

Pupils were exposed to extremist views and teachers bullied Ofsted finds

Jun 09, 2014 22:42 By Jason Beattie, The Daily Mirror

In one primary school white girls were likened to prostitutes and pupils claim they were told girls could not refuse sex to their husbands once married

A “culture of fear and intimidation” has gripped schools in the Muslim Trojan Horse row, with some failing to protect children from extremist ideas, Ofsted found.

In a report into 21 schools in Birmingham, the inspectors said there was evidence of a “campaign to target certain schools in order to alter their ethos”, with teachers feeling “bullied” and forced out of their jobs by governors.

One institution invited in a radical preacher to give a talk and another organised visits to Saudi Arabia only for Muslim pupils.

At a primary school terms such as “white prostitute” were used in assembly and at another, students were taught “evolution is not what we believe”. Ofsted head Sir Michael Wilshaw said: “Some findings are deeply worrying.”

Tory Education Secretary Michael Gove admitted there had been lapses by his own department, Ofsted and the council. He said: “We must acknowledge there has been a failure in the past to do everything possible to tackle non-violent extremism.”

The report was rejected by the schools, and MPs said there was no evidence of radicalisation – the claim that sparked the probe after a letter claimed there was a Trojan Horse plot by -hardline Muslims to seize control of governing boards.

The letter is believed to have been a hoax, but Mr Gove said he would consult on making it mandatory for state-funded schools to promote “British values”. Ofsted found: “A culture of fear and intimidation developed in some schools since their previous inspection. Some heads said they have been marginalised or forced out of jobs.

“Some reported there has been a campaign to target certain schools to alter their character and ethos. Staff described feeling intimidated or bullied by governors into making changes they did not support. Others testified that they have been treated unfairly because of their gender or religious belief.”

Yesterday five sites – Golden Hillock School, Nansen Primary, Park View Academy, Oldknow Academy and Saltley School – were placed in special measures. A sixth, Alston Primary, was already in special measures.

Four are academies, meaning they are the responsibility of the Department for Education. Yesterday Shadow Education Secretary Tristram Hunt said Mr Gove’s policy on academies was “in disarray”. He said: “His vision of controlling every school from a desk in Whitehall doesn’t work.” Birmingham Labour MP Shabana Mahmood said the reports made “shocking reading” but the claims of radicalism were “unproven”.

She said: “Muslim parents feel their children are automatically under suspicion.” After the report, an ex-teacher at Park View told Channel 5 some pupils were complaining they had been told in sex education “girls could not refuse sex to their husbands once married”.

David Hughes, of the trust that runs Park View, Golden Hillock and Nansen, said it would mount a legal challenge against Ofsted. He said: “We wholeheartedly dispute these gradings. Inspectors came looking for extremism and proof children were having religion forced on them as part of a Muslim plot. The report found absolutely no evidence.”

A Muslim school in Luton, Beds, was condemned for promoting fundamentalism after being found with books on stoning and lashing. Ofsted said Olive Tree Primary’s resources did not “present balanced views of the world.”