head teachers elsewhere could provide examples (even now) of youngsters reluctant to leave their estate or postcode, but, against a backdrop of political rhetoric, changing this became a priority and a 'measurable' for these communities in a way that it did not for others under scrutiny.

The vital importance of place runs throughout the story; people leaving their place, mainly Pakistan, from the late 1960s and making a home in a new place – in a community within a city which welcomed them by default rather than with a warm embrace. There are stories of the efforts to be taken seriously, to secure some sort of equality and then equity; stories of a community bringing its traditions, routines and religious practices; stories of people dissatisfied with authority, trying to exert influence on those in charge and eventually seeking to use the government's own policies to secure the best interests for their young people and a sense of self-esteem for their community.

Adrian Packer (Chapter 7), who picked up the mantle of headship at Park View Academy, the school at the centre of Trojan Horse, describes that confusion finding its way into the whole school community, not least the pupils who appeared bemused at the way they had become the centre of a crisis. He communicates the loyalty to an ideal achieved through a homemade recipe, yet turned to dust after such short-lived success.

Whilst Packer moved in from elsewhere with fresh eyes, others were working at the heart of a community they knew well. Sajid Gulzar

(Chapter 8), CEO of Prince Albert Community Trust, was in the unique position of trying to support Highfield Junior and Infant School, which he had attended as a child. Building upon previous experience of helping schools to lift themselves, he knew there was no blueprint. Adrian Packer describes the way he had to resist urgings to impose a new regime to replace the discredited one. Professionalism shines through his description of a desire to build community, and through Azita Zohhadi's (Chapter 6) commitment to bold spirit and purpose at Nelson Mandela Primary School. There is a recognition that the crisis presented a wider challenge to the city and to people such as Pat Smart – mentioned several times for her contribution – who epitomises all those head teachers and teachers across the city who have, over time, committed themselves to making Birmingham the best place it can be for children in schools.

Much of the book is also about the way schools relate to their parent community. Joy Warmington's (Chapter 13) analysis of the more recent dispute at nearby Parkfield Community School, which centred on the No Outsiders programme, goes below the surface and looks first at the reasons for the protests and then the way forward. She explores the detail of larger tensions, the lack of clarity in law and the importance of each side listening to the other and working towards compromise. She describes a situation where parents 'trusted' their school because it secured good results and was deemed outstanding and, as a result, both school and parents accepted a relationship that was muted.

Azita Zohhadi proposes that better futures for children rely on trust (there is an irony in the use of that word) and tells of the early days in her headship as parents viewed with suspicion the steps that she was taking to move the school forward. As parents bought into the developments and saw evidence of the children achieving, that trust became the fuel for an immensely positive relationship. Similarly, Herminder Channa (Chapter 10) portrays her leadership role at Ark Boulton Academy being built upon a rejection of draconian approaches of 'zero tolerance' regimes in favour of listening to pupils and parents as they considered what their school could offer them.

It is the need to address that 'muted' relationship between school and parents that comes through as a message that is applicable to schools elsewhere and in other aspects of schooling. Do parents accept too easily the reassurances, rules and expectations of schools? Perhaps Trojan

Horse was simply an example of members of a community taking a form of direct action as opposed to undermining or plotting anything sinister.

Kamal Hanif (Chapter 2) brings a fascinating perspective on the world beyond schooling. He traces developments using milestones such as the murder of Stephen Lawrence, the Swann Report on multiracial education, the impact of the Rushdie episode and the events of 9/11. The tension associated with being a British Muslim and recognising the perceptions of Islam beyond the community was significant – and not relieved by the response of ministers. There are fascinating and at times upsetting reflections on incidents in school staffrooms. Coming through so much of the book is a sense of a community lacking insight about how to influence.

Karamat Iqbal (Chapter 3) questions systemic issues which result in the continuing lack of representation of the Pakistani community in decision-making roles in the city and delves into questions of competence in bureaucracy at the highest level. This is also picked up by Thomas Perry (Chapter 4) from the University of Warwick who provides an analysis of national and school-level data and poses many important questions for policy-makers and school leaders about differential performance and educational inequalities by ethnicity, gender, English language status and socio-economic status. He acknowledges the unique position of school leaders to respond to need, but asserts that government and community should not shirk from their responsibility to address social problems, and nor should the accountability system be excused from its wilful blindness to school context and (dis)advantage.

Nearly all the writers based in schools saw recognition of their quality through inspection as important in terms of acknowledging that the schools had a clean bill of health. This was surprising given that, at least in part, Ofsted had been a cause of the turmoil wrought upon the community and its schools. Several contributors express doubt about the validity and integrity of the inspection agency in the twenty-one inspections commissioned by the secretary of state. Perhaps this is because many of the writers saw the events from the perspective of arriving on the scene after the negative judgement, and perhaps also there is something about recognition from outside seeming like validation.

Ultimately, *The Birmingham Book* is a kaleidoscope of relationships and values: trust, belief, tolerance, professionalism. It is about a community and its shared commitment to making childhood the very best it can be

for all its children and seeing schools as a vital part of that process. It always was.

Professor Mick Waters

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Provenance – a personal journey

Colin Diamond

It is important to explain the origins of this book. First, I need to confess my affection for Birmingham. I often describe the city as England's best-kept secret because, whilst Brummies are immensely proud people, they keep it to themselves and are generally self-effacing about their achievements. As a professor at the University of Birmingham, my colleagues would expect me to be upfront about conscious bias – and probe my unconscious bias too. I like working in the city and feel at home. I have even been conferred the status of 'honorary Brummie' on a few occasions. There, I have said it. Make of it what you will.

An urban educationalist at heart, with my own schooling in downtown Liverpool and teaching career in inner London, working in Birmingham felt natural from the outset. Twenty years ago, the city's schools were recognised for their cutting-edge innovation and transcending the social disadvantage of the children and families they served. The commitment to Birmingham's children continues. Every day, thousands of miracles occur in the city's classrooms against a backdrop of severe socio-economic deprivation. In communities that are on the bottom rung of the ladder in English society, schools work to give those children a foothold, and they begin to climb. It isn't glamorous work and it is well known that the school inspectorate is less likely to judge inner-city schools to be outstanding, no matter what the quality of the education. Walk the streets just beyond the magnificent civic piazza and Victorian municipal buildings and you will find schools that are beacons of hope amid the urban jumble of roads, dilapidated factories and housing estates. It was always a privilege to visit and celebrate their achievements.

When I left Birmingham City Council in summer 2018 to take up a post at the university, it provided me with the opportunity to reflect on four intense years. Starting with little knowledge of the city and its communities, it had been a crash-course induction. Working initially for the

Department for Education and then moving to the council in 2015, the pace was relentless. Trojan Horse and its legacy dominated those years.

