

I, Michael Gove of the Department for Education, Sanctuary Buildings, Great Smith Street, London SW1P 3BT, WILL SAY in response to the letter from the Leveson Inquiry dated 26 March 2012 as follows:

(1) Who you are and a brief summary of your career history both in the media and in politics.

1. I am currently MP for Surrey Heath, having been elected to the House of Commons in 2005, and Secretary of State for Education, having been appointed in 2010. I joined the Shadow Cabinet as Shadow Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families in July 2007.
2. Prior to entering Parliament I worked as a journalist. Soon after leaving university in 1988, I joined the Thomson Regional Newspapers' journalist training scheme and was then hired by the Aberdeen Press and Journal. I subsequently worked for a number of media organisations, including Scottish Television, Grampian TV, the BBC and Channel 4.
3. In January 1996 I joined The Times as a Leader Writer. I worked full time at The Times until January 2005, writing leaders, then editing the Comment pages, then acting as News Editor from 2000-2001, then working as an Assistant Editor and latterly as Editor of the Saturday edition. I also wrote an op-ed column for the paper from 1999 until 2005. After I was selected as Conservative candidate for Surrey Heath in the summer of 2004 I arranged to leave the staff of the Times. I was retained on a contract worth £60,000 a year to write a weekly column for the newspaper and such other pieces (reviews etc) as might be commissioned ad hoc.
4. During my period at The Times I also broadcast regularly, on programmes including: Any Questions, The Week In Westminster, The Book Quiz, The Moral Maze and Newsnight Review (all on the BBC). After being selected as an MP I stood down from The Moral Maze but continued to appear on Newsnight Review.
5. During my time as an MP, as well as my column for The Times I also wrote columns for Building Magazine and the newspaper Scotland on Sunday, for which I received payment. I also wrote, on an occasional basis, for the Spectator, Standpoint, the Daily Express, The Guardian and the Daily and Sunday Telegraph. It is in the nature of opinion journalism that there will be other titles for which I will have written occasional pieces.
6. I gave up all paid-for journalism and outside earning in January 2010, in keeping with a policy governing Shadow Cabinet activity laid down by David Cameron at that time.

Education responsibilities with a particular bearing on the media

(2) Please assist the Inquiry by setting out as fully as possible the extent to which your current policy and operational responsibilities have or may have a

particular bearing on the conduct and business interests of the media. The Inquiry is particularly interested in the area of the formulation, development and implementation of policy on free schools, and the possible involvement of media businesses, particularly Mr Rupert Murdoch's, in the provision of such schools, but there may be other areas. Your answer should include in particular a description of any powers or functions you exercise in the relevant areas by virtue of statute, and any financial or governance decisions it falls to you to make.

7. My current policy and operational responsibilities as Education Secretary bring me into contact with media organisations in a number of ways. It is part of my responsibility as a Cabinet Minister to seek to explain and account for Government actions with those who monitor, report and comment on public affairs. This being said, the vast majority of DfE policy and operational responsibilities do not affect the conduct and business interests of the media.
8. There are a number of media organisations which have direct commercial interests in education matters. The most prominent is Pearson, an education publisher, and the owner of the awarding body Edexcel. It has been my policy, as much as possible, to ensure that procurement decisions in education, over textbooks, technology and other matters, are taken at the lowest possible level - preferably by schools and colleges themselves - rather than at Departmental level.
9. Free Schools and Academies are not commercial ventures or businesses. They are social enterprises, run on a not-for-profit basis while conforming to charity law and company law. Any organisation which seeks to support or sponsor a Free School or Academy is contributing to the public sector, not deriving financial advantage from it.
10. Underperforming schools become Academies with the help of a philanthropic sponsor. Academy sponsors no longer have to provide monetary help, but instead provide vision, leadership and challenge traditional thinking about how schools are run. There is also a second route to becoming an Academy through a conversion process. Schools that are performing well apply via the DfE to gain freedom from local control and have to be approved to become autonomous Academies. The majority of Academies are now converter Academies.
11. The Free School programme is a demand led programme that requires new school proposers to apply through a competitive process. Free School proposers often include parents, teachers, faith groups and charity groups.
12. They can let contracts for services to help them run Free Schools. As long as the contracts are let in accordance with procurement regulations, contractors can make a profit from the services they provide to schools. This already takes place in the maintained school sector, where schools can contract out teaching services, ICT services, catering and cleaning services etc. Free school proposers remain accountable for the performance of the Free School and for the effective and proper use of public funding.

