ANDREW MARR:
Now Michael Gove - another clever fellow, the Education Secretary - has the reputation for being one of the real Tory radicals in the coalition cabinet. Over the past few days his office has poured out another range of ideas about tougher discipline in schools, shorter school holidays, new tests for 4 year olds and so on. But being radical also means you get tangled up in controversy and, as we’ve heard, there’s been a wave of criticism over his decision to get rid of Sally Morgan, the Labour peer, Baroness Morgan, Chair of Ofsted. Mr Gove joins me now. Mr Gove, you appointed Sally Morgan.

MICHAEL GOVE:
Yes absolutely. I mean I think Sally’s a fantastic person. She’s given distinguished service and she’s going to carry on working alongside us until September. I appointed her …

ANDREW MARR:
Has she been a good Head of Ofsted?

MICHAEL GOVE:
Yes, I think she’s done a really good job. I think that she and Sir Michael Wilshaw, the Chief Inspector, are a fantastic team. I’ve known Sally for several years now, and before I appointed her, I admired the fact that she was a brave and principled person who was prepared sometimes to defy party orthodoxy in order to do the right thing.

**ANDREW MARR:**
She’s a good egg in short?

**MICHAEL GOVE:**
Oh yes, absolutely, and one of the things ..

**ANDREW MARR:**
So why kick her out?

**MICHAEL GOVE:**
Well one of the things I feel, and I think across government this is recognised, is that from time to time you need to refresh the person who’s chair of a particular body in order to bring a new pair of eyes to bear. For example, in the Department for Education itself, we have a …

**ANDREW MARR:**
She’d only been there for three years.

**MICHAEL GOVE:**
Well slightly over three years, but that’s the term. And at the end of an individual term, I think it’s appropriate to consider whether or not we might need to have a new person who can bring a new perspective. We’ve done that also, I should say …

**ANDREW MARR:**
*(over)* I don’t quite understand. I still don’t quite understand. Here is an excellent egg running Ofsted very well and yet she’s having to go and she’s very upset about it. Now I was told that when she asked you about it, you said “Well you’re Labour.”

**MICHAEL GOVE:**
Well she is Labour, but let me …
ANDREW MARR:
Is that what you said to her (Gove laughs) as your explanation for getting rid of her?

MICHAEL GOVE:
No - no, no, no. She is Labour, but let me be clear: this government is perfectly happy to appoint people whatever their political background to important jobs. I appointed Sally in the first place knowing that she was Labour. It’s also the case that we’ve recently appointed a former Labour special adviser, Simon Stevens, to head the NHS. Now when we come to appoint the new Chair of Ofsted, I’ll appoint and we will appoint on merit. And if it’s the case that there’s an outstanding candidate …

ANDREW MARR:
(over) Tory donor called Mr Agnew.

MICHAEL GOVE:
Well if there’s a John Reid or if there’s a John Hutton. If there’s an outstanding Labour candidate who wants to do it, then I and the government will look on their application with the same degree of favour as we would anyone else who’s highly qualified. And I think it’s wrong to try to argue that this government is favouring one group of individuals over another in public appointments.

ANDREW MARR:
There’s quite a pattern. There is quite a pattern. There’s Jenny Abramsky at the National … at the Heritage Lottery Fund; there’s Baroness Andrews at English Heritage; Sally Morgan, Liz Forgan at the Arts Council. There’s a bit of a pattern there of kind of left leaning women being kicked out.

MICHAEL GOVE:
Well there’s also a pattern of very distinguished figures who’ve got no political allegiance being appointed like Lord Bew or Onora O’Neill, who are very distinguished figures. And if you actually look at the figures rather than a few isolated examples, in the first three years of the coalition three times as many people who were Labour were appointed or reappointed to public bodies as Conservatives. So …
ANDREW MARR:
And now you’re having second thoughts.

MICHAEL GOVE:
Well no, absolutely not. I believe that it was right for me to have appointed Sally. I think she’s done a fantastic job. But it’s also the case that, for example, we used to have as the lead Non-Executive Director, effectively the Chairman of the Board within the Department for Education, a very distinguished figure with no political allegiance. And then I decided to appoint a Liberal Democrat, Paul Marshall, and I suspect …

ANDREW MARR:
So there’s no pattern of trying …?

MICHAEL GOVE:
No.

ANDREW MARR:
Right.

MICHAEL GOVE:
No, no. I think the only pattern you can see is appointment on merit and a desire to make sure that we’ve got tough and tenacious figures to concentrate on improving the education system.

ANDREW MARR:
Do you understand Sally Morgan’s bemusement when she’s told you’re fantastic, you’re done a really good job, pick your coat up as you leave?