I needed to make sense of what had happened, and there is no greater discipline than writing a book to create a framework for reflection and learning. My understanding has deepened during the process of writing and editing. This book became possible when all of the authors agreed to tell their stories. I asked them to imagine we were in a cafe or pub and to describe their journeys through the Trojan Horse era. Francis Bacon's quotation, 'Reading maketh a Full man, Conference a Ready man & Writing an Exact man', which sits above the entrance to Kensington public library in Liverpool, has been my lodestar.

The strength of the book lies in the integrity of its authors, who have lived and breathed Birmingham education for many years. There is a range of experiences and perspectives defined by each author's position as school leader, academic or their leadership of related organisations such as brap (formerly Birmingham Race Action Partnership) and the National Governance Association. I deliberately set wide parameters for the authors and trusted their judgement and scholarship. Each contributor read near-final drafts of my introduction and early chapters and agreed to write, knowing my take on events.

The result is a rich brew of powerful accounts which dispels the myth that there is a single version of 'the truth' about Trojan Horse. This is the opposite of a simplistic and convenient single-line narrative that some commentators prefer. It is easy to take a position that supports Michael Gove's paranoia about supposed Islamic extremism infiltrating schools or to create a hagiography that beatifies the principal players at Park View Education Trust (PVET). The multi-layered perspectives found in this book reveal a complex intersectional landscape that continues to evolve.

What took you so long to get here?

By April 2014, it had become apparent to ministers and officials in the Department for Education that something really serious had gone wrong in Birmingham. I was asked to pull together a team drawn from the department's official education adviser team (experienced school leaders and former Ofsted inspectors) who would work with Education Funding

Agency staff to find out what was really going on in the PVET academies and in Oldknow Junior School following the Ofsted inspection judgements. It was meant to be a six-week assignment.

I am still working in Birmingham eight years later. It wasn't the chaos and dysfunction that detained me, and nor was it the immediate task of getting two damaged academy trusts into safe hands. It was an invitation from Pat Smart, at that time executive head teacher of the Greet Federation, to come and see her primary school in Sparkhill that hadn't been directly caught up in Trojan Horse but had experienced some of the behaviours aimed at its leadership.

Sir Mike Tomlinson, the education commissioner for Birmingham, and I visited Greet and were seriously impressed by the standards that pupils achieved. Here was an inner-city primary with almost 100% Muslim children, of whom the majority were of British Pakistani Mirpuri heritage, achieving brilliant results. The Year 6 pupils' books contained writing of sophistication and maturity, testimony to the progress they had made at Greet. And yet many of those pupils, high achievers in Year 6, went on to the neighbouring Golden Hillock secondary school where by 2014 their progress was being halted abruptly.

It was the generosity of Birmingham's head teachers that I found most compelling. The sense of family and loyalty to the city was palpable. Many heads were asked to step up to the plate to remedy what had gone badly wrong because of Trojan Horse. None refused. They wanted to purge the damage to the reputation of Birmingham's education system. And they all asked, 'What took you so long to get here?' In other words, why had the Department for Education ignored all the warning signs that we now call 'Trojan-type behaviours' over many years?

Ministers took some convincing that the solution to most of the problems identified were already on the doorstep in Birmingham. Their instincts were to invite national academy chains to take over this group of rudderless schools. And in the case of the Ark multi-academy trust, already established in the city, this worked out well. It adopted Golden Hillock secondary and Oldknow junior (renamed as Ark Boulton and Ark Victoria respectively). For the other schools, local solutions were found. As a result of exceptional leadership, most of these schools – whether in local or national trusts – have since thrived. It is important to state that many Birmingham City Council-maintained schools that had managed to avoid

serious Trojan incursions into their governing bodies continued to provide high-quality education in spite of the turbulence that surrounded them.

The full weight of what had become a national education crisis was felt most acutely in Birmingham's east end. The mood was febrile in summer 2014. Cab drivers lectured me on the calumny that Michael Gove had visited on Park View and Golden Hillock schools once they knew my destination from New Street station. It was a hot summer. The Intifada was raging in the Gaza Strip and Palestinian flags were on display along the Alum Rock Road. The sense of injustice locally and internationally towards Muslims found voice across the community.

Colleagues at the Department for Education in London were worried, needlessly, about my safety in the city. Their understanding had been shaped by the creation of a narrative with incendiary ingredients: the flagship academy programme had apparently been hijacked and become an incubator for Islamist extremist behaviour. This fed Gove's worst imaginings. Of course, there was anger and confusion in abundance and intense curiosity about what was going to happen to the local schools that had been plummeted into special measures. There were hostile, shouty meetings. There was despair and suspicion in equal measure from everyone involved. Some school staff requested meetings in neutral venues at night and passed information containing school documents to me literally under the table. They feared that once the investigation into Trojan Horse was over and the Department for Education left town, there would be retribution and the termination of careers.

Events were chaotic, with governors locked out of one school by senior leaders as the summer term ended. One parent-governor of two secondary school-aged children caught up in Trojan Horse told me, in tears, that when he was at school in Birmingham, he was informed by the careers teacher that his future would consist of 'driving cabs or cooking kebabs'. Now, all those years later, it looked like a new generation of the community, including his own children, was being failed by that very same school.

Yet, under the circumstances, on a personal level, the reception I received was always polite and very reasonable. Hospitality was invariably offered and accepted. Trust was at a premium. Events over summer 2014 continued to destabilise until new leadership was installed in the academy trusts and schools for the autumn term. And, always, the invitation was

to come and talk things through in the homes of local families, mosques and cafes, with everyone having a view on how to sort things out.

In autumn 2014, work continued at the top level of the Department for Education, with Sir Mike Tomlinson, former Her Majesty's Chief Inspector, appointed as education commissioner by the secretary of state with the remit of getting the city's education back on track. I was appointed as his deputy and embedded in the council's education offices. An education improvement plan was needed to get the basic elements of the council's duties back in good working order. They included school improvement, safeguarding and governance. Communications with schools were broken and needed to be restored. By January 2015, the improvement plan had been approved by the secretary of state for education and the journey to rebuild relationships and trust had begun.

My move from the Department for Education to the city council was seamless in that, broadly, I was working with the same people as the recovery plans gained momentum. I wasn't 'changing sides', as my loyalty lay with the children and families in the city, not the infrastructure – whether in Whitehall or Birmingham. At school level, exactly as foretold by the city's most successful education leader, Sir Tim Brighouse, the real deals were sealed in pubs or curry houses in the evening. The Birmingham education community rightly expects total commitment from its leaders and that involves 24/7 engagement far from the council building and its civic formalities.

Being director of education in Birmingham is an all-consuming job, with around 450 state schools and roughly 205,000 pupils to oversee. The post-Trojan Horse improvement plan had staunched the immediate damage found by the Clarke and Kershaw investigations (see Timeline). However, as I advised Ofsted and the Department for Education in 2015, the biggest risk sector was then to be found within the city's independent schools, which ranged from King Edward's School (founded in 1552 with a civic roll of honour amongst its alumni) through to start-up schools in the east end that could not pass the most basic of safeguarding tests.