13. I take it as a point of principle and it is certainly my strong perception and belief that the involvement of major employers, philanthropists and business leaders in Academies, Free Schools and other education programmes serves both the best interests of children and the wider public good. This applies to media organisations in exactly the same way as any other organisation.
 14. Knowing that Mr Murdoch was involved in supporting educational reformers in the US, I was keen to see British children benefit from his philanthropy. Therefore I was interested in encouraging him, as I have encouraged others to provide support for new school provision. I meet numerous people on a variety of occasions from social functions to formal meetings where I may solicit further support for education reform. These include ongoing meetings with those currently involved in education reform such as JCB and Lord Harris of CarpetRight as well as people I hope to persuade such as the Weston family and Mr Len Blavatnik.
 15. Under statute, now under the Academies Act 2010, as Education Secretary, I have the right to enter into a funding agreement with any party to provide state education. The signatory to that funding agreement will receive revenue funding for that school designed to replicate that provided to maintained schools in that area. Recommendations for funding are made to me only after they have been rigorously assessed by officials and another minister. The resources allocated to the school can only be used for the purposes set out in the funding agreement – namely the education of the children attending the school.
 16. There are a number of legal requirements that must be met before entering into a funding agreement to establish a new Academy or Free School. I am required to consider the impact on other local education institutions, and the proposers are required to consult locally on whether Academy arrangements should be entered into. Where a funding agreement is entered into, this sets out the contractual requirements which the Academy or Free School must adhere to. Model Funding Agreements and application forms are enclosed (see MG1 to MG4).
 17. Overall, the spending decisions of the Department are dictated by funding formulae which are designed to ensure we fund schools equitably, according to well established criteria.
- (3)(i) The Inquiry would be grateful for an understanding of how these responsibilities work in practice. In particular, we would like the clearest possible picture of how you manage press relationships in relation to the formulation and execution of policy impacting on the media or on the wider business interests of media proprietors.
18. I formulate policy with the express aim of raising standards for all children and helping the disadvantaged most of all. There are clear, and robust, rules to ensure ministers do not favour any particular commercial interest in the exercise of their responsibilities. I have made relevant declarations of

interest and am guided, at all times, by the high quality and impartial advice I receive from colleagues. In respect of their business interests, I treat media organisations like all other commercial organisations. It is important to note there are very few decisions which fall to Ministers in the DfE to take which have an impact on the media and the wider business interests of media proprietors.

(ii) How are the views of the press received, and then tested?

19. Like all politicians I receive the views of the press with interest, and give them such weight as I consider appropriate in the light of the cogency of the arguments made and the quality of any evidence said to support them. As I have already noted I formulate policy with the express aim of raising standards for all children and helping the disadvantaged most of all. Therefore I will consider the views of the Press (but not only of the Press) test them against other material and advice at my disposal, and make use of them in so far as they assist me in promotion of that policy.

(iii) How, if at all, does that differ from the way that the views of other parts of the media industry, and other stakeholders, including potential bidders for education-related contracts, are handled?

20. It does not.

(iv) How far is that process transparent or otherwise placed into the public domain?

(v) Do you or your officials schedule meetings or briefings with media representatives in relation to these matters, and if so with whom?

21. Since the Coalition Government came into power, Departments have published quarterly returns on all Ministerial meetings with external organisations, including those meetings with members of the Press (see MG5). This information is published on the DfE website. We also reply to FOI requests and PQs. When we offer contracts, we advertise them in line with procurement rules.

(vi) Do any groups or proprietors have particular access to you or your department at these times?

22. No individual group or proprietor enjoys any preferential access. The meetings I have had with media groups or proprietors are set out in MG5. The next quarterly return will be published by the Government in May and will be provided to the Inquiry then.

The Inquiry would be grateful if you could provide some specific, current or recent, examples.

