

INTEGRATED COMMUNITIES STRATEGY **GREEN PAPER**

GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION

A SUBMISSION FROM RT HON CHARLES CLARKE AND PROFESSOR LINDA WOODHEAD MBE DD

Foreword

This submission is a response to the Government consultation on the '***Integrated Communities Strategy Green Paper***¹. Our submission responds particularly to Chapter 3, 'Education and Young People' (Pages 26-34) but also addresses some other aspects of the document, mainly dealing with the place of faith organisations in the local community.

Over the past six years we have run, from Lancaster University, the 'Westminster Faith Debates'² and in June 2015 published 'A New Settlement: Religion and Belief in Schools'³ which addresses the current legal relationship between religion and schools in England, including the teaching of RE in schools, the Act of Collective Worship and the position of 'faith schools'. In December 2016 we submitted a response⁴ to the faith schools' aspects of the Government's consultation on 'Schools that work for everyone'⁵.

We have discussed these issues widely with faith organisations, teaching professionals, SACREs, OFSTED, politicians, academics, trades unions and many others and this response is based on these discussions. However it represents only our own views.

Charles Clarke
Professor Linda Woodhead

pearsonclarke@pavilion.co.uk
l.woodhead@lancaster.ac.uk

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/integrated-communities-strategy-green-paper>

² <http://faithdebates.org.uk>

³ <http://faithdebates.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/A-New-Settlement-for-Religion-and-Belief-in-schools.pdf>

⁴ <http://faithdebates.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/SUBMISSION-FINAL.pdf>

⁵ https://consult.education.gov.uk/school-frameworks/schools-that-work-for-everyone/supporting_documents/SCHOOLS%20THAT%20WORK%20FOR%20EVERYONE%20%20FINAL.PDF

Introduction

We very much welcome publication of the Integrated Communities Strategy Green Paper.

Debates about 'community cohesion' have tended to focus upon race and the position of minority ethnic groups. These important aspects have dominated the debates and actions of governments, opinion-formers and the media – national and local. For most of the time the issues around faith-based identities, the cohesion of communities with different religions, and indeed no religion at all, have tended to take second place.

So we welcome the fact that the Green Paper, following the report of Dame Louise Casey, recognises the importance of faith and relationships between faith communities in building strong and cohesive local communities.

Our overall summary is that the proposals would, if implemented, represent an important step in the right direction but that they need to go a great deal further, notably in relation to:-

Faith schools

Establishment of a nationally-determined Religious Education curriculum, to be applied in all schools

Leadership role of faiths

Establishing a structure of implementation

We strongly support the overall approach set out by both the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State in their forewords, and the assertion in the introduction that the values in this country include '*a proud history of defending people's right to practise their religion within the law*'.⁶

However the Introduction is also right to point⁷ to '*a worrying number of communities, divided along race, faith or socio economic lines*' and to the rise in recorded hate crime, of which 6,000⁸ were religious hate crimes a 368% increase since 2011/12.

⁶ Page 10

⁷ Page 11

⁸ Home Office Statistical Bulletin 17/17.

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/652136/hate-crime-1617-hosb1717.pdf

It is also right to point to school segregation and the relatively high degree of separation of pupils across schools, and to the dangers of out-of-school settings and home education which is not done well.

It is right to say that:-

*'People can be held back from integrating by cultural practices and attitudes or by their personal choice or fear of facing discrimination or prejudice. This often disproportionately affects women and girls.'*⁹

And of course school is a vitally important place to establish from the outset good practice, which enables individuals freely to express their cultural choices within the context of the wider society.

The Introduction rightly demands that we should build on existing good practice. But it is unfortunate that, throughout the document, there is no mention of the good practice, over nearly 30 years, of local Standing Advisory Councils for RE (SACREs) which have worked, on a statutory basis, in every local community to promote high quality religious education and to promote good relations between faiths and to establish much higher levels of understanding of faith within our schools. They have done that by bringing together representatives of different faiths and belief systems – though in a way which needs to be brought up-to-date – and the government should recognise their contribution. This expertise and experience provides a foundation on which a great deal of more effective work, if properly resourced, can be built.

The introduction further sets out the need to *'implement a national framework of priorities locally'*. We agree with the local focus but believe the national framework of law, guidance and government support is extremely important and in some areas needs to be set out more clearly.

We comment upon the 'key policy proposals' below, within the context of the particular chapters.¹⁰

⁹ Page 12

¹⁰ Pages 14 and 15

Chapter 1: Strengthening Leadership¹¹

The Green Paper is right to emphasise community leadership. Its quality is essential in local communities, and also fairly variable.

