

Response to the 2014 BSI Ofsted report

The Bridge Schools Inspectorate (BSI) has an agreement with the Department for Education (DfE) that specifies that we must inspect schools thoroughly and carefully to determine whether they meet the legal requirements: the Independent School Standards, the Early Years Foundation Stage, where applicable, and the relevant parts of the Equality Act 2010. Since BSI began to inspect seven years ago, Ofsted has monitored a sample of our inspections. For every inspection that has been monitored, including those monitored in the last academic year, HM Inspectors have confirmed that we meet the terms of our agreement with the DfE and that regulatory matters are dealt with properly.

Ofsted has published a report on BSI every year since 2009. The quality, strengths and experience of BSI have been commended in previous reports.

The 2014 Ofsted report was, we consider, seriously misleading because it does not make clear to readers that of the seven monitoring events, three of them, nearly half, relate to one inspection, which took place in June 2014 and it does not reflect many of the positive comments made in the monitoring letters we have received during the year. The conduct of the inspection in June 2014 is the subject of a formal complaint.

We probe carefully and thoroughly to determine whether there is any danger to pupils from extremism and radicalisation. We refute the assertion made in the 2014 report that we do not; and we consider that the conclusion is not a fair or reasonable reflection of the evidence.

The Ofsted monitor of the BSI inspection in June arrived with the name of an alleged extremist who was associated with the school, but he did not at the time of the inspection share this information with the BSI Lead Inspector. Nevertheless, independently of this, the experienced BSI team inspector, who works closely with his local constabulary on the *Prevent* agenda, made detailed checks on several people associated with the school, including the person identified by Ofsted. The same Ofsted monitor, who later undertook an evidence based review of the BSI inspection commented that 'The section [in the evidence base] regarding checks on visitors to the school, documents the evidence thoroughly.'

We are told that an expert within Ofsted identified the alleged extremist. Despite our requests for further information, we have not been told the identity of this expert or the nature of his or her expertise. At a face-to-face meeting with senior Ofsted managers, it was said that the only technique used to identify suspect individuals was to google their names. This highly questionable practice substantiates the concerns recently expressed by the Reverend Nigel Genders, the Chief Education Officer for the Church of England, that Ofsted is ill-equipped to monitor extremism:

'as a country we have access to both counter-terrorism experts and educational professionals. Suggesting these two groups swap roles in an attempt to build a safer society needs more thought.'

BSI endorses these concerns. We consider that the DfE, Ofsted and all independent inspectorates must work together within clearly defined legal parameters to assist counter-terrorism experts and the authorities in identifying areas of potential concern

in schools. Inspectorates of faith schools undoubtedly have an important role to play.