23. A list of my media engagements can be found at MG5. The Government publishes quarterly returns of these meetings and the next return will be

published in May and will be provided to the Inquiry. I did not discuss education-related contracts in any of these meetings.

(4)(i) Please in particular provide full details, including a chronological account of all discussions, meetings and correspondence with Rupert Murdoch and those representing his interests, together with all relevant documentation, relating to the possible involvement of Mr Murdoch's interests in the UK education sector.

24. A list of those meetings I have had with Mr Murdoch direct or at meetings where Mr Murdoch was present is at MG5.

25. I enclose details of relevant correspondence the Department of Education has had with News International (MG6).

26. In these meetings, education reform was discussed in general terms and specific proposals for the establishment of a new Academy or Free School were discussed. But, as I have stressed, this was a philanthropic proposal, not a commercial one.

27. I am not aware that Mr Murdoch has any commercial interests in the education sector in the UK except for his ownership of HarperCollins which has an education division.

(ii) Please explain the history of your relationship with Mr Murdoch in this context, and please set out your current and future expectations about his involvement in the UK education sector.

28. I got to know Rupert Murdoch shortly after joining The Times in 1996. I met him at several editorial lunches and also at conferences.

29. Mr Murdoch is already involved in education, and educational debates, in the US and saw a similar opportunity in England. As a result, I have had a number of conversations with Rupert Murdoch and News Corporation regarding Academies and Free Schools. We discussed the principles in broad terms and I explained both the opportunities and constraints. In these discussions, it was my aim to persuade News Corporation to invest some of their money and time in state education in England. I made clear that in his case we would not provide capital, buildings or subsidy for any Academy and that any proposal would have to go through the proper legal processes in the normal way. I have had similar discussions with a range of other business leaders and philanthropists.

(iii) Please also confirm the extent to which, if any, you have engaged or may engage with other media-related organisations about possible involvement in the UK education sector.

30. I refer you to the quarterly returns at MG5. I have discussed our education reform programme with representatives of the management of Pearson and

the Daily Mail General Trust. I would be happy to discuss with any media organisation opportunities for them to support education reform.

Without prejudice to the generality of this question, your account should, in particular, cover:

(a) your reported visit in November 2010 to east London to inspect a site where Mr Rupert Murdoch is said to have offered to build an academy school. Please confirm who attended on this occasion (the media reported that Rebekah Brooks, James Harding and Will Lewis were amongst the party) and why they attended;

31. On our visit in November 2010, with the Mayor of London, to a site in Docklands, we discussed what benefits News Corporation's educational investment could bring to the East End. Since News Corporation arranged the trip they decided which members of their own organisation should attend. Attendees were, I believe, James Murdoch, Rebekah Brooks, Will Lewis, James Harding, Boris Johnson, Neale Coleman, Guto Harri, Sara Cadisch, Lord Coe, John Armit and my Private Secretary (see MG7). To the best of my knowledge this is an accurate list, but the Department does not keep a record of attendees at events not organised by the Department itself. We visited the proposed new school site, but News Corp decided not to take this project further. A material factor in that decision may have been our inability to provide additional capital funding.

(b) the January 2011 visit to the United Kingdom of Joel Klein, the former Chancellor of New York City's Department of Education and Director of News Corp's Education Division, and now responsible for News Corp's Management and Scrutiny Committee, as a reported guest of the Department for Education. During that visit you attended several meetings with Mr Klein. Please set out the purpose of that visit and those meetings, and the extent of the cost to public funds.

32. On 5 November 2010, I invited Mr Klein, who at that time was Chancellor of the New York City Board of Education, to come to London to address a conference hosted by the Department for those interested in setting up Free Schools (the agenda for which is at MG8 and the letter of invitation is at MG9). I had also invited a number of other speakers from other jurisdictions. Subsequent to my extending the invitation, Mr Klein joined the board of directors of News Corp on 9 November 2010. I had no prior knowledge of this. Mr Klein, a widely celebrated school reformer, agreed to speak at our conference and combined that with other meetings with people interested in educational reform. The purpose in inviting him to speak was to add a celebrated name in the world of school reform to the conference guest list, who would be able to communicate the benefits of school reform with passion and authority.