We place particular importance upon the roles of both faith leaders and school leaders (mainly head teachers). Both are exceptionally important sources of community leadership, both within and outside their own institutions, in addressing the faith issues which are addressed in this document. They already play a generally respected and valuable role, and every effort to enhance and support this is very important.

The impact of faith organisations and their leadership upon the pattern of voluntary and community organisations in any local community is immense. A significant proportion of volunteers in the community sector come from the various churches and faith organisations. The quality of faith leadership, informal and formal, female and male, contributes a great deal to the strength of the local voluntary sector.

We are not clear what the '*new Cohesion and Integration Network*¹² is and note the proposal to '*provide funding to the network to support its development and to enable government departments to access the leadership and best practice resources it will develop*'.

We are not sure that this is the best orientation for this funding. What is needed are substantial proposals to provide the support and training needed to strengthen activity in these key areas. It needs to be based in every locality in the country and there should be stronger proposals in these areas, with the provision of resources to help put these into effect. These are the kinds of work which properly resourced local SACREs would be very well placed to co-ordinate and provide.

The Green Paper states¹³ that:-

'Every government department will select a number of priority policies and services to review during this Green Paper consultation period to assess whether they exacerbate segregation and could be developed so that they actively drive integration'.

¹¹ Pages 17 to 25

¹² Page 19

¹³ Page 19

We strongly urge that schools are identified as one of those priority areas. The local authority role in running schools has been massively diminished in recent years and an alternative support framework in this area needs urgently to be identified by national government. The responsibilities of the Regional Schools Commissioners cover geographical areas which are far too large for them to provide the kind of local support which is needed

In this context, reference is made in Chapter 7¹⁴ to expanding the 'Strengthening Faith Institutions' programme¹⁵ to help a wider range of faith institutions to strengthen their governance structures, including the participation of women and young people. A number of comments are made, which we generally support, about the ways in which faith leadership can be strengthened.

However the existing £400,000 funding is totally inadequate and the three strands currently identified as the focus for its support: 1.Support for faith institutions facing challenges, 2.Sharing best practice and 3.Connecting faith with the community need to be substantially widened.

Finally, we note the shrinking size and influence of organized religion as a whole, and the growth of 'no religion' to become the majority affiliation of children and young adults (according to the 2011) Census, or even the under 40s (according to the British Social Attitudes Survey and other reputable surveys).¹⁶ The 'none's are not necessarily secular or atheist, but they eschew organized religion. Schools and SACRES are coming to terms with this in the way they represent and deal with religious diversity. The division between those who belong to organized forms of religion and those who do not is likely to become a growing source of tension if what used to be called 'inter-faith relations' is not expanded to include the 'none's and to counter prejudice and misunderstanding between those who claim a religious label and those who do not.

¹⁴ Page 61

¹⁵ <https://www.sfitogether.org/>

¹⁶ Voas, David and Mark Chaves (2016), 'Is the United States a Counterexample to the Secularization Thesis?' *American Journal of Sociology*, 121(5), March 2016, pp. 1517–56; Woodhead, Linda (2016). The Rise of 'No Religion' in Britain: The Emergence of a Cultural Majority. In *Journal of the British Academy*. 4, pp. 245-61. Available at :

<https://www.britac.ac.uk/sites/default/files/11%20Woodhead%201825.pdf>

Chapter 3: Education and Young People¹⁷

1. Overall

The Green Paper's vision and description of the education challenge are strong. In particular it is right to state that:-

segregated schools are a product of where people live, admissions policies and parental choice.

In some circumstances the lack of specific regulation for, and coordinated oversight of, out-of-school settings can mean that children attending them may be exposed to harmful practices which should not be acceptable in any community.

In regard to home education, 'It is essential that local authorities can identify children who are missing education or may be neglected or taught to hate and be intolerant'.

The independent schools sector contains schools...that offer a poorer quality of education and struggle to meet the independent school standards

And we believe that Dame Louise Casey's Review¹⁸, was right to state:-

'It is clear to us that radical change and a new approach across all schools is required, not just in relation to admissions but also to the fundamentals of what is taught in schools to grow tolerant, resilient pupils, capable of reflective, critical thinking.'

However we do not believe that the measures suggested in this Green Paper are anywhere near radical and strong enough to meet these challenges.

In relation to the Green Paper's recommendations in this Chapter we therefore make the following specific comments and proposals.

