CENTRE FOR POLICY STUDIES

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The new betrayal of faith schools

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CENTRE FOR POLICY STUDIES
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2008

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ISBN No. 978-1-905389-77-3

Printed by 4 Print, 138 Molesey Avenue, Surrey

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PREFACE

THE WITCH HUNT IS ON. A Government obsessed with phoney egalitarianism and control freakery is aligning itself with the strident secularist lobby to threaten the future of faith schools in Britain.

At stake is our understanding of education. Should it be a tool for social engineering, or a consumer service? Should it ensure equality, or fairness? The issue also raises questions about faith in the modern world: how relevant is it to a child's identity? To a community? Does someone's faith command greater allegiance than someone's nationality?

These questions, in the wake of 11 September and the 7 July London bombings, burn ever more fiercely. They rouse passions and fears, and regularly stir public debate. They will surface again this month when the interim report by the schools adjudicator Philip Hunter into claims against faith schools is expected to be published.

The claims were made last March, when the Secretary of State for Schools Families and Children (SFC), Ed Balls MP, announced that his department had uncovered "shocking evidence" of selection among faith schools in three sample local

authorities – Northamptonshire, Barnet and Manchester.[1] The schools were interviewing pupils and parents, asking parents for hundreds of pounds and refusing to give places to children in local authority care. This was in breach of the new admissions code.

The row that erupted resurrected the spectre of schools that are a law unto themselves. But, significantly, parents failed to step forward to confirm that they had been ill-treated by the various faith schools 'named and shamed' by the Department. Moreover, the three local authorities and the areas' religious education authorities soon refuted Mr Balls's allegations – instead of serious and shocking breaches there were, in the end, a few minor failures to adhere to the new code.

The Secretary of State was forced to back down. He went so far as to tell *The Sunday Times* that "I fully support the role faith schools play and indeed want them to play a wider role."[2]

Faith schools know that they are at the mercy of the current administration. They were in with Tony Blair, who sent sons Euan and Nicky to the London Oratory School and daughter Katharine to Sacred Heart High School; and his education guru Andrew, now Lord, Adonis, who sought the collaboration of faith school providers in setting up new academies. Of his first 100 flagship academies, 42 had Christian sponsors.

They are in with David Cameron and Michael Gove, his Education spokesman, who have publicly endorsed them.

But they are out with Gordon Brown.

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1 Department of Children, Schools and Families, 11 March 2008.

2 *The Sunday Times,* 27 April 2008.

The Prime Minister may acknowledge that his faith is important to him. But so is his standing with the Labour party – all the more so given his record-low popularity with the voters.

Gordon Brown knows that for the 'Old Labour' rump of the party, equally committed to secularism and comprehensive education, faith schools are anathema. Tony Blair and 'New Labour' were ready to ignore this constituency, but Gordon Brown cannot afford to.

Nor can his ambitious Secretary of State. "Gordon Brown is over. Now his party is deciding who will succeed him," says Benjamin Perl, a philanthropist whose Huntingdon Foundation has set up 20 of the 39 Jewish state schools in England and Wales. "Balls is setting himself up as the Old Labour candidate by bashing faith schools."

Frank Field, Labour MP for Birkenhead, warns that in the long run Ed Balls is playing the wrong card:[3]

> *When he did it, it may have played well with the party, and it was lining himself up for the election. But post Crewe [the Crewe and Nantwich by-election last May which went disastrously for the Labour Party] the idea that we can rough-up the core vote, such as Catholics, is ridiculous. We need to move on from this hostile position.*

Michael Gove has been robust in his defence of faith schools against an attack riddled with "inaccuracies". He was quick to point out that the Secretary of State unleashed his attack against faith schools on the very same day he had to admit that

[3] Interview with the author.

one in five children had failed to gain admission to the secondary school of their choice.

Whatever Mr Balls's motives, his attack has generated a climate of fear. Prominent Labour figures who believe in faith schools know better than to speak out in their defence. Mark Stephens, a high-profile lawyer with impeccable liberal credentials, admits that he does not parade having been governor of a Church of England school, or the fact that his daughters attend faith schools. "There is a chilling atmosphere that makes for closet Christians, who only dare to come out to each other once they've established a firm friendship."[4]

Some leading Labourites have gone public with their faith in faith schools – Ruth Kelly, Frank Field, Lord Adonis – but others are, in Stephens's words, "running scared".

This climate of fear has had consequences for many families: this year the parents of an adopted child with a troubled background wished to visit a faith school to discuss the school's special needs provision. Their priest was told, in writing, that such a visit would not be possible. The reason: it might put the school in breach of the Government's admissions procedures, which call for 'blind admissions'. Similarly, when an Anglican mother of two, a high profile media figure, was filling out the school admissions form for a Church of England primary, friends suggested that she use her married name: otherwise, they explained, the admissions governors, worried about accusations of cherry-picking, would turn her down automatically.

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[4] Interview with the author.

PREFACE

In the course of my research, I approached more than 30 faith schools of different denominations, requesting a brief interview with the head or deputy; and a brief visit to the school. In the end only a handful of schools agreed to see me. One Jewish governor defended his school's decision to turn me away with "yes we're paranoid, but wouldn't you be?" while a Catholic head explained that "this is not the time to stick one's head above the parapet."

A rich legacy is being betrayed. For centuries, Britain's Christian Churches were the sole providers of education, and they were welcome to the monumental task. It was not until the 19th century that the state decided it too should school the nation's children and offered to collaborate with the churches in doing so. The government's "collaboration" meant earmarking public funds for Church of England and Catholic schools. But why, asked irate secularists or vehement anti-Catholics, should public money pay for religious institutions catering exclusively for their own? That question is once again being asked.

The charge sheet that Ed Balls drew up against faith schools last March is highly damaging: selective and divisive, the schools flout the law and ignore their duty to society.

I am grateful to all those who have helped me expose this picture for what it is: a distortion that is based on prejudice – and will fuel it.

In particular, I would like to thank Tom Woolfenden for carrying out some invaluable research. I am grateful too to Sir Cyril Taylor, Paddy Walsh, Mark Stephens, Idris Mears, Peter Stanford, Peter Wilby, Andrew Rashbass, Benjamin Perl, Sarah Johnson, Humeira Khan, Fuad Nahdi, and Peter Brooke.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Sir John Cass and Redcoat School

AMONG THE HIGH-RISE BLOCKS and council flats of Stepney, in Tower Hamlets, the red brick buildings of Sir John Cass and Redcoat Church of England Secondary School are immediately noticeable behind their towering gates.

In contrast to the graffiti that covers the neighbouring buildings, and the litter on the streets and pavements, the Sir John Cass complex is impressively tidy and clean. Youngsters (the school is co-ed) in navy blue uniforms walk briskly but quietly in the corridors, greeting teachers with 'Hello Sir' or 'Hello Miss'. When they spot the head, Haydn Evans, they fall silent to attention. It is easy to understand their awe: when one boy arrives with his tie askew, Evans, eyebrow raised, picks him up on it: 'Where's your uniform?'