At the same time, the number of families resorting to elective home education was increasing rapidly, partly as a result of displacement when Trojan Horse activities stopped in state schools. Families were persuaded that a better, more Islamic education was on offer in these backstreet operations. A number of them were educating children illegally, never having registered with the Department for Education. Ofsted created a

specialist team of inspectors to investigate independent schools where risk was evident, and I joined them on one visit. Everything about this 'school' was appalling. The thirty children sat passively in tiny classrooms receiving poor teaching and were making no progress. The premises were unsafe on every level. The lead inspector warned the proprietor that she was running a school unlawfully and it would be reported to the Department for Education. I informed her that fire safety breaches, insanitary conditions and rodent infection were all major issues that would be reported immediately to the relevant authorities. The real tragedy was that cash-poor families had been conned into paying fees for a substandard education in the name of their faith, whilst places were available in a good community school a few hundred metres away. The proprietor closed the 'school' a few days later.

2015 – turning the corner

By 2015, things were starting to fall into place. One feature of Trojan Horse had been the pressure to narrow the curriculum and remove or reduce subjects such as sex education, mixed physical education, citizenship, music and the humanities. In its revived leadership role, Birmingham's cabinet member for children's services, Brigid Jones, and for inclusion and community safety, James McKay, signed the Birmingham Curriculum Statement in September 2015. It stated unequivocally that 'ALL children in Birmingham will experience a broad and balanced curriculum enabling them to grow and learn in an environment without prejudice or inequality' (Birmingham City Council, 2015, p. 1). It was explicit about the place of arts, physical activities, music and social, moral, spiritual and cultural education.

This simple statement, underpinned by a raft of educational legislation, was a crucial ingredient that affirmed Birmingham City Council's moral authority in education. It has been used extensively by head teachers and governing bodies as the touchstone for curriculum planning. It was reissued in 2019 to bring it up to date with legislation and to ensure that it was fit for purpose with the advent of compulsory relationships, health and sex education in all schools in England from 2020 (Birmingham City Council, 2019). The Birmingham Curriculum Statement was subsequently recognised as an example of good practice by the Department for

Education. Moving from national opprobrium to approbation in a year demonstrated how well Birmingham City Council was motoring once more. In August 2016, the secretary of state for education, Nicky Morgan, stood down the commissioner because solid progress was evident in the outcomes of the improvement plan. This was the beginning of the recovery journey that continues today.

At the University of Birmingham, a number of the authors now share their experiences with master's students in education leadership. Seminars led by Herminder Channa, Sajid Gulzar and Bev Mabey have been well received because of their authenticity and impact. These leaders know how to turn around schools in the city by dropping anchor in the community, building relational trust and then turning up the school improvement repertoire. Prior to working with the university, they had not been asked to write down their leadership journeys. It was a natural next step to bring everything together in this book. It has made me reflect on how few of our school leaders capture their contributions and pass them on to their peers and the next generation of leaders. We are doing that now constantly at the university's Education Leadership Academy.[2]

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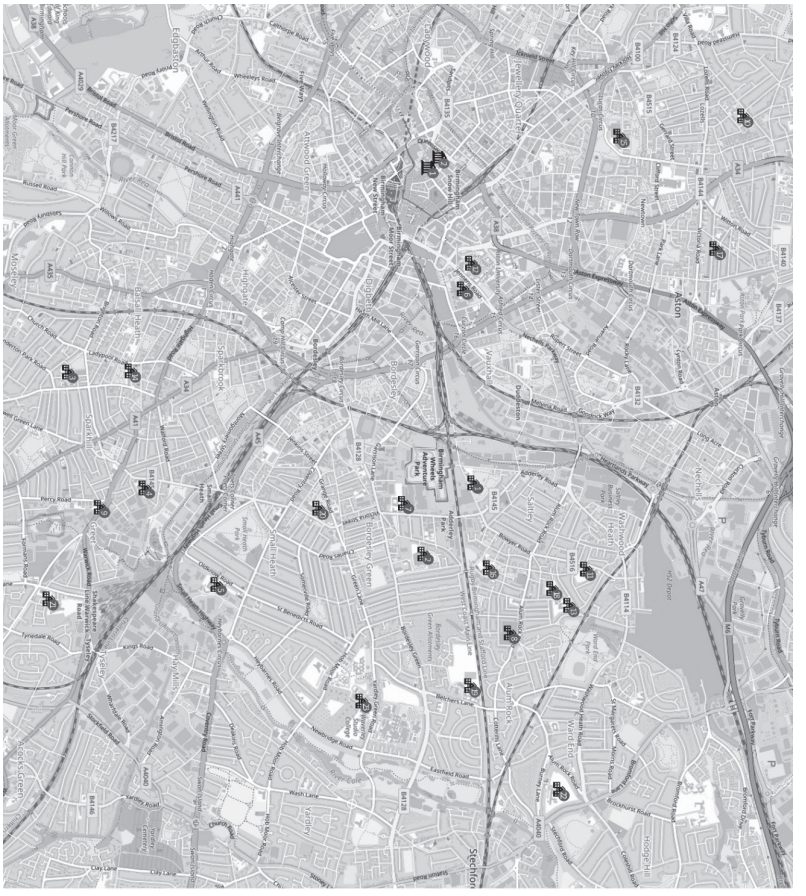
2 See https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/schools/education/ela/index.aspx.

Trojan Horse timeline

November 2013	Trojan Horse letter sent to the leader of Birmingham City Council.
February 2014	Reports of the Trojan Horse letter being sent to fourteen schools in the city.
March 2014	First major media reports of the letter. Ofsted mobilised to undertake twenty-one inspections by Secretary of State for Education Michael Gove.
April 2014	Outstanding flagship academy Park View judged to require special measures by Ofsted, plus three more academies and one maintained school.
April/May 2014	Department for Education/Education Funding Agency investigations into what has gone wrong in the academies.
April 2014	Gove appoints former Metropolitan Police Head of Counter-Terrorism Peter Clarke to investigate what happened.
April 2014	Birmingham City Council appoints Northern Education Associates (Managing Director Ian Kershaw) to conduct its own investigation into what happened.
April 2014	The secretary of state for communities and local government and Birmingham City Council ask Sir Bob Kerslake to carry out an independent review of the governance and organisational capabilities of the council.
July 2014	Clarke reports to the secretary of state and Kershaw reports to Birmingham City Council. Many parallels between their findings.
July 2014	Park View Educational Trust members resign.