MICHAEL GOVE:
Well I know, because I talked to Sally yesterday and the day before, that if there’s another opportunity for Sally to serve in a different role at a different time, then I would be delighted to support her in whatever role she thinks is appropriate for her to
do. So there’s nothing wrong with Sally, but there is a principle across government that there should be no automatic reappointment and that after three years or four years - whatever the term is in a particular role - it’s appropriate to bring a fresh pair of eyes. That’s good corporate practice in order to ensure that you refresh boards, that you bring a new perspective and that you have tough questions asked. Sally herself replaced someone who’d been in post for about four years; and Sally, I recognise, having brought significant gifts to this role, will bring significant gifts, superlative gifts actually to another role in the future.

ANDREW MARR:
And is Mr Agnew being lined up, can I ask?

MICHAEL GOVE:
Well anyone can apply for this role who feels that they’ve got something to bring to running what is a critical organisation.

ANDREW MARR:
(over) Not quite what I asked.

MICHAEL GOVE:
Well I want to make sure that we have the widest possible range of candidates and I don’t think anyone should be ruled out on the basis of political allegiance. As I said earlier, if someone is a distinguished former Labour minister and they want to put their hat in the ring, then I would look favourably on that. If there’s a distinguished Liberal Democrat educationalist - great. If there’s someone who’s a Conservative, why should they be ruled out just because they’re a Conservative? I think that would be quite wrong. What we want is a strong field to appoint upon merit and ideally someone who shows their passion for education.

ANDREW MARR:
(over) It sounds like you are lining up Mr Agnew, who’s a Conservative donor, for this job.

MICHAEL GOVE:
Well I think it would be quite wrong for me to rule anyone out.

ANDREW MARR:
Right.

MICHAEL GOVE:
I think the important thing to do is to make sure that we have a broad field. I think the other thing to do, Andrew, is to stress that the appointment will be made - I think it’s important to underline this - in accordance with the rules …

ANDREW MARR:
Yeah.

MICHAEL GOVE:
… which are clear and fair. There’s an obvious process to go through, which is at arm’s length for ministers. And I would expect actually that the person chairing the appointment panel will be the gentleman I mentioned earlier, Paul Marshall - a friend of mine who’s a Liberal Democrat party donor - and I think the fact that someone like him is either going to be chairing or on the panel …

ANDREW MARR:
Okay, right.

MICHAEL GOVE:
… is one of the guarantees of integrity that you would expect.

ANDREW MARR:
Just on this, one last question. Was it your decision or No. 10’s decision?

MICHAEL GOVE:
Absolutely my decision.

ANDREW MARR:
Right. Let’s move onto some of your announcements this week or suggestions this week. One of your advisers talked about shortening the school holiday season,
lengthening the school year, lengthening the school day. Is that official policy? Is that something you want to roll out across the country?

MICHAEL GOVE:
Not quite. The idea came from a chap called Paul Kirby who used to work at No. 10 and has now moved back into the private sector. I don’t believe in shortening the school holiday - I think there’s some case for actually varying it in order to give people access to cheaper holidays - but I do think that we do need to have a longer school day. I don’t believe that this should be mandated like that from the centre right now. I think the critical thing that we need to do is to work with the profession in order to ensure that we can provide the extracurricular activities at the beginning and the end of the day and at lunchtime that students get in private fee-paying schools.

ANDREW MARR:
I can absolutely see the case for this in all sorts of ways, but it will cost money, presumably, because you’ll have teachers staying on for longer, people to supervise sports days or whatever.

MICHAEL GOVE:
Well one of the things that we need to look at is exactly how it can be delivered appropriately. There is already within the state system the example of a number of schools funded just as well as other schools or just as tightly as other schools, depending on your point of view, that are already providing an extended school day with the sorts of activities - whether it’s competitive sport, drama, dance or debating - that help build character and grit. Because it’s important that as well as concentrating on the academic excellence that’s been the hallmark of the coalition’s reforms over the course of the last few years, that we also build character. And one of the things that we’re also talking about today is the importance of behaviour - politeness, decorum.

ANDREW MARR:
(over) Okay, I will come onto that in just a moment.

MICHAEL GOVE:
Of course.

ANDREW MARR:
But you mentioned the question of school holidays …

MICHAEL GOVE:
Yes.

ANDREW MARR:
… and the expensive … the prices some people face for going abroad and so forth.

MICHAEL GOVE:
Yes.

ANDREW MARR:
Do you have any sympathy with people who take their children out of school in order to capitalise on a cheaper holiday?