33. When Mr Klein was in London he was a guest at a dinner hosted by the Department of Education on 28 January 2011 for conference speakers

including Mike Feinberg, Co-founder and Superintendent KIPP Houston, Aaron Brenner, Head of Primary Schools KIPP Houston, Paul Castro, Head of High Schools KIPP Houston, Jo Baker, Executive Director Washington DC Public Charter School Board, Monique Miller, Performance Manager, Washington DC Public Charter School Board, and Karinne Kennedy, parent of children attending SEED Charter School, Washington DC.

34. The DfE covered the travel and accommodation costs for each of the international speakers who addressed the Free Schools conference. This included a return economy flight from the US, accommodation costs at a government approved hotel and one evening meal. The total cost for Mr Klein's international flights and accommodation was £700.
35. When Mr Klein was in London, he and I were guests at Rupert Murdoch's house for dinner on 26 January, as well as a dinner of over 40 at Matthew Freud's house on 25 January and we attended a lunch hosted by Policy Exchange on 28 January. On all these occasions, Mr Klein talked about education reform to varied audiences which included former Labour Ministers, current teachers and representatives of relevant think tanks.

(b)(i) Who initiated the visit?

36. I initiated the visit.

(b)(ii) Is this degree of hospitality afforded to other representatives of media companies, or representatives of other business interests, by the Department for Education?

37. Mr Klein was not offered any hospitality as a representative of a media company or of other business interests so the basis for any comparison is lacking. He was invited when he was Chancellor of the New York City Board of Education and he came here to speak of his experiences in that role as an education reformer (see MG9).

(b)(iii) Please explain the history of your relationship with Mr Klein in this context.

38. My interactions with Joel Klein have been driven by my desire to learn from his work as the Chancellor of New York's Department of Education. In the same spirit I have also sought out advice from the former Chancellor of DC schools, Michelle Rhee, the former Chicago Chancellor and now US Education Secretary, Arne Duncan, the head of the New Orleans recovery school district, Patrick Dobard, the Louisiana superintendent of education, John White and the superintendent of Miami Dade County schools Alberto Carvalho. I recall recently attending the same American Enterprise Institute conference as Mr Klein during a trip to America in March 2012.

Questions about engagement with the media

(5)(i) In your view, what are the specific benefits to the public to be secured from a relationship between senior politicians at a national level and the media?

39. A healthy democracy needs a healthy press. Citizens benefit when any politicians explain their policies and decisions in a public forum. Therefore senior politicians' engagement with the media - newspapers, television and other new media - helps inform public debate. If, through a relationship with someone in the media, a politician can explain their views more thoroughly before those views are reported, this can improve the quality of information transmitted to the public. Likewise, if through a relationship with a politician, a journalist can challenge a politician's views more vigorously, the quality of information is again enhanced. Often, journalists will communicate to politicians the opinions of their readers, providing another means by which politicians receive the views of others.

(ii) What are the risks to the public interest inherent in such a relationship?

40. There are always potential risks in any relationship between politicians and those (I note not only media persons or entities) who might benefit commercially, or otherwise, from Government decisions. In the particular area of concern to this Inquiry - it is right that politicians should receive the views of journalists, it would be wrong - and against clear rules - to take direction from them in the formulation of government policy, or to do them commercial favours as a quid pro quo for their support

(iii) In your view, how should the former be maximised, and the latter minimised and managed? Please give examples.

41. Contact should be governed by common sense, helpful precedents, the Ministerial Code, the requirements of the Register of Members Interests and the law of the land, including procurement law. The benefits are maximised and the risks minimised by the exercise of good judgement in that overall context. And the civil service is skilled at helping ministers avoid any impropriety.

(6) Would you distinguish between the position of a senior politician in government and a senior politician in opposition for these purposes? If so, please explain how, and why.

42. Politicians in Government, because they can dispose of public money and determine public policy, necessarily have greater responsibilities and the number of decisions or judgement calls about conflicts of interest, actual and apparent, will accordingly and, inevitably, be greater. The existence of the Ministerial Code reflects this.

(7) The Inquiry is interested to understand the extent to which your views about the relationship between the media and politicians have been shaped by your experience as a journalist and media practitioner, both before and after

you entered Parliament. Please describe your relevant media business and journalism activities and experiences over this time, and the specific insights you consider you bring to these issues as a result.