August 2014	Sir Mike Tomlinson appointed as education commissioner for Birmingham by new Secretary of State Nicky Morgan. Colin Diamond is appointed as his deputy. Birmingham City Council in formal Department for Education intervention.
January 2015	Birmingham City Council's education improvement plan approved by the secretary of state.
August 2016	Department for Education intervention ends and the education commissioner is stood down in view of the progress made. Trojan Horse activity had ceased following the implementation of the education improvement plan and national changes to the governance of academies and free schools made by the Department for Education.
August 2016	Trojan-type activities move from undermining schools from within to undermining them from the outside.
2019	Resurgence of Trojan-type activities as the Department for Education plans to introduce compulsory health, sex and relationships education in all English schools.

Map – key schools



SCHOOLS

1. Adderley Primary School
2. Al-Hijrah School
3. Anderton Park Primary School
4. Ark Boulton Academy (formerly Golden Hillock)
5. Ark Victoria Academy, (formerly Oldknow Junior)
6. Birmingham Ormiston Academy
7. Bordesley Green Girls' School & Sixth Form
8. Eden Boys Leadership Academy
9. Greet Primary School
10. Heathfield Primary School
11. Highfield Junior & Infant School
12. Matthew Boulton College
13. Nansen Primary School
14. Nelson Mandela School
15. Nishkam High School
16. Parkfield Community School
17. Prince Albert Junior & Infant School
18. Rockwood Academy (formerly Park View)
19. Saltley Academy
20. Small Heath Leadership Academy
21. The Olive School
22. Washwood Heath Academy
23. Waverley School

BUILDINGS

1. Birmingham Council House
2. National Governance Association

Birmingham – fact check

Birmingham has a population of 1.14 million (2018) projected to grow to 1.31 million in 2039. It is the most deprived local authority area in the West Midlands and the sixth most deprived in England. 41% of the population and 50% of the children live in the most deprived decile. Over one in three children live in poverty, with Ladywood constituency having the third highest level in the UK and Sutton Coldfield the fifteenth lowest (Birmingham City Council, 2018). Birmingham is 'super diverse' with people from nearly 200 countries having made their homes in the city. The 2011 Census revealed that 42.1% of the population classify themselves as within an ethnic group other than White British (compared to 30% in 2001). Over 60% of the under-18 population was from a non-White British background in 2011, compared to 44% in 2001. The largest ethnic groups of young people are Asian (with British Pakistanis being the largest Asian group), White British, Black and mixed race.

There were approximately 450 state schools and approximately fifty independent schools in the city in 2018. Precise numbers cannot be provided as the number and status of state schools now changes within the school year and independent schools are opening and closing frequently. There were 205,867 pupils in schools with 82% of state schools rated good or outstanding in 2017.

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And, finally, my family for their great support along the way since Birmingham loomed large in our lives.

Contents

List of contributors

Rosemary Campbell-Stephens, MBE

Rosemary Campbell-Stephens is a veteran educator who grew up, went to school and trained as a teacher of English in Birmingham. Rosemary is a visiting fellow at the Institute of Education, University College London and an associate at Leeds Beckett University. Her leadership work as part of the London Challenge (2003–2011) was in developing a programme focused on increasing the numbers of Black and Asian leaders in London schools. Investing in Diversity became the catalyst for subsequent programmes in the schools sector across the UK. Rosemary is an anti-racist practitioner who frames her work through a critical race lens. She provides bespoke leadership training and coaching internationally and is a sought-after keynote speaker in her areas of expertise and passion, namely anti-racist decolonising practice. In 2016, Rosemary was awarded an MBE for thirty-five years' service to education in the UK. She was honoured to accept the award as recognition by peers of her activism in education. As a junior elder, she embraces the label 'disruptor' and is rarely in her lane. Her latest book, *Educational Leadership and the Global Majority: Decolonising Narratives*, was published in 2021. Rosemary lives with her husband in Jamaica.

Herminder Channa, OBE JP

Herminder Channa is currently an executive principal at Ark Schools, a lead Ofsted inspector, a local leader of education and a magistrate. Herminder chose teaching as a profession as she is driven by the idea that access to an excellent standard of education is a birth right for all. Herminder, who was born locally in Sandwell, helped to found Nishkam High School in Birmingham in 2012, one of the first Sikh multi-faith free schools. Under her headship it gained Ofsted outstanding status in just eighteen months. Herminder left Nishkam for Ark because she wanted to work with children in disadvantaged areas and where she felt she could make a difference. In 2015, she took over Golden Hillock School, one of the schools at the centre of the Trojan Horse affair, which had seen a decade of underachievement, re-brokerage to two different academy chains, high levels of supply staff and judged as an inadequate academy

by Ofsted, twice. In the Queen's Birthday Honours List 2020, Herminder was awarded an OBE for her services to education. When asked how she transformed the school she replied, 'We did it with love!' Herminder is proud to serve her community as a magistrate.

Professor Colin Diamond, CBE

Colin Diamond has worked in education leadership roles for forty years. He started his career in inner-London secondary schools as a humanities teacher and soon began to specialise in working with pupils with additional needs. He became a local authority adviser for special educational needs and disabilities and an associate head teacher in Hackney and Tower Hamlets. His career then took him to jobs in North East England and then the South West, where he has lived for over twenty years. En route he trained as an Ofsted inspector. He became director of education in North Somerset when it was in intervention from the then Department for Education and Employment and led its improvement journey until it gained outstanding judgements from Ofsted. He then worked for the Department for Education as director for children and learners based in Bristol and Plymouth, holding seventeen local authorities to account for their value-added performance. In 2011, he returned to the Department for Education in London to head up the academies and free schools education adviser team.

In 2014, he was asked by the Department for Education to lead the team that went to Birmingham in the wake of the Trojan Horse crisis. This led, in the short term, to the re-brokerage of the academies damaged by Trojan Horse. In the longer term, it led to his appointment as deputy education commissioner for Birmingham. In 2015, he was appointed as executive director of education in Birmingham to deliver the Education Improvement Plan signed off by the secretary of state.

In September 2018, Colin took up the new post of professor of educational leadership at the University of Birmingham. His main tasks are to create greater engagement between schools and the university and to establish an Education Leadership Academy. He is driven by the power of education to transform the lives of working-class children and wants them all to have the same opportunities that he was lucky enough to get from going to brilliant schools in Liverpool.

He is a member of the Liverpool Education Improvement Board and chair of the West Somerset Opportunity Area. In 2018, he received a CBE in the Queen's Birthday Honours for services to education.

He is a lifelong supporter of Liverpool Football Club and Anfield is his spiritual home. He used to play in blues and rock and roll bands until Birmingham took over his life.