¹⁷ Pages 26-34

¹⁸https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/574565/The_Casey_Review.pdf (Para 3.98)

2. School admission and Schools' contribution to integration

The Green Paper proposes to:

*Work with local admission authorities **in the Integration Areas (our emphasis)** to help ensure the intake of schools are more representative of the wider area*

*Strengthen expectations on integration **for new free schools (our emphasis)** and in the future strengthen expectations on integration further*

The Green Paper identifies the right areas for taking action to promote integration and reduce segregation but the explicit qualifications within these two proposals are extremely disappointing. They limit ambition for the changes which are needed and in practical terms will do nothing to promote integration in faith schools in almost the whole country, despite the very clear need identified in the 'Challenge' paragraphs of this Chapter.

Our baseline is that we very much agree with the view¹⁹ that faith schools make an important contribution to our national education system.

The aim of government policy should be to help these schools to flourish, in a way that promotes a religiously-literate, tolerant and inclusive society. And so we strongly agree with the DFE statement²⁰ that faith free schools should:

'promote inclusivity, enhance understanding of other faiths and those with no faith; promote community cohesion and properly prepare children and young people for life in modern Britain'

And that they should be required to:

'act inclusively by enabling pupils of all faiths and none to play a full part in the life of the school and not disadvantage pupils or parents of any faith (or none); and actively promote the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs.'

¹⁹ Page 26

²⁰ 'Schools that work for everyone', https://consult.education.gov.uk/school-frameworks/schools-that-work-for-everyone/supporting_documents/SCHOOLS%20THAT%20WORK%20FOR%20EVERYONE%20%20FINAL.PDF

This language is reflected in this Green Paper's '*Schools' contribution to integration*' paragraph²¹.

The government should fully and unequivocally commit itself to the strength of this aspiration. This vision should inform government policy in all parts of the country and in relation to *all* faith schools.

It is simply not sufficient, as the Green Paper proposes, to limit its active work with local authorities to '*support increased diversity in schools' intake and promote integration*' to the government's designated '*Integration Areas*'²². The challenges for integration extend more widely, and action needs to take place throughout the country.

Similarly it is insufficient to '*strengthen expectations on integration further*'²³ only in new free schools, of which there are very few. In September 2016 there were 425 free schools in England and Wales²⁴, of which 62 had a religious character. There are nearly 25,000 schools in the country, including nearly 7,000 faith schools. Free schools were attended by 1% of the total number of pupils in the country.

A policy based upon influencing the behaviour of only new free schools simply does not cut the mustard. Any comprehensive strategy needs to address the operation of all schools, including all faith schools.

If the country is to have confidence that faith schools, and particularly those which select pupils for admission on the basis of their faith or that of their parents, should legitimately be supported by public funds, it is important that such schools can demonstrate their commitment to the values of an inclusive society which the government rightly highlights.

The government's approach needs to recognise the reality and variety of faith schools today.

²¹ Pages 28/9

²² ie Blackburn with Darwen, Bradford, Peterborough, Walsall and Waltham Forest

²³ Page 29

²⁴ researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/SN07033/SN07033.pdf

There is a highly salient difference between more inclusive and more exclusive faith schools.²⁵ There is a range of types of faith school but the distinction between those whose admissions criteria include faith and those which do not is particularly significant.

There is a considerable difference between the majority of Church of England schools, which exist to serve the whole community, and Roman Catholic and many other faith schools which exist primarily to educate the children of parents who share that faith, and to pass on that faith. As the Revd Nigel Genders, Chief Education Officer for The Church of England, wrote on September 9th 2016:

'Our (i.e. Church of England) are not faith schools for the faithful, they are Church schools for the community, and we don't propose to change that.'

In a letter to The Times that year he said *'more than half the 4,700 Church of England schools have no faith criteria for admissions'*.

This does not prevent these schools having their own clear faith ethos, but they are open to all.

This approach distinguishes most Church of England schools from many (though not all) other 'faith schools', and this important difference needs to be understood in considering the appropriate policy options, and made clearer in talk and policy about 'faith schools' which can be misleadingly general, as is the case in the Green Paper. Such clarification will in itself encourage good practice in the faith school sector, and allow parents to discriminate more easily. The greatest concerns about inclusivity arise in relation to schools which use faith criteria to select their pupils. As it seeks to promote inclusivity the government's central focus should therefore be upon those schools, and not faith schools in general.

Moreover diversity of ethnic minority background within schools should not be equated with diversity of religious belief (for example many Catholic schools have high ethnic diversity because of migration of Catholics from many countries, especially Eastern Europe but low religious diversity). The characteristics may be related but are not the same.