43. As a journalist I learned to respect the hard work and dedication of those who submit themselves for election. I also believed their hard work was more effective when scrutinised and analysed by a strong, free and diverse media. I covered politics as a reporter, including for the BBC, and appreciated there were men and women of goodwill and ideals in every party but that none had a monopoly of wisdom. As a columnist and opinion page editor I enjoyed polemical takes on politics, but the arguments made were inspired by respect for the importance of politics. I made the transition to elected politics because I believe in the importance of public service. My experience as a journalist has, I hope, made me realise that however difficult and irritating some reporting and comment may be, it is better to allow newspapers and other media to err on the side of freedom rather than be subjected to external constraint.

44. My view on the role of the media, and its influence on politics, is – as one MP once said – that politicians who complain about the press are like sailors who complain about the sea. A vigorous, questioning, energetic media hold politicians to account. That is a good thing.

(8) The Inquiry notes the material you have placed in the public domain, including in the Parliamentary register of Members' interests, about the extent to which you have maintained your practice in journalism since your election to Parliament. Please assist the Inquiry further by confirming, by way of a chronological narrative, the extent of the payments and other benefits which you have received from, and any other interests you have in:

(a) any enterprise in which Mr Rupert Murdoch has an interest,

45. Since my election to Parliament, from January 2005 to January 2010 I was on a contract to write a column for The Times, for which I was paid £60,000 a year but no other money from Mr Murdoch or his companies and I have (and had) no other interests in his companies. This and all other monies from media work are recorded in the Register of Members Interests. In January 2010 I ceased media work for payment.

46. My wife has been an employee of the Times for more than 10 years. She writes three columns a week and a range of other features.

(b) any other media-related enterprise in the period from your election to Parliament to date. Please include in the account details of your reported contract with Harper Collins to write a political biography, even if it pre-dated your election to Parliament, including what (if anything) you have been paid by way of an advance under this contract and when, what arrangements you have made to write the book, and what role, if any, Mr Rupert Murdoch, played in making these arrangements.

47. As also recorded in the Register for Members Interests, I was commissioned by Harper Collins to write a biography of Henry St John, Viscount Bolingbroke, in 2004. The offer to publish the book was made by the then Harper Collins executive Michael Fishwick, who now works for Bloomsbury publishing. Mr Rupert Murdoch had no involvement in any aspect of this book's commissioning.

48. I signed a contract for a £40,000 advance. I was paid one third of that amount on signing (less my agent's commission) and will receive another third on delivery and the final third on publication. Much of the advance has been used to pay a post-graduate historian who has collaborated with me in research for the project. Since joining the Shadow Cabinet the time available for research has been limited and the projected delivery date has been delayed.

49. I should add that I also received £40,000 from Weidenfeld and Nicolson in 2005 to write a book on terrorism. The book was published in 2006. Because of its topical nature, its writing took precedence over work on the Bolingbroke biography, which itself was superseded by my subsequent appointment to the Shadow Cabinet.

(9) Please explain the approach you personally have taken in the course of your political career to engaging with media proprietors, senior editorial and executive staff, and political editors, within the media. In relation to the period of your tenure of your current position in Government, and to the period before that as Opposition spokesman on education, your answer should cover at least the following - indicating as appropriate whether the information relates to either of these capacities or a private capacity:

(a) the nature and frequency of contacts of this nature, whether formal or informal; please provide all available records of meetings and conversations, indicating where possible who initiated them and the purpose and content of these occasions. The Inquiry is aware of the published information setting out your official meetings with proprietors, editors and senior media executives from 6 May 2010 – 15 July 2011; the Inquiry would be grateful if you could amplify this information as part of your response to this question and is seeking a response on this broader basis which extends up to the date of your witness statement;

50. During my time in politics I have always sought to deal openly and frankly with individuals in the media and used my interactions to discuss current affairs and explain Conservative Party and Government policy.

51. I have enjoyed my conversations with a wide range of media figures - from discussing music education and the strengths of coalition Government with Alan Rusbridger to sharing thoughts with Simon Heffer on what we can learn from Victorian politics. It's a privilege of my job to be able to listen to thoughtful individuals like Mr Rusbridger and Dr Heffer.