MICHAEL GOVE:
Well I have sympathy with a lot of people who find the cost of holidays during holiday time to be excessive and I think it’s wrong that the companies behave in that way. But the answer is not to take children out of school in term time. It is vitally important that children are at school learning and I think it’s wrong and schools are right to punish parents who do that. The answer, which some schools have already done, is to think hard about …

ANDREW MARR:
(over) Is to vary.

MICHAEL GOVE:
Exactly, exactly, deploying a more flexible approach.

ANDREW MARR:
Let’s come onto discipline then. Now you’ve suggested writing lines, picking up litter
and so forth.

MICHAEL GOVE:
Yes.

ANDREW MARR:
The Mail on Sunday, one of your supporters I would say in the press by and large, in a very measured editorial says you’ve got to be very careful of not announcing gimmicks but having proper policies. They clearly see this as a bit of a gimmick.

MICHAEL GOVE:
Well I think that the reaction from teachers I’ve been talking to today is quite different. They support the idea that the government should support them in making sure that they have a wide range of sanctions. And I think critically what we need to do is to ensure that the one in three teachers who say that they’re uncertain in polling about the measures that they can deploy in order to keep order should be reassured by the government that they have a full range from verbal reprimands through to lines and essays and up to and including community service. And I think it is absolutely right to say to students that if they have in some way undermined discipline or contributed to the deterioration of the fabric of a school building, that they should be responsible for clearing up after school lunch …

ANDREW MARR:
(over) What about …

MICHAEL GOVE:
… clearing up litter or weeding the school playing field. People need to understand that there are consequences if they break those rules and that teachers have the power to enforce them.

ANDREW MARR:
Teachers aren’t allowed to hit children anymore.

MICHAEL GOVE:
Of course not.

**ANDREW MARR:**
What about manhandling them as it were because that is a grey area? If somebody’s behaving really badly in class and a teacher needs to get them out so that the rest of the class can continue to learn, what can they actually do?

**MICHAEL GOVE:**
Well it’s no longer a grey area. It used to be the case that many teachers felt that there was a no touch rule, but we’ve actually clarified in guidance that it is appropriate if you need to separate, for example, two students who are involved in some sort of conflict, that you can use appropriate physical intervention in order to separate those, or to restrain a child who is misbehaving in any other way. The rules are unambiguous.

**ANDREW MARR:**
A lot of teachers say that may be the case, but with the threat of litigation and so forth, as we were hearing earlier on, you really need primary legislation on this kind of thing. Just to say as Secretary of State this is what I want to happen is not enough.

**MICHAEL GOVE:**
Well I think we’ve been pretty clear in the legislation that we’ve put forward so far. I would also say that we’ve also changed the rules, so that teachers get protection against the sorts of allegations, unfounded allegations often, which can blight their career. But my message to the teaching profession is simple. Whatever the tools are that you need, we will give them; and I think it’s appropriate that teachers know that whatever they need to do, we will back them 100 per cent.

**ANDREW MARR:**
A lot of teachers say there are already far too many tests, that children’s learning is actually blighted by endless hurdles.

**MICHAEL GOVE:**
Yes.
ANDREW MARR:
Now you’re proposing a new hurdle when they’re four. That seems to a lot of people ridiculous.

MICHAEL GOVE:
Well I don’t think it seems ridiculous at all to ask the question how well are children doing at the end of primary school compared to the position they were when they started primary school. If we’re going to judge how …

ANDREW MARR:
(over) What kind of tests can you give a four year old practically?

MICHAEL GOVE:
Well at the moment there are a variety of tests, checks, which you can give to children in reception and I think most of them would actually be five rather than four. But anyone who’s in the first year of school can be given a series of tests to see the level of cognitive development that they’re at. Durham University produced a set of tests called PIPs tests, which are widely used both in the state and the independence sector …

ANDREW MARR:
Will they be sort of stressful for the children because they’re just starting their school lives?

MICHAEL GOVE:
No, no, they won’t be stressful at all. What they will do is they provide teachers with the information they need - and the best teachers already do this - to know how to tailor teaching to students. But what they will also do - and we’ve worked with head teachers and teachers on this who’ve given it a wide welcome so far - is they will also enable us to see those schools that have tough and difficult intakes, that may perhaps at the end of the primary phase not appear to be doing well on headline figures but they’ve made tremendous progress. And what we need to do is to ensure that schools that are helping the most disadvantaged children in the most difficult areas are
rewarded most generously for the work they do in order to advance social justice.

ANDREW MARR:
Michael Gove, for now thank you very much indeed.

INTERVIEW ENDS