As Evans guides his visitor round the school he stoops to pick up a small paper wrapper from the corridor, then drops it into one of several yellow litter bins that dot the walls. Attention to every detail, it is clear, is fundamental to his approach to education.

Although this is a Church of England foundation school, and Evans leads the prayer in assembly, 60% of the 1,400

students are Muslim and, reflecting the local community, mainly from Bangladesh.

"We all share in faith, not one faith," Evans explains. As I look over the students sitting in assembly, I see Sikhs and Anglicans and Roman Catholics. In the build-up to the prayer and during the prayer itself, you can hear a pin drop. There is total engagement and respect.

Evans has presided over the extraordinary turn-around of Sir John Cass. When he joined the school in 1996, the number of pupils gaining five or more good GCSE grades had been 8%. By 2002, there were 71%, and the school was rated as the most improved school in the country (as it was again in 2003 and 2004). Last year, Sir John Cass was the only school that raised achievement from the lower quarter on entry to the top 10% on exit. This, with a student body that has a 75% take up of free school meals, and for whom, in 66% of the cases, English is a second language.

Nor is Evans's achievement exclusively academic. The school offers an extended day (from 7am to 9pm) for families where both parents work. It also opens its doors to the local community, offering English as a foreign language course, vocational programmes for second language learners and qualifications for business studies.

Haydn Evans knows what lies behind his school's success: 'a clear sense of values' shared by the Head, the 180 staff (100 of them teachers), the six governors (four of them Bengali parents) and pupils. Those values, he explains, are faith, discipline, charity and respect for one another. They are incorporated into every aspect of school life, from testing (doing well is important, but doing your best more so) to

mutual support (when, recently, a teacher's daughter died, the 'school behaved like an extended family').

This is the elusive ethos that even secular authorities claim they want.

Sir John Cass is exceptional; but a snapshot of faith schools[5] in this country reveals that the majority share many of the features and achievements that mark the Tower Hamlets school.

Faith schools: a success story

There are 7,000 faith schools in England today. And they are overwhelmingly a great success. They account for a third of all primary schools but make up almost two-thirds of the top 209 primaries. Of the top 25 schools in the 2007 ranking of highest-attaining primary schools in England (at national curriculum Level 5 in the Key Stage 2 tests taken by 11-year-olds), 15 are of a religious character.[6]

The table of overall best results in the 2007 National Curriculum tests in England shows that 17 of the 25 top ranking schools are of a religious character.[7]

This data sounds all the more impressive when seen in the context of Britain's education. Since 1997 when Labour came to power, almost 60% of pupils have left school without gaining five C grades at GCSE, including English and Maths.

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5 Note that publicly-funded faith schools fall into two categories: maintained schools with a religious character and Academies with a religious character).

6 DFES, *School and College Performance Tables*, 2007.

7 Ibid.

One million teenagers in those ten years have failed to even achieve five G grades. UNICEF rated the UK bottom of a league of industrialised countries for child well-being last year: compared with other European countries, our children are under-educated, unhappy and unhealthy. One in five 15-year-olds in the UK tested in maths and literacy by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development last year failed to reach basic standards. (In Finland, the best-performing nation, the figure was one in 20.) A quarter of all children leave school without reading skills.

Britain's parents have taken such dire statistics to heart. They are sending their children to faith schools in increasing numbers. In 1990, 23% of Jewish children attended Jewish schools. Today 63% do. The number of Muslim independent schools has increased three-fold over the past ten years.

Among Christian parents, faith schools are so popular that they are allegedly pushing their children into late baptisms to secure places at these schools.[8] Meanwhile, parents who were turned away from over-subscribed faith schools refuse to accept the alternative: about 70,000 appeals are launched each year.

[8] *The Times*, 12 January 2008.

CHAPTER TWO

CHERRY PICKING?

WHILE PARENTS SEE FAITH SCHOOLS as a rare bit of the state school system that works, critics claim that they only work because they are exclusive boutiques of learning, catering for la crème de la crème.

Having a religious character does allow a school a degree of flexibility. It can appoint staff. Teaching staff is predominantly, but not always, of the same denomination as the faith school (a majority will dip in and out of the faith sector in the course of their career). Faith schools set their own teaching and inspection of Religious Education; they have collective worship; their faith informs the school ethos; and, crucially, they can control, to a limited and shrinking extent, their own admissions policy.

Critics maintain that faith schools use the admissions procedure to usher in a better-off intake. As evidence, they point to the schools' under-representation of children on Free School Meals (FSM).[9]

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[9] Children are entitled to FSM if their parents receive Income Support or income-based jobseeker's allowance or are asylum seekers.

CHERRY PICKING?

It is true that in faith schools fewer students take up FSM compared with their catchment area. (A 2006 survey found that in church primary schools only 14% of pupils were on FSM compared with 19% in their catchment area).[10]

But the National Audit Office warns that FSM do not necessarily serve as the best proxy for poor income. Its reservations were corroborated by research carried out last year for the Centre for the Economics of Education.[11]

One reason to question FSM as the best proxy for income is that signing up for FSM is seen as a loss of face in tight-knit faith communities. Mike Freer, Conservative head of Barnet Council, says that when he has discussed the issue with local rabbis, they have told him that "a lot of their school children would not take up FSM because of stigma."

Dr Flowers, whose primary school Our Lady of Victories school includes many children from Polish, Lithuanian, Filipino, and Portuguese immigrant families, agrees. "My perception is that our mothers would beggar themselves rather than have their children take up FSM."

In faith communities in particular, the first port of call is not the government but the family, more distant relatives, even the neighbours. "The Jewish community" Joy Wolfe, who for 21 years has been governor of North Cheshire Jewish Primary School, points out, "tends to look after its own."

Moreover, some parents would hate the intrusion in to their privacy – where do they work, where do they live, how much

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[10] C Waterman, *Education Journal*, 17 February 2006.

[11] G Hobbs et al, *Is Free School Meals a Valid Proxy for Socio Economic Status?*, Centre for the Economics of Eduction, 2007.

do they earn? – entailed in filling out application forms for FSM. (The state's forms can prove as intimidating as those of faith schools.)

The Government persists, however, in seeing covert selection in the sector. This suspicion has inspired a series of measures. The Education and Inspection Act of 2006 banned interviews of parents and pupils. The 2008 Admissions Code requires that schools cater for children who need a school place outside the normal admission round (this covers excluded children who have been pulled out of their school for behavioural difficulties); prohibits any questions about the parents' employment, marital status or education; and prohibits the asking of voluntary contributions from parents until their child has been accepted.