52. Media proprietors, in my experience, and from my reading of history, tend to be intellectually curious and politically engaged figures whom it is always fascinating to meet. As a former journalist, I value the free, open and engaging way in which both proprietors and media executives share their views and enjoy responding robustly.

53. As a former journalist, with clear views on a range of matters, and as a serving politician who has never fought shy of asserting my opinion, I have benefitted from having my positions challenged in conversations. But I attach no additional weight to the views of anyone just because they are in the media, whether proprietor, editor or commentator. I do, however, believe that public debate benefits overall from having a wide range of voices, including some that may be considered raucous.

54. The nature and extent of my formal meetings with proprietors and editors are listed (MG5).

55. By their nature these meetings will have varied, from my being one of 30-40 at a formal dinner, with limited interaction with any senior media figure to smaller gatherings with a greater opportunity for direct conversation with media figures.

56. It is in the nature of political life that at least one or two evenings a week are given over to having dinner with individuals or, more usually, groups interested in public policy. I have regularly had dinner with groups of academics, head teachers, policy professionals and others to explain and defend Conservative Party and Government policy as well as learning from them about their perspectives on public policy matters. Most of my meetings with media professionals fit this pattern.

57. On some occasions individuals with different backgrounds will meet, for example I have attended a dinner hosted by an Academy sponsor who also invited a friend who was a senior media executive. The evening was informal in style but the discussions were broadly similar to most work-related dinners I attend. All the relevant details are listed (MG5).

(b) details of any relevant hospitality you have given, received or participated in;

58. Again, I refer you to the quarterly returns (MG5). I should mention that I attended the Guardian Hay on Wye Literary Festival as a guest of Sky News in 2010 who paid for my accommodation. A copy of my letter to the DFE Permanent Secretary and his relevant reply are enclosed (MG10). Owing to the nature of my, and my wife's, occupation we have many friends in written and broadcast media whom we will have met on social occasions and entertained in our home.

(c) the value of these interactions to you;

59. Beyond keeping up with my friends and acquaintances as part of a normal social life, where I have meetings I will explain why the Conservative party, or now the Government, is pursuing specific policies and I will make the case for education reform as reflected in those policies. I hope that my advocacy at least makes it more likely the Government's actions will be viewed sympathetically.

(d) the extent to which political support by the media for any individual, party or policy is discussed at such interactions;

60. I will always try to win support for my party, if the opportunity arises naturally, in any conversation but I do so on the basis of the specific ideas we are putting forward in which I believe. I have never asked outright for media support for our party as a party. And I have never asked any media group, title or executive for their blanket endorsement of our party. I would certainly never tailor policy to win such support.

61. My approach to shaping public policy is based on doing what I believe to be right. I seek to ensure that people who report and comment on what we do understand why we are acting, and, if possible support Government policies, especially our education policies. But my approach to Government is driven not by desire to win good opinions but by belief in certain principles.

62. Some of my actions in Government will be popular, others unpopular, some will secure media support, others opprobrium, I try to concentrate on doing the right thing and hope that my actions will be judged fairly.

(e) the extent to which the existence and nature of such interactions are or are not placed within the public domain and the reasons for that.

63. I have sought to ensure that meetings with media and senior executives are listed in the quarterly return, but it is in the nature of political life in Westminster that I will bump into political editors, correspondents and commentators on an almost daily basis and enjoy a wide range of discussions. It would be unrealistic and impractical to seek to place a record of all such brief encounters in the public domain. Formal meetings are however listed in the quarterly return.

(10) From your various perspectives, what influence have the media had on the formulation and delivery of government policy more generally? Your answer should cover at least the following, with examples as appropriate:

64. The media are, by definition, not a monolithic bloc.

65. Insofar as this question invites me to reflect on the extent to which specific advocacy by media organisations, or individuals in the media, has shaped public policy, I would refer to my previous answers.

66. I weigh the views of media commentators or newspapers alongside others and give them such weight as the quality of the arguments, and the evidence supporting them, deserves.

67. I seek, in so far as it is consistent with the integrity of policy, to secure support for Government action. But I think it is foolish, indeed self-defeating, to abandon policies which make sense in the long term to win, necessarily ephemeral, good headlines.