Dr Reza Gholami

Reza Gholami is a reader in sociology of education at the University of Birmingham where he is also the deputy director of the Centre for Research in Race and Education. His research interests are Islamophobia and racism in education as well as community-based forms of education. He is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts and an honorary senior research associate at the University College London Institute of Education. He earned his Doctor of Philosophy in the Department of Anthropology and Sociology at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, where he also conducted postdoctoral research funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council, working with diverse youth and community organisations in London to improve educational and citizenship outcomes for young people. Currently, he is leading an Economic and Social Research Council-funded project working with non-formal educators in Birmingham to develop innovative educational materials to foster inter-communal learning. Reza is the author of numerous books and articles in his field, including co-editing the book *Education and Extremisms: Re-Thinking Liberal Pedagogies in the Contemporary World* (2018). He regularly appears in national and international media, including featuring in the BBC Radio 4 documentary *The Corrections* about the Birmingham Trojan Horse affair.

Sajid Gulzar, OBE

Sajid Gulzar is the founding CEO of the Prince Albert Community Trust. The trust currently consists of five primary schools and a new secondary free school which opened in September 2021. Sajid has led the trust in operating a 'turn-around' model, taking on failing schools and improving them markedly. He is passionate about improving the life chances of children, especially those raised in challenging circumstances. Sajid was born, raised and educated in Birmingham. The son of first-generation immigrants from Pakistani-administered Kashmir, he was taught the

value and life-changing impact of education from a young age. He is a national leader of education, has previously inspected for Ofsted and has worked internationally on behalf of the National Association of Special Educational Needs and Cambridge Education. Sajid is a guest lecturer at the University of Birmingham's Education Leadership Academy and has served as a regional schools commissioner on the West Midlands advisory head teacher board since 2017. In June 2019, Sajid was awarded an OBE for services to education.

Kamal Hanif, OBE

Kamal Hanif is a former CEO of the Waverley Education Foundation Trust. He has successfully engaged in various roles in education since 1992, supported the Department for Education to resolve issues around schools in the city during the Trojan Horse episode and was on the Kershaw review group. As a national leader of education, Kamal has supported a number of schools. He is also a trustee of the charity SINCE 9/11 and sits on various working groups, such as the Department for Education's Due Diligence and Countering Extremism Group, and was on the Association of School and College Leader Council. Kamal has been involved as a Stonewall School Champion and training partner. In his spare time, Kamal enjoys restoration projects, gardening and swimming.

Dr Karamat Iqbal

Karamat Iqbal has been associated with Birmingham since his father came to the city in 1957. He himself arrived in 1970. Karamat received his upper secondary, college and university education locally. He began his public sector work (as an informal educator and then secondary school teacher) serving the diverse local communities. He spent fifteen years in Wolverhampton, first as a community relations officer, challenging racism and promoting multicultural education. This was followed by his role as deputy director of the Equal Rights and Opportunities Management Unit and later as head of the supported learning department at Bilston Community College. After this, Karamat spent ten years as a schools adviser in Birmingham. Since 2000, as a director of the Forward Partnership consultancy, he has undertaken numerous consultancies in education and diversity. His clients have included local and national organisations in the public, private and third sectors, including several government departments. He is the author of *Dear Birmingham: A Conversation with My Hometown* (2013), *A Biography of the Word*

'Paki' (2017); *British Pakistani Boys, Education and the Role of Religion: In the Land of the Trojan Horse* (2018) and *Educating Brummies* (edited with Tahir Abbas; forthcoming). He blogs on education and diversity, including for Optimus Education.

Emma Knights, OBE

Emma Knights is the chief executive of the National Governance Association (NGA), which provides guidance, advice, research and professional development for school governors, trustees and governance professionals in state schools in England. NGA's charitable objective is to improve the educational welfare of pupils by improving governance. Emma has particular interests in vision, culture and strategy; accountability; stakeholder engagement; disadvantage; ethical leadership; diversity, inclusion and staff development. She is the author of the NGA's *The Chair's Handbook* (now in its eighth edition) and edited the association's magazine *Governing Matters* for seven years. She is co-author of many other publications on welfare rights, child support, legal services, early years and, of course, most recently, governance, including *MATs Moving Forward: The Power of Governance* (2021). Prior to joining the NGA in 2010, Emma was joint CEO of the Daycare Trust, and before that, worked in a number of roles in the voluntary sector, including the Child Poverty Action Group and Citizens Advice, and then at the Local Government Association and the Legal Services Commission. She was a governor at a secondary school in Warwickshire for eight years, and earlier set up an after-school club at her children's middle school in Norfolk. Emma was awarded an OBE in the New Year Honours List in 2018 for services to education.

Dr Bev Mabey

Bev Mabey has worked in education for over thirty years and as a head teacher in Birmingham for over ten years. She led the academisation of Washwood Heath Technology College in 2013. Bev has been chair of the Secondary Heads Forum for the city. She was chair of the city/police panels and vice-chair of the east local policing unit independent advisory group. She was awarded an honorary doctorate by Aston University in 2018 in recognition of her contribution to education in Birmingham.

Adrian Packer, CBE

Adrian Packer was appointed executive principal of Park View Educational Trust (now CORE Education Trust) in 2014. He was also principal of Park View School (now Rockwood Academy) at that time. He is currently CEO of CORE Education Trust. Prior to this, in 2012, Adrian was the founding principal of Everton Alternative Provision Free School and Sixth Form College, the first free school set up by a Premier League football club. From 2010, Adrian was part of the founding team of Birmingham Ormiston Academy, an arts academy partnered with the BRIT School. Adrian was a senior artistic director at the BRIT School for twelve years and taught some of the country's highest profile, award-winning talent in the music, theatre, film and television industries during that time. He is currently a member of the Liverpool Institute for Performing Arts (LIPA) Council and director and governor of the LIPA sixth form. Adrian is an independent non-executive director of ukactive and chair of the ukactive Kids Council. In 2018, Adrian conceived the Echo Eternal project, a commemorative arts participation project which brings together groups of schools with different characteristics and uses Holocaust survivor testimony to inspire community integration and empathy. In 2019, he was awarded a Points of Light award from the prime minister for this work. In March 2021, Adrian became a board-appointed Lawn Tennis Association councillor.

Sir Mufti Hamid Patel, CBE

Mufti Hamid Patel has been the chief executive of Star Academies since its inception. The multi-academy trust currently comprises thirty schools and was named as the top-performing trust in the Department for Education performance tables published in 2018 and 2019.

Previously, Hamid was executive principal of the trust's founder school, Tauheedul Islam Girls' High School (TIGHS), which has consistently secured the best Progress 8 score in the country since this measure was introduced. TIGHS, and thirteen of the Star Academies schools, have been judged by Ofsted to be outstanding.

Hamid's knowledge and experience of the education sector is extensive. He was formerly the director of strategy, change and external relations at Bradford College, leading on one of the most ambitious change programmes in further education. As a national leader of education, Hamid has contributed to the development of strategies and programmes as

diverse as teacher training, leadership development, community cohesion, curriculum reform and social mobility. He is committed to the development of a strong, world-class academy sector.