Richard Gold of Stone King Solicitors, a firm which specialises in the education and charity sectors, feels that "over the past four or five years the admissions team of the DFSC have been steadily whittling back the freedom of faith schools... It is in my mind an attempt to shoe-horn the faith schools into a one-size-fits-all admissions policy."

Banning interviews and application forms may make for a comprehensive intake – but they also remove the checks that a faith school relies on to ensure that applicants subscribe to its distinctive ethos.

To the Government, as Ed Balls's attack revealed, a request for a marriage certificate as part of an application form is an ignominious attempt to flush out single mothers. To the Orthodox Jewish school, it is the only way to verify that both parents are born Jews.

CHERRY PICKING?

The Government suspects that interviews allow schools to select the most articulate and most middle-class candidates; but faith schools defend them as a chance for the candidate and parents to prove their commitment to their faith. Sarah Johnson, a Catholic parent and governor at Our Lady of Victories School, remembers an interview at Cardinal Vaughan Memorial School where her son was asked how he would respond, at Mass, when the priest said "Lift up your hearts" during the Eucharistic Prayer. ("We lift them up to the Lord.")

To the Government, raising the issue of voluntary contributions with prospective parents is tantamount to saying that only the rich need apply. For Jewish schools, it is the only way to pay for Jewish studies, which are not on the curriculum, and in some schools mean 10 hours extra teaching; and for security (one school in Barnet estimates that its CCTV, patrols and alarms cost it about £50,000 a year) which otherwise would take a huge proportion of their government grant.

Academics Anne West and Rebecca Allen have been conducting extensive research into admission policies in the faith school sector. They argue that these schools, by requiring a 'continuum of attendance', familiarity with priest or vicar, baptism certificate, and marriage certificate, can collect the kind of family background data that gives them the means to select their intake. Only a certain kind of family is disciplined and well-organised enough to go to church regularly, and only a certain kind of parent capable of approaching a vicar, priest, rabbi or imam to fill out a form. Moreover, Professor West explains, many parents fear revealing so much personal information – and fear being judged.

The two academics' findings have been used, repeatedly, to portray faith schools as exclusive playgrounds of the middle classes. West and Allen do call for standardised admission forms to be used by faith schools (these could be developed by the education services of the different denominations.) But in fact, Rebecca Allen's latest research paper stresses that although faith schools could use information to cream-skim, "there is no proof that this is actually taking place in schools."[12]

Indeed, research by Bristol University concluded that Christian schools tend to be more ethnically diverse than their secular counterparts, because they recruit their pupils from a wider area. Community schools, the researchers found, tend to be more polarised: white parents sent their children to "white" schools while ethnic minority families opted for schools where they were a majority.[13]

Looked after children

Perhaps the most damning allegation made against faith schools is that they turn away 'looked after children'. Could this be the most effective kind of selection? Are faith schools really keeping out the often chaotic, troubled children who are living in foster or care homes.

This would be clearly illegal. It would also make a mockery of the commitment to the most vulnerable that is a shared pillar of faith among Christians, Muslims and Jews. We asked the 152

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[12] R Allen, *Do own-admission schools cream-skim? School intake versus neighbourhood characteristics,* working paper presented at Sheffield Hallam University on 30 January.

[13] *The Independent*, 10 September 2006.

local authorities in England whether they had approached a faith school with a 'looked after child'; and whether they had been turned away. 80 local authorities responded. In 2007, these authorities were responsible for transferring 1,517 looked after children from primary to secondary school. The local authorities tried to place 242 of these children in faith schools. 227 were successful. Only 15 children were turned down.[14]

Phoney egalitarianism and hypocrisy

The Government's approach betrays huge hypocrisy. While it is determined to stamp out what it sees as covert selection in faith schools, the government accepts covert selection operated outside the faith context.

Specialist schools account for 92% of non-faith secondary schools. Schools with specialities like music or foreign languages are allowed to select up to 10% of intake from children with an aptitude for the piano, or French. These Mozart-loving, French-appreciating children are less likely to be the product of a poor and ill-educated household than a child who knows how to perform the salat, or Muslim prayer.

Meanwhile the post-code lottery has parents buying homes near good state schools, and driving property prices in the neighbourhood beyond the reach of any but the middle classes. As Dr Flowers explains about Our Lady of Victories primary school in Kensington and Chelsea, "If we followed government criteria, we'd be taking in the people who live near us – and

[14] See Appendix for details. Note that, in many of not all cases, the looked after children who were refused a place by a faith school were not of the faith of that school.

they are the people who can afford to live in our expensive area." As it is, the school's catchment area goes well beyond its immediate neighbourhood, and the 220 students are predominantly the children of "local shop keepers, cleaners, housekeepers". Many of the children arrive at the school speaking no English.

CHAPTER THREE

CONTROL FREAKERY

DESPITE RECENT ATTACKS, faith schools still enjoy a degree of autonomy. This may explain why often faith schools experience hostility from local authorities. Many, according to Richard Gold, fear "losing their fiefs": "We're doing a lot of conversions from community schools to foundations and some of the local authorities are trying to subvert the process. For example by scare-mongering among staff, 'oh you'd better watch out, you won't be employed by us but by the governors,' and raising fears for pension plans."

Some local authorities are now charging for bussing children to and from faith schools. Seven authorities have introduced the charges already; four more will do so by next year. Fees range from £48 a year to £350, and have faith groups worrying that admissions to their schools will be affected.[15]

Mark Stephens, former governor of Wanstead Church School, a Church of England primary school in the Redbridge Council, remembers how the LEA had proved intractable to deal with: when Wanstead Church School reached their statutory number, and turned away a child, "the parents

[15] *The Daily Telegraph,* 24 May 2008.

appealed to local authority. The LEA immediately imposed this extra child on the school."

Another petty example of local authority hostility was experienced by Emmanuel College in Gateshead – a City Technology College that belongs to the Christian Evangelical Emmanuel Schools Foundation set up by Sir Peter Vardy. In 1990, when the College opened, it was not allowed to use the local authority's playing fields which surrounded the school. "No local schools would play sport with us," Jonathan Winch, the principal, says. "Our children had to learn rugby because only the independent schools would play with us. No more football."

Richard Gold also reveals a "pecking order for local authorities when it comes to ploughing money into new buildings etc – voluntary aided schools come below community schools, and faith voluntary aided schools at the bottom."

CHAPTER FOUR

DIVISIVE?

Madani High School

IT'S 3 O'CLOCK. The girls at Madani High School in Leicester troop out of the school gates. They wear white scarves over dark blue djellabies – a shapeless coat worn over trousers. No sign of the boys: they're at school for another half an hour. Boys and girls operate on a different schedule, carefully programmed to keep the sexes segregated during everything from break to lunch to gym.