²⁵Faith schools' are defined by their admissions policy, governance arrangements and sponsorship, employment policy for selecting senior staff on the basis of religion, ethos and educational practice.

We think that the government is right to make the stated values of inclusivity on the basis of religion or belief the test of policy in regard to less inclusive faith-based free schools. However, as stated above, this approach should not be limited to the tiny number of new faith-based free schools which will have almost no impact. This approach should be strengthened and extended far more widely

That is the basis of our further comments. In the case of schools which use faith criteria to select their pupils the approach to encourage inclusivity and community cohesion should be enforced through the funding agreement, with strengthened guidance for applicants, and DFE powers of intervention should be strengthened where schools do not meet government expectations, including in relation to uniform policy, food policy and curriculum.

Schools that do not meet the requirements which have been set out should lose the right to admit on the basis of faith which would not necessarily mean that such schools would become 'non-faith schools' but simply not be able to select pupils on the basis of faith.

In the event that 'faith schools', irrespective of their admissions policy, were not correctly carrying out their responsibilities to educate, including teaching RE, in a way which promotes inclusivity and community cohesion, the normal range of OFSTED sanctions should apply.

3. Promote mixing and twinning arrangements between schools in areas of high segregation

The Green Paper proposes to:

Continue to fund The Schools Linking²⁶ programme to develop and expand twinning of schools of different backgrounds

We strongly support the proposal to strengthen twinning arrangements between schools, particularly of different faiths and we admire the work of the Schools Linking programme. So we agree with the emphasis on structured programmes such as the Schools Linking programme to promote this. The twinning needs to be done in a professional way and should involve professional training for the teachers involved.

²⁶ <http://schoolslinking.org.uk>

That said, the current programme is nothing like sufficient and needs a far greater scale of resources than that which supports 448 schools²⁷ out of nearly 25,000, 20 local authorities out of 150 and 17,635 pupils out of more than 8 million.

Any requirement in this area will only be really successful if implemented by structural arrangements across the whole local school community, for example through properly-resourced local SACREs.

However this Green Paper does not include two worthwhile proposals which were included in the 2016 DFE Green Paper, '**Schools That Work for Everyone**'²⁸, namely the establishment of mixed-faith multi-academy trusts, with proper governance arrangements, and placing an independent member or director who has a different religion or belief on the governing body of every faith school which includes faith criteria in their admissions policy.

We believe that there is a strong case for implementing these measures in relation to all faith schools, though the issues are less pressing for those faith schools whose admissions policies do not use faith criteria.

4. School ethos, curriculum and fundamental British values

The Green Paper proposes to:

Support teachers to promote British values across the curriculum

Work with Ofsted to ensure that there is strong coverage of schools' promotion of fundamental British values and integration within its new inspection arrangements. In addition, Ofsted will review the prominence and the weight attached to fundamental British values. It will ensure that there is strong coverage of schools' promotion of fundamental British values and integration within its new inspection arrangements from September 2019, which are currently in development, and ensure it is a priority.

Continue to support institutions to promote these values and we will continue to commission materials to support teachers to promote British values across the curriculum.

²⁷ Page 30

²⁸ https://consult.education.gov.uk/school-frameworks/schools-that-work-for-everyone/supporting_documents/SCHOOLS%20THAT%20WORK%20FOR%20EVERYONE%20%20FINAL.PDF

These proposals are unobjectionable.

However the most realistic way to promote the values set out in the Green Paper is for all children to follow an agreed and well-taught Religious Education syllabus, given that there is already a statutory duty for all maintained schools to teach RE. This should reflect the importance of high-quality RE teaching, in a way which is balanced and respects the fundamental values set out Green Paper.

The way in which religion is taught in a school is absolutely central to the promotion of inclusivity and community cohesion. We consider that, in place of the current locally agreed syllabuses, there should be a new nationally agreed curriculum or entitlement which builds upon the non-statutory national framework for RE, published in 2004, and which will greatly strengthen and improve the way the subject is currently delivered.

Such an RE curriculum should be followed by all schools and all state schools should be funded, and then inspected, on that basis. The current situation where the government is turning a blind eye to widespread failure by schools to obey the law (by any standard a pretty important 'British value'!) should not be permitted to continue and a clearly agreed national entitlement would enable that to happen.

We have been told that Her Majesty's Inspectors face considerable difficulties in inspecting RE at the moment because of the lack of an agreed curriculum and thus clear targets against which to assess. This is one of the reasons why we urge that a nationally agreed syllabus be introduced as soon as possible.

