

To the Right Honourable Michael Gove, Secretary of State for Education,

Please find enclosed both a summary and full letter signed by the Chair of Governors, on behalf of the Governing Body and myself outlining the unlawful actions of the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead Local Authority.

In addition to the letters I would like to inform you that good progress was being made for Bisham School to become an Academy within the Oxford Diocese Academy Trust. It is envisaged that I would remain the Head Teacher if Bisham School elects to become an Academy. I believe that the school would continue to flourish and serve our community with the quality of Education about which I know you to be passionate. I could then retire from the school leaving it safe hands.

It is understood that the LA do not support this course of action and the warning notice has stalled this process. The LA are acting rapidly and it is believed that they wish to remove me as Head Teacher and possibly close Bisham C of E Primary School within the next one or two months. It is believed the LA wish to force Bisham School to become part of the White Waltham Academy. The LA are attempting to force individual meetings with the Governing Body this week, it is believed with a view to applying to The DFE to appoint an Interim Executive Board. They are also forcing a meeting with me on 2nd June 2014 in an attempt to remove me.

I believe I have been a strong leader of Bisham School for 29 years. This is evidenced by consistently good or excellent results as per the letter from David Laws MP dated 2012, and more recently September 2013 which is attached. The school has also been rated "Good" or "Good" with elements of outstanding for every Ofsted inspection conducted over the last 29 years. The most recent Ofsted inspections of 2012 and 4th April 2014, where Bisham School was again rated "Good", are attached.

It would appear that there is a clear and systematic campaign by members of RBWM Local Authority to unfairly and unlawfully discredit the Governing Body and me. It would be unlawful and unjust if the LA are permitted to continue with the actions as outlined above.

Jim Cooke
Headteacher



2014/0041360POSoS

Rt Hon Michael Gove MP
Secretary of State

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tel: 0370 000 2288 www.education.gov.uk/help/contactus

Jim Cooke
Headteacher, Bisham C of E Primary School
Church Lane
Bisham
Berkshire
SL7 1RW

11/12 July 2014

Dear Jim,

Thank you for your letter, received by my office on 3 June, enclosing a summary and full letter signed by both by you and your Chair of Governors, Mr Robert Clayton, raising concerns about the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead Local Authority.

Thank you for sending such a comprehensive file detailing your concerns about the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead. I was very sorry to read that you have had such trouble in securing the outcomes you believe to be best for your school.

My officials have considered all of the information you sent, and have identified three separate complaints. I understand that the first of these complaints is about the lawfulness of the Warning Notice issued to you by the local authority. Unfortunately it is not clear from your letter whether you have yet made representation to Ofsted against this notice. More guidance on the Schools Causing Concern process is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/schools-causing-concern--2>, and gives further information on when an LA can issue a notice. It should help you determine if it would be appropriate for you to make representations to Ofsted against the local authority's actions in this instance.


The further two complaints you detail are both against the local authority, with regard to their actions against you as head teacher, and in relation to the governors' indemnity insurance. I am afraid that these are not matters on which I can, in my capacity as Secretary of State, intervene. This is not due to any lack of concern, but rather because there is a local complaints process you must instead follow.

Information on your local authority complaints process can be obtained from the local authority in question, should you not have it already. If, after lodging this complaint, you are unhappy at the way it has been handled, you may be able to

escalate your concerns to the independent Local Government Ombudsman (LGO). Information about making a complaint to the LGO can be found at: www.lgo.org.uk/making-a-complaint/.

Despite the problems you have experienced, I am glad to hear that Bisham C of E Primary School is considering submitting an application to convert to academy status. At the time of writing, no application has been received by my department. As I am sure you are aware, as a Church of England school you will require the written consent of your Diocese before you submit any application to my department.

Thank you for writing to me on this important matter. I appreciate that my lack of powers to intervene at this stage must come as a disappointment, but I do hope you are able to work with your local authority or the LGO to satisfactorily resolve the situation.

Yours,


MICHAEL GOVE

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 15 October 2014 09:52
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: [REDACTED]

Subject: RE: Query re complaint about warning notice from Bisham CofE URN 109951
Importance: High

Good morning [REDACTED]

As promised, I have been in touch with the SoS's Private Office who have been able to confirm the following:

The SoS replied to the complainant (11 June 2014) and alerted them to the Schools Causing Concern process which provides further information on when an LA can issue a notice. He suggested that the guidance should have helped the complainant determine if it would have been appropriate to make representations to Ofsted against the LA's actions in this instance. He did not receive a response so the Department has taken no further action and the warning notice stands.

Please let me know if you require any further information

Best wishes

[REDACTED]

Part time hours: All day Monday, all day Tuesday, Wednesday morning, Thursday morning

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 14 October 2014 16:21
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: Query re complaint about warning notice from Bisham CofE URN 109951

Dear [REDACTED]

Re: query from Ofsted about whether or not the Department has either intervened or is investigating the issuing of a warning notice to
Bisham Church of England primary school URN 109951

I hope you don't mind me contacting you directly as [REDACTED] (Diary Manager to Lord Nash) provided me with your details and stated that you were the best person to speak to.

This enquiry is because the headteacher of Bisham school is objecting to the reference to the warning notice in the school's recent inspection report. This report has yet to be published, and if possible we want to avoid unnecessary delays.

Unless the Department informs Ofsted to the contrary, we are of the view that the warning notice stands, and if so reference should be included in the report. Having been sent a copy of the draft report to check for factual accuracy, the headteacher objected stating:
'a complaint was made to the Secretary of State for education because the issuance of the warning notice was unlawful. The local authority decision to impose the warning notice is being investigated by an independent investigator. Therefore the decision regarding the legality of the warning notice is pending.'

I would be most grateful if you were able to confirm the following:

1. whether or not the Department has directed the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead LA to withdraw the warning notice issued to Bisham school
2. whether or not the Department is investigating the legality of the warning notice.

Context:

Windsor and Maidenhead local authority issued Bisham Church of England Primary with a warning notice on 13 March 2014. The warning notice also advised the Chair of the Governing Body that representation could be made to the Chief Inspector at Ofsted against the warning notice, within 15 working days of the date of the warning notice.

No such appeal was received by Ofsted. However, in response to the warning notice the governing body sent the local authority their action plan 4 April 2014.

Ofsted was subsequently copied into a letter of complaint dated 30 May 2014, sent from the headteacher and chair of governors at Bisham, to The Rt. Honourable Michael Gove MP in his capacity as Secretary of State at that time.

Hannah informed me that you were the best person to speak to about this matter and that I could expect a response, to queries 1 and 2 above, within the next couple of days at the latest.

Many thanks in advance for your assistance with this matter, and please don't hesitate to contact me if you require additional information.

Best wishes

Her Majesty's Inspector

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