Through his membership of several Department for Education expert groups, Hamid influences national policy development. As chair of the Grants and Evaluation Committee of the Youth Endowment Fund, he leads a team of experts on the evaluation of initiatives to prevent serious youth crime and violence. He also serves as a member of the Ofsted board and is a board member of the Confederation of School Trusts.

Hamid's uncompromising vision is to ensure the success of disadvantaged pupils. His commitment to securing excellent academic outcomes through the provision of a knowledge-rich curriculum is mirrored by his drive to nurture the philanthropic leaders of tomorrow.

Hamid's contribution to education was recognised by the award of a CBE in 2015 and knighthood in 2021.

Dr Thomas Perry

Thomas Perry is an assistant professor in the Department of Education Studies at the University of Warwick. He is a former lecturer in education at the University of Birmingham, programme leader for educational leadership masters programmes, and head of research and knowledge transfer in the Department for Teacher Education. Tom's research and teaching are focused on supporting students, school leaders and policy-makers to improve education through research- and evidence-informed policy and practice. He has specialist methodological expertise relating to research synthesis and review, quantitative methods and secondary data analysis, educational evaluation and improvement, social research methodology, and knowledge mobilisation, exchange and use. His work has been cited widely and internationally, including a UK Parliament Briefing, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the Young Lives international study, FFT Education Datalab, and has featured in national news media, including the *TES*, *Schools Week* and BBC Radio 4.

Professor Mick Waters

Mick Waters has a deep affection for Birmingham and its schools, having worked for the city around the turn of the millennium as what was, at the time, called chief adviser for schools. He has a wide experience of

the world of education in schools, higher education and local authorities. Mick has also worked with central government on curriculum development and supported governments in different parts of the world on aspects of teaching and leadership. He has written and contributed to many books and is much in demand as a conference speaker. He enjoys spending time in classrooms, asking adults to look at learning through the eyes of the pupil.

Joy Warmington, MBE

Joy Warmington began her leadership career over thirty years ago designing groundbreaking learning programmes for marginalised communities. Then came senior leadership roles in education, local authority and civil society, including nineteen years as the CEO of brap, one of the UK's most progressive equality and human rights charities. brap seeks to rethink our approach to equality and progress our learning, use of evidence and innovation to make sustainable change. brap's impressive work portfolio covers research, evaluation, organisational and individual development, and community support. Joy's insights into making equity a reality are sought after by organisations seeking real solutions to exclusion and inequity. In 2019, Joy was awarded an MBE and named one of fifty 'Women to Watch' by Cranfield University. As a lifelong learner and recent graduate in process work – a psycho-social method to democratise spaces and address conflict – Joy brings her unerring curiosity and appetite for change and creativity to her work.

Azita Zohhadi

Azita Zohhadi was born and brought up in west London and graduated from Kingston University, Surrey in 1989. Her first teaching post was in Kingston upon Thames at a small one-form entry primary school where she became the literacy lead in her newly qualified teacher year. In her desire to understand education at all levels she became the staff governor in that same year. In 1990, she became the deputy head of a school in Hammersmith and Fulham where she later took on her first headship. In 2008, Azita moved to Birmingham, remaining as the head teacher of Nelson Mandela School until November 2021, where she sadly finished her final months of headship away from her school community due to self-isolating because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Since leaving Nelson Mandela School, Azita has worked as a consultant developing local provision for special educational needs and disabilities across Birmingham's

primary schools, contributed to the Durham Commission's second report on creativity and education, and worked as an education adviser with the Rosie Kay Dance Company and Royal Shakespeare Company.

Introduction

Colin Diamond

The purpose of the book is to share the learning that has arisen from the experience of the Trojan Horse affair and extract the implications for school leadership, governance and education policy. It is not a post-mortem on Trojan Horse, but it does seek to contextualise the major events that occurred in 2014–2015 in order to understand the school leadership journeys in some of the schools most affected.

The majority of contributors to this book have first-hand experience of living and working in Birmingham for many years. Four of the authors picked up the pieces at schools that were in bad shape by summer 2014 and led the improvement journeys in unique circumstances. Two of the authors grew up in Birmingham as members of the British Pakistani community and went on to become chief executives of multi-academy trusts, honoured by Her Majesty for their contributions to education. Others have worked across the community and have been embedded in the rich, complex inner-city cultures, which enabled them to support school leaders and governors authentically. The book is about their authentic experiences and perspectives. Colleagues from the University of Birmingham School of Education have contributed critical analysis of the educational performance of children in the city and the complex intersectional social environment in which these events took place.

The book does not examine forensically all of the schools caught up in Trojan Horse or those on the periphery. Neither does it dwell on the actions of protagonists named in the Clarke (2014) and Kershaw (2014) reports. And nor does it attempt to record a comprehensive history of events. Rather, it seeks to learn from history, so the catalogue of events that led to Trojan Horse and were acted out in high drama in 2014 are never repeated.

Trojan Horse remains a hotly contested narrative with entrenched positions on both sides of the debate. As a BBC journalist commented recently, 'reading the Guardian and Telegraph articles, you would think that you were reading different stories' (Fidgen, 2020). For some, it will remain a

hoax based on an anonymous letter which fuelled a witch-hunt against Muslim school governors in Birmingham. For them, Secretary of State for Education Michael Gove weaponised the letter and unleashed the power of the state against a group of governors who had been attempting to improve the life chances of inner-city Muslim children over many years. Her Majesty's Chief Inspector Sir Michael Wilshaw is forever cast in the role of attack dog because he did a U-turn on Park View. In 2012, he had lavished praise on the secondary school, celebrating its success and outstanding judgement from his own inspectors. In 2014, with nothing fundamental having changed in respect of leadership or governance, his inspectors produced a damning report that pitched Park View into requiring special measures.

For others in Birmingham, the arrival of Ofsted inspectors and the follow-up investigations by the Department for Education and Education Funding Agency marked liberation from the suffocating control and coercion that had gradually extended over a number of schools – and latterly academies – in the city. As one primary school head teacher told me, 'I can breathe again.' It was an open secret in Birmingham that school leaders had been undermined by factions within their governing bodies for years. The tactics were unsavoury and went largely unchallenged by the city council, as its own report confirmed (Kershaw, 2014). Unofficial meetings were held between civil servants and heads, senior staff, school administrators and governors to share the experience of working in these schools. Documents were passed to officials under the table. Witnesses to the Clarke and Kershaw inquiries were guaranteed anonymity because many involved with the schools were fearful for their futures. The biggest anxiety was that things would be allowed to return to 'normal' and nothing would really change for the future.

The reality is that there is no single narrative or 'truth', as the contributors to this book explain. There are multiple, overlapping perspectives that jigsaw together into a three-dimensional picture. However, there are themes that have emerged from the experience which are examined by the authors from their different perspectives, and they will be familiar to all those in education leadership roles in inner cities:

- The challenge of 'getting it right' – that is, getting the balance right in schools that serve communities in complex, urban, multi-faith and multiracial societies.