The architecture at Madani High conspires to do the same: there is a girls' wing and, mirror image, a boy's wing, separated by an elegant Arabic-style courtyard with a fountain. Madani High is located on the fringes of Highfields, home to large Somali and Caribbean communities and one of the poorest areas in the country. But the high school building is spanking new (construction finished last year) and dazzlingly high-tech, with interactive white boards and sophisticated IT equipment in almost every classroom. For the 70% of the student body who come from Highfields, school must be an oasis in a desolate landscape.

"We want the school to be a real centre for the community around here," Dr Muhammed Mukadam, Chair of the Association of Muslim Schools and the principal of the school,

explains. “We also want to use it to introduce non-Muslims to Islam. We have visitors every day, who want to have a look around, ask us questions about the faith, our community.” The school’s open-door policy impressed the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors enough to give it an award last year for community service.

He dismisses claims of Muslim schools being divisive: “If you develop a strong sense of identity and self-esteem in young people, their interactions with the community will be much easier. It is the fearful and insecure who shut themselves off, or become aggressive.” The school’s 570 students are taught that “they’re Muslims, they’re British, and there’s no conflict between the two.” Dr Mukadam also stresses that his 50 teachers represent other faiths and none: “The children in this way interact with grown-ups who show respect for their faith, but do not share it.”

Dr Mukadam sees schools such as Madani High building bridges between the devout world of the mosque, with its Imams and madrasas, and the secular world with its alternative value system. He finds himself often acting as ambassador to the Imams for those parents who want to prepare their children as good Muslims, but also as members of contemporary British culture. “I will appeal to the Imams and say, for instance, look, divorce is out there, in high numbers: we must educate our daughters so that they can stand on their own two feet always.” His own daughter, he says proudly, “has learned to be confident in her Muslim identity, but completely committed to being a British girl too.”

Muslim schools in Britain

An ICM poll of British Muslims in 2004 showed nearly half wanted their children to attend Muslim schools. Yet only 3% of Muslim students have a Muslim school to go to (whereas 40% of Jewish children in their school history can attend a Jewish school.)[16] With only seven maintained Muslim schools (and three more in the pipeline), the great majority of the approximately 500,000 Muslim school-age children in England and Wales attend state schools.

Here, according to Idris Mears, former head of the Muslim Schools Association, "everywhere they turn [Muslim] children find stereotypes of the Muslim… They feel a generalised fear and distrust of the outsider." Iftikhar Ahmad, who in 1981 founded the London School of Islamics, the first Muslim school in Britain, agrees: "Children from minority groups, especially Muslims, are exposed to the pressure of racism, multiculturalism and bullying" he explains, "They suffer academically, culturally and linguistically."

"Earlier generations, in the 1960s and 1970s, were happy to send their children to state schools," says Humeira Khan, founder of Al Nisa, which offers a wide variety of faith-based services to the Muslim community. "Primarily they came here thinking their children would get a much better education than back home. Then little by little, the overt and covert discrimination in the system turned them off. They grew conscious of the failure of the school system and of hostility from the school system for people of faith and especially Muslims."

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[16] Open Society Institute.

This hostility to their faith is particularly resented by young Muslims. The vast majority (99%) of Pakistani and Bangladeshi pupils said that their religion (and in 99% of cases for both groups, this was Islam) was fairly or very important to them, compared to 34% pupils of white British background.[17]

A recent paper by the Muslim Council of Britain, *Towards Greater Understanding*, highlighted 15 areas where Muslim school children (or/and their parents) may find themselves offended by secular state school practice.[18] These include everything from the gym where their modesty is affronted to the school trip to a farm where they might come into contact with a pig. Sometimes the desire to accommodate different preferences is overstated to the point of parody – the "good practice guide" offers a long checklist for state schools who seek to satisfy their Muslim students (and parents), including building individual cubicles in the changing rooms, segregating classes, and banning life drawing classes (Muslim students should not be expected to draw human bodies).

Clearly some of this may be unacceptable in the state sector and indeed many liberal-minded Muslims may not see these changes as necessary; but they point to the gulf between traditional Muslims and secular education.

Young Muslims' alienation has far-reaching consequences. 33% of British Muslims of working age have no qualifications.[19]

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[17] Department for Education and Skills, *Ethnicity and Education: the evidence on minority ethnic pupils*, 2005.

[18] Muslim Council of Britain, *Towards Greater Understanding: Meeting the Needs of Muslim Pupils in State Schools*, February 2007.

[19] ONS, *Diversity and different experiences in the UK*, April 2008.

Feeling misunderstood or rejected by their peers at school, and frustrated in their ambitions beyond it, these youngsters are likely to be receptive to radical messages.

In 2006 the Jamenah Islamiyah private school near Crowborough was shut down, for allegedly serving as an al-Qa'ida training camp. For many this was proof of what David Bell, then Chief Inspector of Schools, had warned the year before: that "Traditional Islamic education" did not "entirely fit pupils for their lives as Muslims in modern Britain."[20] Bell was speaking about 50 small independent 'schools' (typically a couple of children having lessons in someone's house) that had just been set up and had yet to reach the Oftsed standard in terms of teaching about British institutions and services. But his words fuelled the image of Muslim faith schools where bearded fanatics taught children to hate Britain and blow up innocent civilians.

The reality is very different: not one of the 77 convicted on terrorism charges since the Terrorism Act 2000 attended a Muslim school; one, Ader Ahmed, was home-schooled.[21] As Dr Taj Hargey, who runs the Muslim Education Centre in Oxford, has warned:

> *It is not the school that offers proper teaching of Islam that proves a training ground for terrorism, but the one where Islam is misunderstood or misinterpreted.*

Dr Hargey this year launched a supplementary school – "We don't like to use the word madrasa because of its negative

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[20] David Bell, Speech to the Hansard Society, 17 January 2005.

[21] Research conducted for this report.

connotations" – where children are taught the syllabus plus religious education. All classes are taught in English except for Arabic for RE and the study of the Koran.

> *We've got 50 children in the school, boys and girls; and they come from all over – Turks, white converts, Pakistani, Arabs… We teach these kids that they have an allegiance to this country. We highlight the passages in the Koran that talk about tolerance and pluralism; reinterpret the passages that we believe have been twisted out of their real meaning. We say God, not Allah. Allah is an Arabic word. We ask them to become thinking Muslims as opposed to blind faith. Our motto is 'Muslims' theological self-empowerment': you don't need to hear what the Mullah is saying, or the Wahaabi.*

Dr Hargay says he would welcome an Ofsted inspection of his new school. But at present there is no inspection for the 700 madrasas attached to British mosques. For traditionalists with children in the state sector (and no access, because of financial or geographic constraints, to Muslim schools), madrasas are the only way to secure a grounding in Islamic studies for their children. An estimated 100,000 children in this country attend the madrasas.