(a) the nature of this influence, in particular whether exerted through editorial content, by direct contact with politicians, or in other ways

68. Politicians receive the views of journalists both through editorial content and direct contact. It is then up to the politician to decide the extent to which they are persuaded by those views. But the views of journalists should be given no greater or less weight than the views of people in other professions or occupations.

(b) the extent to which this influence is represented as, or is regarded as, representative of public opinion more generally or of the interests of the media themselves

69. Because newspapers and broadcast media reach millions and compete daily for public attention, politicians hope their actions will be viewed favourably by those who write for, and read each title.

(c) the extent to which that influence has in your view advanced or inhibited the public interest.

70. Principled campaigns by responsible newspapers on particular issues can significantly advance the public interest. I would single out for recognition the Daily Mail's campaign to secure a conviction for Stephen Lawrence's killers which helped secure justice and the investigation by the Daily Telegraph into sharp practice in exam boards, which led to beneficial changes in public policy.

Questions about media policy

(11) Please set out for the Inquiry the extent to which you take a particular personal interest in the formulation, development and implementation of Government policy in so far as it affects the interests and conduct of the media. Your account should explain how, to what purpose and with what effect you seek to express that interest – for example by way of public statements, Parliamentary activity, and discussions formal or informal with Cabinet colleagues.

71. As a Cabinet Minister I am collectively responsible for all Government policy and attend Cabinet, Home Affairs Committee and other meetings where issues of all types are discussed. I also have the opportunity to discuss general Conservative party positioning in meetings with party colleagues prior

to question time appearances. Beyond that I play no part in the formulation of Government policy on the media.

(12) Have you at any time discussed with Rupert Murdoch, or anyone representing his interests, Conservative Party or Government policy or decision-making in relation to:

(a) the BBC licence fee,

(b) Ofcom,

(c) the possibility of Mr Murdoch increasing his interest in BSkyB

or media policy issues more generally? If so, please give full details.

72. I have never, to my recollection, discussed the BBC licence fee, Ofcom, BSkyB, or media policy issues with Mr Rupert Murdoch or anyone representing his interests since becoming an MP.

(13) To the extent to which your previous answers have not already done so, please confirm the extent to which you have discussed Conservative Party or Government policy or decision-making on media issues, whether specifically or generally, in the course of any interactions you have had – whether with media interests or within Government – about the possible involvement of media interests in the UK education sector.

73. To the best of my recollection I do not recall any specific discussions not already mentioned.

(14) You are reported as having said that: "...there is a chilling atmosphere towards freedom of expression which emanates from the debate around Leveson". Please assist the Inquiry by amplifying this observation, including explaining on what evidence you founded it.

74. In the conversations I have had with journalists and others in the last few months I have been struck by their feelings that there is a desire on the part of influential figures, politicians, lawyers and celebrities to use the debate around this Inquiry to inhibit free speech and journalistic investigation.

75. I have been struck by the concerns expressed by journalists on a range of titles that such publicly expressed external pressure - is all in favour of greater restraints on, or regulation of, the press. While the voices strongly in favour of press freedom have been restricted to journalists whose arguments could easily be presented as simple self-interest. For the benefit of the Inquiry I enclose an account of the relevant passages of my speech which I believe to be accurate (MG11).

Allegations of wrongdoing at News International

(15) Please give a full chronological account, together with all relevant documentation, of your awareness of allegations of phone hacking and other improper conduct within News International, and any steps you have taken in response. Your account should cover at least the following:

(a) the extent to which you were briefed in relation to material not within the public domain - for example by the UK Government, the police, any regulatory body, or sources within the industry;

76. I have no knowledge and have never had any knowledge about phone hacking or other improper conduct alleged to have occurred within News International beyond that which has been reported publicly.

(b) all public statements you have made in relation to these issues;

77. I have made no public comment on these issues other than to say that the allegations, if true, are a breach of the existing criminal law.

(c) discussions of these issues with, and any representations made by you or on your behalf about them to, anyone within News International.

78. I have not discussed these issues with anyone representing News International.

This statement is true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Signed: _____

Dated: _____

30 iv 2012

