

Smear, anecdote and hoax – the Trojan Horse reports

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A letter in today's Guardian runs as follows:

The new secretary of state for education, Nicky Morgan, makes various pledges following the "Trojan Horse" reports on Birmingham schools. Several of her pledges are valuable. The basis for them, however, is unsound. Peter Clarke's report is not "forensic", as Nicky Morgan claims (Report, 22 July), but a biased mix of uncorroborated smear, anecdote, hoax and chatroom gossip.

It reflects neoconservative assumptions about the nature of extremism; ignores significant testimony and viewpoints; implies the essential problem in Birmingham is simply the influence of certain individuals; discusses governance but not curriculum; ignores the concerns and perceptions of parents and young people; and is unlikely to bear judicial scrutiny. The Trojan horse affair has done much damage in Birmingham, both to individuals and to community cohesion.

Political leaders have key roles in the urgent process of restoration and support for curriculum renewal. Alas, they will not be much helped by the official reports of Clarke, Ian Kershaw and Ofsted.

They will, though, be helped by the unique strength and goodwill of people in Birmingham itself.

The letter is at <http://www.theguardian.com/education/2014/jul/28/rights-and-wrongs-trojan-horse-birmingham>. It is signed by Tim Brighouse, Gus John, Arun Kundnani, Sameena Choudry, Akram Khan-Cheema, Arzu Merali, Robin Richardson, Maurice Irfan Coles, Gill Cressey, Steph Green, Ashfaque Chowdhury, Ibrahim Hewitt, Baljeet Singh Gill, Arshad Ali, S Sayyid, Massoud Shadjareh, Abdool Karim Vakil and Tom Wylie. There is information about Nicky Morgan's pledges at <http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2014/jul/22/schools-face-curbs-extremism-birmingham-trojan-horse-affair>.