There are calls within the Muslim community to bring the madrasas under more scrutiny, by establishing a national registration scheme co-ordinated centrally and monitored by local authorities. Dr Ghayasuddin Siddiqui, who has led this campaign, warns that the closed world of the madrasa can hide child abuse and shield abusers and the Muslim community risks replicating the scandal that rocked the Catholic Church in the

US.[22] As of now, only a handful of local authorities have asked local mosques and madrasas to put in place guidelines to meet their legal obligation as required by the Children Act 1989.

Misogyny

The most heated cultural battle involves the education of Muslim girls. As *Towards Greater Understanding* spells out, traditional Muslims want to shield pubescent and post-pubescent girls from the sexual pressures that their Western peers face as a matter of course. Parents who cannot afford Muslim faith schools with single sex gym classes and tailor-made art lessons, will withdraw their daughters from a state school system they regard as unacceptable.

"The Drugs sex and rock and roll scene is not an option for Muslim girls," Humeira Khan points out, "or if it is, it sparks huge conflict. So suddenly marrying them early or sending them home [to Pakistan or Bangladesh] becomes a huge pressure."

Idris Mears acknowledges that "each year hundreds of Muslim girls disappear from the state system." The Government's Forced Marriage Unit says 30% of its cases involve minors (under the age of 18), many of whom are in compulsory education.[23] The Unit, which contributed to a recent House of Commons Home Affairs Select Committee

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[22] Dr G Siddiqui, *Child Protection in a Faith-Based Environment: A Guideline Report*, The Muslim Parliament of Great Britain, 2006.

[23] House of Commmons Home Affairs Select Committee, *Domestic Violence, Forced Marriage and 'Honour'-Based Violence*, June 2008.

report,[24] highlighted a flaw in the official data on the forced marriage of minors: 15 local authorities that had been selected as most likely to have a high incidence of forced marriage came up with only four cases between them. This was far from the Unit's experience of victims.

But forced marriage is not the only tragic scenario. According to Idris Mears and to Iftikhar Ahmad, those girls who are not married off or sent home are kept at home, where sometimes they will be home-schooled, but often are not. "The girls grow bored, or feel put upon by their families, and run away," says Ahmad. "It is a big issue, that no one in the community admits to."

A table published in the report by the Home Affairs Select Committee shows the number of children listed as 'not in suitable education' in 13 local authorities with large Muslim populations.[25] In Manchester, the number is 385, in Leicester, 294, and in Birmingham, 250. There is no listing of children by gender; statistics in this area are extremely difficult to come by, as a recent Children's Society report reveals.[26] In Asian communities, where girls are seen as their 'father's pride', a run-away girl is regarded as a shameful secret to keep from prying neighbours, let alone the authorities. Few of the run-away girls themselves would feel comfortable approaching social services or Muslim groups, out of fear of being forced back to their homes or of bringing disgrace upon their families.

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[24] House of Commmons Home Affairs Select Committee, *Domestic Violence, Forced Marriage and 'Honour'-Based Violence*, June 2008.

[25] Ibid.

[26] The Children's Society, *No One Asked Us Before*, 2002.

With runaways and their Muslim families equally reluctant to seek their help, the authorities seldom step in. As a result, Jasvinder Sanghera of Karma Nirvana told the House of Commons Committee: "we are finding examples across England and Wales where children have gone off rolls and people have just allowed them to go off rolls without tracking where they are."

For these girls, the seven Muslim schools within the state sector represent the only chance "to go from the kitchen to the university", as Dr Mukadam, chair of the Muslim Association of Schools, puts it. The proportion of girls in Muslim faith schools who go on to higher education is more than twice as high as in secular or independent state schools.

"When I started at Leicester Islamic Academy, not one girl went on to higher education. From here [Madani High School] more than 95% do."

CHAPTER FIVE

GHETTOS?

Yavneh College

YAVNEH COLLEGE IN BOREHAMWOOD, Hertfordshire, sits in the middle of a quiet residential neighbourhood. The school is ringed by two steel fences, a few yards apart, and signs warn that CCTV cameras are in operation. Two guards in the guardhouse screen visitors before letting them through the automatic gate.

"I'm afraid it is necessary" Dr Dena Coleman apologises, "All our schools must have this level of protection."

Inside the light and modern building, the atmosphere is more welcoming. Uniformed children (the boys wear a yarmulke, the Orthodox skull cap; the girls black and white tartan skirts) spring to attention when the Head does the rounds of the classrooms. In the hallways and stairs, they stop and give way to visitors. "Good manners are important, and we're strict about that. But we explain that they show respect for others."

Dr Coleman's father was a Holocaust survivor: she is very conscious of the need to teach the children the "immensely ancient and rich tradition that is theirs, but also to recognise that they are a tiny minority – 0.5% of Britain's population – and that they will have to go out into a wider community and

mix with people who have never met a Jew, and know nothing about Jewish practice."

Charity, and community service as part of charity, are encouraged at every level. "Each year chooses three charities: one must be Jewish, a second one British and non-Jewish, and a third Israeli. In this way we teach the children to see themselves as having a number of identities: Jewish, and British, and having a special link with Israel. Once a week students, as part of their "enrichment programme", will visit an old people's home, or a home for children with special needs. The school's first Ofsted report hails this outstanding contribution to community cohesion.

Of the 228 students, nine have been statemented. Of the 50 teachers, more than half are non-Jews. Dr Coleman acknowledges that although the parents who send their children to this modern orthodox school represent a wide range of observance, they are all committed to education: "It is the way up and out. It is the means of self-improvement" she says, and hands me the prospectus. In his foreword, the Chief Rabbi Jonathan Sacks has written "To defend a country you need an army, but to defend a civilisation you need schools."

Faith schools and the wider community

Critics of faith schools regard them as educational ghettos where Christian children learn about Creationism and Muslim children about jihad, while Jewish children are taught they alone are Chosen People – all without any interference from the state's regulatory bodies.

The stereotype does not bear scrutiny. Faith schools in the state system must follow the National Curriculum, including

Citizenship education. They must participate in National Curriculum tests and assessment, be inspected by Ofsted, employ fully qualified teaching staff, and act in accordance to the statutory schools admission code.

Far from being ghettos, faith schools engage with the wider community. As of September 2007, all maintained schools are under an 'obligation' to promote community cohesion – according to Oona Stannard at the Catholic Education Service, it was the Catholic Church that lobbied for community cohesion to be included in inspection.

A consultation set up last year by the Commission on Integration and Cohesion interviewed over 2,000 representatives of race and equality groups, housing associations, police and criminal justice agencies, women's groups and voluntary organisations to find that faith groups, through their schools and leaders, were seen as instrumental in promoting community projects and networks.[27]

Many faith schools open their doors for child care, night classes and extended hours. Others, those catering for a sizeable number of immigrant children, concentrate on reaching parents through English lessons and vocational training. In this way, according to the Archbishop of Birmingham, Vincent Nichols, "newly arrived families and children find an excellent point of entry into British society".[28]

Jewish schools, says Alex Goldberg, of the Board of Deputies, "inculcate a sense of duty not only towards Jews but

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[27] Commission on Integration and Cohesion, *Our Shared Future*, June 2007.