This approach would be a far more effective means of addressing the challenges and concerns set out in the Green Paper than the piecemeal initiatives and proposals which are set out.

Moreover we believe that the law should be changed in order to remove the right of withdrawal of pupils from the RE syllabus

All pupils at a school should be taught about religion in a way that follows the agreed RE syllabus. However there is growing evidence that some children are being withdrawn from RE (and even other subjects) at many schools because their parents fear that their children will be exposed to faiths other than their own.²⁹

²⁹ David Lundie, 'Religious Education and the Right of Withdrawal' (2018) <https://davidlundie.files.wordpress.com/2018/04/report-on-re-opt-out-wcover.pdf>

We believe this form of intolerance is unacceptable and in such cases the right of withdrawal should be removed, with the aim of removing the right altogether once a national syllabus is established which secures the place of RE as a professional subject on the same basis as all others.

Finally, we are amazed that the Green Paper makes no mention at all of the Act of Collective Worship in schools, and the fact that widespread evidence indicates that large number of schools are not obeying the current law in this respect. The law needs to be changed and brought into alignment with the changes in culture, society and education which have taken place since the 1944 Education Act which established the current arrangements. In the coming months we will be publishing our own proposals as to how this should best be done.

5. Out-of school settings and Home Education

We strongly support the proposals in the Green Paper to:

Ensure a high standard of safeguarding in all education settings

Consult on a voluntary code of practice intended to set out clear standards for providers, explaining what they need to do in order to run a safe setting

Work with local authorities to provide more guidance for parents to support them in making an informed choice when considering out-of-school education settings

Work with the selected areas and Integration Areas to develop locally-led, voluntary quality assurance arrangements for out-of-school settings

Revise the government's non-statutory guidance so that it explains more clearly to both local authorities and parents what their respective rights and obligations are, including making it easier for local authorities to tackle poor elective home education more effectively and with more confidence

Invite views on revised guidance on home education that will clarify local authorities' existing powers to take action where home educating parents are not fulfilling their duties to provide their child with suitable, full time education.

These are of course controversial matters and we hope that the government will persist strongly with the approach set out in the Green Paper.

6. Independent schools and unregistered schools

The Green Paper states that the Department for Education:

has published for consultation two documents designed to make the existing system work better, dealing with guidance, and expectations, and enforcement on the independent school standards, and

will review whether the regulatory regime for independent schools that fail to meet the required standards should be strengthened further.

We strongly support this approach, about which we understand that the consultation process is running in parallel with this overall consultation.

However we would go further.

Independent schools should also be required to follow a nationally determined RE curriculum, which should be properly regulated and inspected. The government proposals on RSE and PSHE rightly extend to all schools, including independent schools, and this should apply to RE as well, for exactly the reasons around segregation and inclusion which are at the centre of this Green Paper.

Implementation

As indicated in our introduction, we support the overall direction of the Green Paper proposals but the main point of our comments is to suggest that they do not go far enough in a number of important areas, specifically:-

they need to extend to all faith schools, particularly those which include faith criteria in their admissions policy

they need to apply across the country and not only in the 5 local authorities which are designated 'Integration Areas'

there should be a nationally determined Religious Education curriculum, which applies in all schools

the serious flouting of the law, with tacit governmental approval, relating to teaching RE and to the statutory Act of Collective Worship should not be tolerated, and should be corrected by way of legal and practical changes that update what is required of schools in a way that fulfils the aims of the Green Paper

there should be stronger proposals to strengthen existing leadership and capacity (in both schools and civil society) in relation to integration and relations between religion and belief

But in addition we believe that there need to be strong and properly resourced local drivers to implement the approach set out in the Green Paper.

Insufficient attention has been given to the previous work of local SACREs up and down the country as they have brought together into schools people and communities of different faiths and beliefs, in mutual understanding and tolerance.

Organisation is needed to promote good interfaith (religious and non-religious) relations and good understanding of what faiths are, and what they are not, in every community in Britain. SACREs have been extremely successful at doing that.

The wealth of experience, skills and expertise of SACREs should be used to help build community cohesion not only in schools but more widely across their communities. Their experience would probably be a better way to bring work around faith into the centre of community cohesion than just leaving it to local government or setting up a whole set of entirely new organisations.

We believe that many local authorities would very much welcome the contribution that developed SACREs could make and would be ready to fund and support local SACREs to provide professional assistance for the development of stronger relationships between schools local faith communities and more widely.

In short, we believe that the foundations and structures for what the Green Paper proposes are already in place, but need to be strengthened and updated rather than supplemented by relatively minor tinkering.

END