- How to work with socially conservative religious cultures and faiths alongside more established cultural norms without imposing what were termed 'fundamental British values' by the government in response to Trojan Horse.
- Socio-economic status remaining the biggest determinant of school outcomes but with the overlay of what that means in different sections of a city's community – factoring in the performance of White working-class children in relation to children from the British Mirpuri or Somali communities and how this should influence education policy.
- Local politics, with councils dominated by White elected members and chief officers who are uncertain about how to create policy for fear of being seen to be racist.

In summary, when all the intersectional elements within a city's education community align, they create learning power with the heat of phosphorus; when they clash, that same heat can be destructive and leave lasting damage.

More broadly, Trojan Horse threw into sharp relief:

- The relationship between the state, education and faith.
- Importance of place and social capital versus the de facto and de jure nationalisation of the English education system since the Academies Act 2010.
- The fragility of the academies and free schools programmes.
- How a neoliberal government opportunistically used the less than edifying behaviours of some governors in Birmingham to create an Islamophobic narrative for its own ends. Let us be clear: Trojan Horse was never about Islamic extremism, as Baroness Warsi (2017) expressed so succinctly in *The Enemy Within: A Tale of Muslim Britain*.

Part I of the book sets the scene with a combination of narrated events, first-hand accounts of growing up and working in education in Birmingham, and data harvested from the Office for National Statistics on what was really happening in schools during those years. The lessons for governance at local and national level are explored. Part II contains six values-driven education leadership journeys that have enabled pupils to

achieve against the odds in the east end of Birmingham. Each chapter has a list of 'takeaways' for school leaders. Part III pulls things together with lessons for school leaders and education policy-makers in complex urban environments. It also contains perspectives on the protests against teaching lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer awareness in primary schools, the media coverage about Trojan Horse and the impact it had on career progression for Asian school leaders. It concludes that urban education leadership is a neglected area of development and research, long abandoned by English education policy. However, there are some fine examples of community-based, innovative practice that yield excellent results. The postscript brings things up to date as the pandemic, the Black Lives Matters movement and the climate crisis all impact on urban school leadership with unrelenting pressure and growing impact.

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Part I

Setting the Scene: What Took You So Long to Get Here?

Chapter 1

Shame visited on Birmingham: publication of the Trojan Horse letter and its consequences, 2013–2014

Colin Diamond

Introduction

Chapter 1 takes us through an overview of events in 2014 which cast a long shadow over Birmingham's reputation. They influenced the direction of national education policy with the introduction of the duty to promote fundamental British values in all English schools (DfE, 2014) and the arrival of the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015. This new legislation made Prevent a legal duty in schools (and all public authorities). Later, in 2015, Tahir Alam became the first person to be banned from governance of any schools in England under powers set out in the Education and Skills Act 2008. The direction stated that he had engaged in 'Conduct aimed at undermining the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs' (Taylor, 2015).

The combination of new duties on schools and the use of longstanding regulations firmed up the government's position towards what it perceived to be the threat of extremism from principally Muslim sectors of the community. The impact in English inner cities has largely been compliance teaching of the Prevent duty and the flowering of Union Jack displays in schools to ensure they pass muster with Ofsted. The real risk was not stopping the tide of extremism. In fact, swathes of the Muslim community became alienated because they considered that the government response to Trojan Horse had been disproportionate (Hughes, 2014).

This chapter includes two case studies that exemplify the real nature of Trojan Horse-style subversion of school leaders in the name of what a

few governors believed was right for young Muslims educated in English schools. Equally, they reveal that such events had nothing to do with Islamism, the gateway drug to the Caliphate or any other conspiracy theory fantasy. Adderley Primary School suffered from interference for many years, which diverted its leaders from improving the life chances of its mainly Muslim pupils. Al-Madinah School, a Muslim free school in Derby, was all but destroyed by such activities within a matter of months. It is sad to reflect on how much positive energy, purpose and commitment to the local communities served by both schools was undermined by governors from inside their own schools.

2014 – shame visited on Birmingham

Publication of the Trojan Horse letter in February 2014 led to a chain of events that unfolded rapidly and generated huge turbulence in Birmingham's schools. In March, at the request of Secretary of State for Education Michael Gove, Ofsted inspected twenty-one schools in the city and catapulted two showcase academies (Park View and Oldknow) from outstanding judgements to requiring special measures. The subsequent Education Funding Agency investigations, carried out by teams of education advisers and officials, exposed multiple breaches in academy trusts' funding agreements (the legal contract between the secretary of state and the academies) and equally serious breaches of the Independent Schools Standards regulations.[1] In 2013, the Al-Madinah free school in Derby, which had opened in 2012, was found to have a similar set of failings in its governance following whistle-blowing and follow-up inspections. The academy and free school programmes were in crisis due to a volatile combination of significant failings at a local level and the perception within the Department for Education that these events were linked to Islamic extremism.

Two major investigations were commissioned into Trojan Horse. Michael Gove asked Peter Clarke, the former head of counter-terrorism at the Metropolitan Police, to lead his investigation. Birmingham City Council wanted to collaborate with the Department for Education and conduct one joint inquiry. That approach was rejected by the Department for Education, so Birmingham City Council commissioned Northern Education,

1 See https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2014/3283/schedule/made.

chaired by the former secretary of state for education Baroness Morris of Yardley, with chief executive officer Les Walton, former head of the Education Funding Agency, to lead its investigation. Ian Kershaw, managing director of Northern Education, ran the team and wrote the report.

The two investigations ran in parallel over early summer 2014 and reported within weeks of each other in July. Both were required to move quickly as the Trojan Horse narrative had taken off in the media with extensive coverage in the newspapers and on TV. For the Department for Education, and Gove in particular, this was an existential crisis. He had authored *Celsius 7/7*, published in 2006, which set out his views on the 'hellish violence and oppression' of Islamism (p. vii) and compared it with Nazism and Communism. It now appeared to Gove that a version of Islamism was infiltrating schools in Birmingham. It was a short stop from that assumption to appointing a former head of counter-terrorism to find out what was happening as quickly as possible. For Birmingham City Council, the Trojan Horse letter stated that the subversive activities had been 'tried and tested' and were well established – in effect, it had begun before the Academies Act 2010 began to fragment the English school system. The council needed to find out quickly why there had been a serious breakdown in its custodianship of local schools and how to remedy things.

Clarke and Kershaw did cooperate with each other as far as was practicable and shared some witness interviews. There are different emphases and somewhat different conclusions to the reports, but both stated that the intimidation and undermining of school heads and governors was a reality. Gove never got the opportunity to follow up on the findings of the Clarke report himself as he was demoted to become chief whip by David Cameron on 15 July 2014 and was replaced by Nicky Morgan. She described to the House of Commons Clarke's findings and how they were to be followed up (DfE and Morgan, 2014). It was evident that Trojan Horse was symptomatic of deep historic failings in Birmingham City Council's discharge of its duties and powers in relation to schools.