[28] *The Daily Telegraph*, 24 October 2006.

towards people of all faiths. At secondary school, children are asked to serve the community, whether this is through working with charities, mentoring programmes or community centres."

Peter Stanford, a governor for the past four years at St Joseph's RC Primary in North London, agrees that faith schools generate the 'social capital' that benefits the wider community:

> *One of the pillars of St Joseph's success… has been to work closely with and integrate with the local community. This happens at a practical level – so the ICT suite, equipped largely by the fund-raising efforts of (Catholic) parents, is open to the community as a place to learn computer skills. And our old free-standing nursery building, now converted into a reception room with kitchen and bathroom facilities – again through the fund-raising efforts of parents – is available to rent at a low rate for all community organisations. The idea that Christianity is about shutting yourself off in a ghetto is a fundamental – dare I say fundamentalist – misunderstanding of what is actually at the very core of the faith.*

The dangers of unregulated schooling

When it comes to religious fundamentalism, private faith schools or home-education are far more dangerous. Here constraints and standards do not apply.

Today, seven Muslim schools are within the state sector, and 115 are fee-paying. Many of these independent schools are small (most of them set up by three or four families who have been home-schooling their children and decide to pool together); poorly funded; and unregulated. Ofsted has inspected 53 of the registered schools, and reported poorly-

maintained buildings and management, and badly-trained teachers.[29] From next academic year, Muslim independent schools affiliated with the Association of Muslim Schools and schools affiliated with the Christian Schools (about 100 in total) will be inspected by the new Bridge Schools Inspectorate. From September, Ofsted will monitor the work of the Bridge School Inspectorate in the same way that it monitors the work of the Independent Schools Inspectorate and the Schools Inspection Service. This involves observing a sample of their inspections and reading some of their reports.

With an eye to bringing these unregulated private schools into the fold (and under the Ofsted searchlight), the DCSF last year agreed to provide the 115 fee-paying Muslim schools with money to convert to the state sector.[30] The funds – coming directly from Whitehall – would be used to bring their buildings up to scratch and expand. (Other new Jewish, Sikh and Hindu schools could be created in the same way.) At least 30 independent schools have expressed an interest in moving into the state sector.

Many will have to clean up their act before they can be admitted – especially in terms of their teachers. "Teachers in small independent schools do not need qualifications. In fact, these schools cannot afford to pay them." Idris Mears, former head of the Muslim Schools Association, recognises the dearth of properly-trained Muslim teachers and has set up a training scheme to address this.

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[29] *The Daily Telegraph*, 4 March 2007.

[30] See Department for Children, Schools and Families, *Faith in the System*, 2007.

Multi-faith dialogue

In calling for community cohesion, the Government has asked single faith schools to link with schools of other faiths. The Board of Deputies has launched a project, 'Shared Futures", which will include a Muslim adviser to help develop "religious and culturally sensitive programmes that will appeal to Jewish and Muslim schools". One third of Jewish schools have signed up to school-linking.

For some, linking is the first step on a road that logically ends with multi-faith schools. Already, there are 15 Anglican-Catholic schools, and three more are expected to open in Liverpool, Manchester and Runcorn.

In the wake of the 2001 Oldham Riots, Sir Cyril Taylor, chairman of the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust, has called for "multi-faith" academies to improve integration in some of the country's most racially segregated areas. Under the £100 million plan, six schools in Oldham – some 99% white and others 99% Muslim – will close and be merged into three city academies.

The project takes its inspiration from the integrated school scheme that has been running for almost 30 years in Northern Ireland. Baroness Blood, who pioneered the scheme, believes that the state system she grew up with, where schools were either all-Protestant or all-Catholic fuelled the factionalism that plague the region. Her vision is of Catholic and Protestant children attending the same school and learning about one another's faith. Although Baroness Blood encountered enormous resistance both from the British Government, and from 'tribal' local politicians, there are now 64 integrated schools in Northern Ireland and last year they had to turn

away 1000 applicants. The schools cater for special needs and all ability, and repeatedly figure among the top five in Northern Ireland's school leagues.

Tolerance, she is convinced, is the by-product of such exposure. "A multicultural society needs children to learn about one another's ways," Baroness Blood explains, "This is the only way forward."

CHAPTER SIX

SMEARS

Emmanuel Community Technical College

CHARLES DARWIN looms large on the time-line featured along the corridors of Emmanuel Community Technical College in Gateshead.[31] A photocopied portrait of the father of evolution towers over his 19th century contemporaries – as seems only fitting, not only because of Darwin's contribution to our understanding of the world around us but also because of the huge shadow he has cast over the school.

Emmanuel College was forced in the spotlight in 2002 when it was discovered that its Head of Science, Steven Layfield, had given a lecture two years earlier (before taking up his post) advocating the teaching of Intelligent Design in schools. Richard Dawkins and a group of scientists and bishops claimed that creationism was being taught in the school's biology classes. Ofsted inspected the school and in 2002 declared there was no problem with its teaching of science. In November 2006 it emerged that Steven Layfield was a director of Truth in Science – a group that questioned the theory of evolution.

[31] City Technology Colleges are technically independent schools but charge no fees because they are funded by the government as well as the private sector.

Emmanuel College quickly issued a statement explaining that the school did not share Layfield's views – and Layfield resigned from Truth in Science.

Richard Dawkins thundered about innocent minds being filled with nonsense stories about the beginnings of life on earth. The media described Sir Peter Vardy, the founder of Emmanuel and its two sister academies, as a Christian crackpot, a car dealer with a sinister mission. And Nigel de Gruchy, general secretary of the National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers, held up the incident as proof of the damage inflicted by faith schools: "You will see a lot more controversies when you are sending out the begging bowl and inviting the private sector in to spend money on schools, and at the same time having a particular emphasis on faith schools."

Emmanuel College, however, leaves the visitor with a very different impression. Children in maroon-coloured uniforms bustle in and out of computer-filled classrooms. New space has had to be carved out of the 20-year-old building to accommodate the growth of the school (from 150 students to 1,250). In some cases, this means that students sit at computers in "nerve centres" that, without walls or partitions, are totally exposed to passers-by. No problem, it would seem: the students concentrate on their teacher, showing great restraint even when the bell rings for break. As they form an orderly queue to file down the stairs, I study them, in vain, for signs of a Bible: according to one report, they are forced to carry the Good Book wherever they go.[32] I study the school's syllabus to see if Creationism is taught in its science classes: no, but Darwin is.