Morgan set in train a formal intervention, appointing Sir Mike Tomlinson, former Her Majesty's Chief Inspector (HMCI) at Ofsted, as education commissioner. Birmingham City Council was required to produce an improvement plan which addressed all the recommendations of the Clarke report. The plan incorporated the recommendations of both Clarke and Kershaw's reports and was approved by the secretary of state

for education in January 2015. The core of the plan addressed what was termed 'getting the basics back in place'. Major gaps in the council's discharge of its duties on safeguarding, governance and school improvement needed remedying. Relationships and communication with schools needed rebuilding. Above all – but not written down – the city's education system needed to believe in itself once more.

On the same day that Gove was removed from his role as secretary of state, Tahir Alam resigned as chair of Park View Educational Trust. Alam had attended Park View School as a pupil, became a governor and eventually chair of governors. By 2012, Park View had risen from requiring special measures to outstanding in Ofsted's judgement. Its GCSE examination results and pupil progress were stellar under the leadership of head teacher Lindsey Clarke. In 2012, it had featured in an article in *The Guardian* (Vasagar, 2012) with praise lavished on its leadership by the newly appointed HMCI, Sir Michael Wilshaw, during an informal visit. Two years later, Wilshaw's inspectors had judged Park View inadequate following a full inspection, and once again it was facing special measures.

A host of safeguarding, leadership and governance issues were identified with the overall message that Park View was not preparing its pupils for life in modern Britain. The Ofsted inspection was followed up by an investigation by a joint Department for Education and Education Funding Agency team which found multiple breaches in the funding agreements. This picture was compounded by the headline conclusions from the Clarke report in early July which described an 'aggressive Islamist ethos' afoot in some schools in the city (Clarke, 2014, p. 96). In the light of the reports from Ofsted, the Education Funding Agency and Clarke, new members of the trust were installed following negotiations between Tahir Alam and the Department for Education. Alam, as the Clarke report illustrates, had been at the centre of a large network in Birmingham and had been an influential player in many of the schools damaged by Trojan Horse activities.

Birmingham has a proud education history. The leadership of Sir Tim Brighouse, chief education officer at Birmingham City Council (1993–2002) and his team, had created a superb local education authority in which pupils' achievement was rising against the social odds. It had embraced multiculturalism and worked with the grain of the local, diverse communities (see Diamond, 2020, p. 123). It was recognised internationally for its innovation and empowerment of school leaders. During my

years working for Birmingham City Council, visiting schools every week, Brighouse's name was mentioned regularly and his contribution is still revered today. It was also said to me by many head teachers that no chief officer from the city had visited their school since Brighouse's tenure. That sadly illustrated the gap that had been allowed to grow between the city council and its schools.

'We educate Birmingham children'

I heard this said many times by head teachers back in 2014. It resonates still because of its unqualified generosity and inclusiveness at a time when Birmingham's education system was in crisis. In spite of all that was happening, head teachers' loyalty to and compassion for the children across the city shone through. They wanted to find positive ways forward after Trojan Horse had brought national shame on the city's schools and Birmingham City Council.

Trojan Horse was a damaging, scarring episode that had profound consequences for education in Birmingham. It was symptomatic of how Birmingham City Council's custodianship of its schools had deteriorated from being recognised as national best in class by Ofsted in 2002 under the leadership of Sir Tim Brighouse (Ofsted, 2002) to being placed in formal intervention by the Department for Education and requiring an education commissioner, Sir Mike Tomlinson, in 2014 (Ofsted, 2014a).

The twelve years between 2002 and 2014 had witnessed many changes in national education policy, a reduction in the power of local government and the arrival of austerity in 2009 (Smith, 2014). The combination of these developments seriously reduced the role and influence of all English local education authorities.

For many local authorities, including Birmingham, the pressures of budget reductions, the national policy emphasis on school autonomy and the challenge of poor children's social care provision resulted in a downgrading of education as a local priority. In Birmingham's case, the urgent need to improve the quality of children's social care became the number one priority when Ofsted judged it to be inadequate in the annual performance assessment (Ofsted, 2008a). The subsequent ten-year improvement journey dominated the council's focus and resources.

Diamond's book – always calm, generous and informed – reveals the issues which beset that shifting mix of diverse communities, rival faiths and the interplay of professional commitment and parental ambition – or lack of it – which is veiled under the easy heading of 'urban education'. Those who engage with it will find plenty of stimulus from these pages.

Tim Brighouse, former Commissioner for London Schools

The Birmingham Book reveals a deeper and disturbing truth which forces one to consider why it is we have failed to encourage, mentor and promote sufficient numbers of teachers of the Muslim faith to become future leaders in our British schools.

Ian Kershaw, Independent Chief Adviser to Birmingham City Council

Diamond's book is very relevant and has implications beyond Birmingham. It sheds light onto how the needs of the largest minority group in England – Muslims – are or are not being met and the reaction by authorities to alarmist levels, escalating prejudice, fear and mistrust despite it resulting in no criminal charges whatsoever.

Kausor Amin-Ali, author of *A-Z School Leadership*, founder of All Children Read, experienced Head Teacher

More than a book about what happened in Birmingham, this is a book about politics, religion, equality, tolerance and intolerance, about the politicisation of education, abuses of power at local and national level and the ability of ethical school leaders to do what needs to be done, despite enormous pressure, wherever they may be. And among many takeaways from the inspiring education leaders in this book, it is clear that 'community, community, community' will always be at the heart of all great schools.

Ian Gilbert, founder of Independent Thinking Ltd, education writer, editor of *The Working Class*

A must-read for those wishing to understand the important underlying dynamic between Muslims considering the education of their children, and the educational establishment's quest for a quality education based on British values. The contributors provide serious and authentic perspectives on the systemic issues of structural racism, Islamophobia, class and cultural imperialism.

Dr. Muhammad Mashuq Ally, Chair of Governors, Bordesley Green Girls' School and Sixth Form

A cornucopia of authentic and inspiring, hitherto untold stories from school leaders; stories of recovery that offer an alternative lens through which to view the kaleidoscope that embodied the Trojan Horse affair. Refreshing and vividly personal accounts of recovery – the existential angst that refines the compassion that inspires motivational leadership – are woven through every chapter and each one offers alternative dimensions through which schools can work relationally with communities.

Razia Butt, MBE, Isonomy Education

Amazingly well researched, Colin has collated the historical and present-day theories of school leadership from all angles. He then brings all these vividly to life though citing the lived narratives of exemplary school leaders he has worked alongside in the urban Birmingham context. He sums up what works simply as 'a combination of adaptive leadership and pragmatic interpretation of government education policy from a secure base in the community, driven by a passion for Birmingham's children'.

Meena Wood, international Edu-speaker, trainer, author and leadership coach

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