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[32] *The Observer*, 17 March 2002.

Emmanuel's intake is very diverse. 66% of the student body come from families in the lowest income band of Gateshead. 10% come from the Asian community (though in Newcastle, Asians represent just 2% of the population). When the school opened in 1990, 90% of students' parents had not attended university. As for the school application form, it is on one side of A4, and nowhere does it ask what denomination the applicant or her parents are. Yet this is a Beacon school which has been awarded the highest grading by Ofsted in its three inspections to date – 1995, 2000 and 2006.

I ask Jonathan Wynch, principal of Emmanuel, to explain the school's position on evolution and creationism.

"Naturally, as a Foundation with a Christian ethos, we stand by the Biblical account that God did indeed create the earth and everything in it – however long it took Him," he explains.

> *Creationism, as we understand it, is the belief that there is scientific evidence that the world was created in six 24-hour days. This has never been the position of Emmanuel College nor its sister schools and is taught in neither Science nor RE. What is taught in RE is that the Bible speaks of a six-day creation and that this is variously interpreted. In Science, Darwinian evolution is taught, a part of which is Darwin's own reservations regarding the absence of incontrovertible evidence to support it, including the incompleteness of the fossil record. As a result, given that students attend both RE and Science lessons, students are aware of the controversies surrounding the scientific/religious interface regarding the origins of life.*

As for Sir Peter Vardy, when asked on the Today programme by Jim Naughtie if he believed that God had

created the world in six days, he answered, clearly: "No." Asked if he would be concerned if creationist thinking was taught in classes, he answered: "Yes."[33]

The toxic creationist smear

Vardy's Emmanuel Schools Foundation is not alone in being daubed with the toxic 'creationist' brush. Reports circulated in the press about 'a number of Muslim schools' teaching creationism – though none were named; and the first state-maintained Seventh Day Adventist school in north London, John Loughborough, doing the same. Yet Keith Davidson, a registered Ofsted inspector who is also director of education at the British Union Conference of Seventh Day Adventists, which runs the school, countered that evolution *was* taught in science classes, as required by the National Curriculum. He allowed that "the school has a particular religious supposition that man was created by God. We don't apologise for that."[34]

Creationism, then, is not a wild fire sweeping the country's schools; it is not taught in science classes in place of, or as an alternative to, evolution. Instead, Creationism is taught, in a handful of schools, as part of their study of the Bible in RE. Those Christian students who subscribe to a literal interpretation of the Bible will believe that God made the world, and man, in seven days; but thanks to the National Curriculum they will also know that science has proved otherwise. In this way their Christianity has to accommodate their learning.

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[33] Today programme 15 April 2006.

[34] *The Guardian,* 19 March 2002.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION

AS THE GOVERNMENT AWAITS the interim report of its schools adjudicator, it should think carefully before repeating the mistake Ed Balls made last March. Bullying and humiliations, plots and threats, simply serve to cement prejudices and an us-against-them mentality. Neither good schools nor a good society can flourish in this atmosphere.

Faith schools have been wrongly attacked for the wrong reasons. Political positioning has led the Minister of Education to denounce these schools. In so doing, he was stoking and validating a smear campaign, orchestrated by a strident secularist lobby, that has long plagued this sector.

As we have seen, the charges against faith schools can be dismissed one by one.

The schools do not cream-skim pupils. The intake of Christian schools reflects a broader ethnic range than comprehensive schools in the same area.

Faith schools do not turn away children in care. In the 80 local authorities surveyed, only 15 looked after children had been turned down for a place at a faith school.

The schools are not divisive. Not one of the 72 British citizens convicted under the Terrorism Act of 2000 attended a faith school.

Faith schools are not misogynist. Girls who attend Muslim schools are more than twice as likely to go on to higher education than those who attend secular state or independent schools.

Faith schools do not charge parents for places. Although some schools did ask for voluntary contributions from parents even before admission, these pay for extra teaching for religious studies and, in the case of a Jewish school, for protection.

The schools do not create a ghetto mentality. Faith schools have been shown to support local communities in terms of sharing their resources, and generating social capital.

Faith schools do not teach Creationism in science classes. The schools named and supposedly shamed for teaching Creationism were inspected and cleared by Ofsted.

Faith schools have an excellent academic record, serve their local communities, and ground their students in a religious as well as the national identity. Why squander this force for the good?

Why above all misrepresent it as a force for the bad? Today's class warriors are bent on portraying faith schools as boutique education, the exclusive preserves of pushy middle-class parents. Yet for low-income parents, these schools represent the only way their children can be taught the faith that their own family holds dear. Would a government that prides itself on its egalitarian instincts block opportunities for the poor while securing them exclusively for the rich?

CONCLUSION

For Muslims in particular, faith schools offer a bridge between their religious community and the wider secular society. For Muslim girls, they are the route out of a forced marriage, or their parents' kitchen, and into higher education.

The Government needs to encourage, and copy, the existing ones rather than put obstacles in their way

Quite simply, we need more, not fewer, faith schools.

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUESTS

ON 29 MAY 2008, a Freedom of Information request was sent to the FOI officer in all 152 Local Authorities in England. This FOI asked three questions:

Q.1 In September 2007, how many looked after children in your Local Authority transferred from primary school to secondary school?

Q.2 Of these children, how many did your Local Authority seek to place in faith schools?

Q.3 Of these children, how many were refused places by faith schools?

Under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act they were required to respond within 30 days. 75 responses were received at the time of going to press (26 June). These responses are tabulated overleaf.

In those Local Authorities which answered the FOI request:

- 1,517 looked after children were transferring to secondary school;
- 227 were successfully placed in faith schools;
- only 15 were refused places in faith schools.

APPENDIX

	Party	Q1	Q2	Q3
Corporation of London				
London Borough of Barking & Dagenham	LAB	12	0	0
London Borough of Barnet	CON			
London Borough of Bexley	CON			
London Borough of Brent	NOC	15	4	0
London Borough of Bromley	CON			
London Borough of Camden	NOC	7	0	0
London Borough of Croydon	CON			
London Borough of Ealing	CON			
London Borough of Enfield	CON	6	1	0
London Borough of Greenwich	LAB			
London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham	CON			
London Borough of Haringey	LAB			
London Borough of Harrow	CON			
London Borough of Havering	CON	7	0	0
London Borough of Hillingdon	CON	5	1	0
London Borough of Hounslow	NOC	6	0	0
London Borough of Islington	NOC			
London Borough of Kingston upon Thames	LIBDEM	1	0	0
London Borough of Lambeth	LAB			
London Borough of Merton	NOC	2	1	0
London Borough of Redbridge	CON			
London Borough of Richmond upon Thames	LIBDEM			
London Borough of Southwark	NOC	20	1	0
London Borough of Sutton	LIBDEM	5	3	0
London Borough of Tower Hamlets	LAB			
London Borough of Waltham Forest	NOC			
London Borough of Wandsworth	CON	16	0	0
Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea	CON			
Westminster City Council	CON			
Bedfordshire County Council	CON	21	1	0
Buckinghamshire County Council	CON			
Cambridgeshire County Council	CON			
Cheshire County Council	NOC			
Cornwall County Council	LIBDEM			
Cumbria County Council	NOC	30	7	0
Derbyshire County Council	LAB	26	0	0
Devon County Council	LIBDEM	30	1	0
Dorset County Council	CON	10	0	0
Durham County Council	LAB	8	2	0
East Sussex County Council	CON	29	5	3
Essex County Council	CON			
Gloucestershire County Council	CON	32	7	1
Hampshire County Council	CON			
Hertfordshire County Council	CON			
Kent County Council	CON	65	31	0

APPENDIX

	Party	Q1	Q2	Q3
Lancashire County Council	LAB			
Leicestershire County Council	CON			
Lincolnshire County Council	CON	40	0	0
Norfolk County Council	CON	68	1	0
North Yorkshire County Council	CON	27	0	0
Northamptonshire County Council	CON			
Northumberland County Council	LAB			
Nottinghamshire County Council	LAB	30	1	0
Oxfordshire County Council	CON	15	0	0
Shropshire County Council	CON	5	0	0
Somerset County Council	LIBDEM	22	2	0
Staffordshire County Council	LAB			
Suffolk County Council	CON	9	1	0
Surrey County Council	CON	10	1	0
Warwickshire County Council	NOC	20	3	0
West Sussex County Council	CON			
Wiltshire County Council	CON	23	3	0
Worcestershire County Council	CON			
Barnsley Metropolitan Council	LAB			
Birmingham City Metropolitan Council	NOC	61	3	0
Bolton Metropolitan Council	NOC			
Bradford City Metropolitan District Council	NOC	45	8	0
Bury Metropolitan Council	CON	14	4	0
Calderdale Metropolitan Council	NOC	15	2	0
Coventry Metropolitan Council	NOC	18	3	0
Dudley Metropolitan Council	CON	33	0	0
Gateshead Metropolitan Borough Council	LAB			
Kirklees Metropolitan Council	NOC			
Knowsley Metropolitan Council	LAB	11	0	0
Leeds City Metropolitan Council	NOC	70	14	2
Liverpool City Metropolitan Council	NOC	33	8	0
Manchester City Council	LAB	74	16	2
Newcastle upon Tyne Metropolitan Council	LIBDEM			
Oldham Metropolitan Council	NOC	20	7	0
Rochdale Metropolitan Council	LIBDEM	13	1	0
Rotherham Metropolitan Council	LAB	19	3	0
Salford City Council	LAB			
Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council	LAB			
Sefton Metropolitan Council	NOC			
Sheffield City Metropolitan Council	NOC			
Solihull Metropolitan Councl	CON	14	0	0
South Tyneside Metropolitan Council	LAB	9	4	1
St Helens Metropolitan Council	NOC	7	4	0
Stockport Metropolitan Council	LIBDEM			
Sunderland Metropolitan Council	LAB	25	6	0
Tameside Council	LAB	26	4	0

APPENDIX

	Party	Q1	Q2	Q3
Trafford Metropolitan Council	CON			
Wakefield Council	LAB	14	0	0
Walsall Metropolitan Council	CON	21	2	0
Wigan Metropolitan Council	LAB	23	8	0
Wirral Metropolitan Council	NOC	32	12	6
Wolverhampton Metropolitan Council	NOC			
Bath & North East Somerset Council	NOC	?	10	0
Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council	NOC			
Blackpool Council	CON			
Bournemouth Council	CON	7	0	0
Bracknell Forest Council	CON	4	1	0
Brighton & Hove City Council	NOC			
Bristol City Council	NOC			
Darlington Council	LAB	6	0	0
Derby Council	NOC	21	2	0
East Riding of Yorkshire Council	CON	14	0	0
Halton Council	LAB			
Herefordshire District Council	CON	17	0	0
Isle of Wight Council	CON			
Isles of Scilly Council	OTHER			
Kingston-upon-Hull Council	N/A	12	0	0
Leicester City Council	LAB	19	0	0
Luton Borough Council	LAB			
Medway Council	CON	21	2	0
Milton Keynes Council	NOC	4	0	0
North Lincolnshire Council	LAB			
North Somerset Council	CON			
Nottingham City Council	LAB			
Peterborough City Council	CON	20	2	0
Plymouth City Council	CON	25	1	0
Poole Borough Council	CON	4	1	0
Portsmouth City Council	NOC			
Reading Borough Council	NOC			
Redcar & Cleveland Council	NOC	1	0	0
Rutland Council	CON			
Slough Council	LAB			
South Gloucestershire Council	NOC	6	0	0
Southampton City Council	CON	16	1	0
Southend-on-Sea Council	CON	21	6	0
Stockton on Tees Borough Council	NOC			
Swindon Council	CON	19	0	0
Telford & Wrekin Council	NOC			
Thurrock Council	NOC			
Warrington Council	NOC	13	4	0
West Berkshire Council	CON			
Windsor & Maidenhead Council	CON	3	0	0

APPENDIX

	Party	Q1	Q2	Q3
Wokingham Council	CON			
York City Council	NOC			
Bedford Borough Council	NOC			
Watford Borough Council	LIBDEM			
London Borough of Hackney	LAB			
London Borough of Lewisham	NOC			
London Borough of Newham	LAB			
Doncaster Metropolitan Council	NOC	19	4	0
North Tyneside Metropolitan Council	CON			
Hartlepool Council	NOC			
Middlesbrough Council	LAB	19	5	0
Stoke on Trent Council	NOC			
Torbay Council	CON	7	2	0
TOTAL		**1517**	**227**	**15**

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The witch hunt is on.

Gordon Brown's government has unleashed a vicious attack on faith schools.

This may curry favour with the strident secularists of the Labour grassroots. But what may be good politics is appalling education policy.

Faith schools work. They account for a third of all primary schools but make up two thirds of the top 209 primary schools. They are good for Muslim girls as parents have the confidence to keep their daughters in school for longer, and they increase the chances of Muslim girls going on to higher education. They offer a chance of a high quality education that would otherwise be available only to the rich; they provide exactly the "ethos" of aspirations, respect and civic consciousness that the Government claims to want throughout the state system; and they offer a valuable source of autonomy and innovation in a system plagued by centralism and bureaucracy.

The Government accuses faith schools of cherry-picking candidates from the articulate middle class, of turning away children in care, of being educational ghettos that are a law unto themselves. But new research for this report proves that these charges to be false.

Cristina Odone concludes that the Government's attack on faith schools is misguided – and that we need not fewer but more faith schools.

Price: £7.50