

Ofsted propose "no notice" inspections of independent schools

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Ofsted, the education watchdog, is proposing to launch "no notice" inspections of independent schools falling under its direct control amid fears that too many children are being let down.

This follows concerns that some children in private Islamic and evangelical Christian schools are not receiving a balanced education. The new regulations, detailed in a consultation document, demand that schools prepare pupils for life in a "modern British multicultural society".

In some independent "faith schools" run by Islamic bodies and evangelical Christian groups there is a suspicion that children are indoctrinated rather than given an opportunity to make up their own minds about religion.

A significant number of these schools had also failed to put proper child protection procedures in place and had employed people without checking their references or carrying out a Criminal Records check.

Ofsted is responsible only for directly inspecting private schools that are not members of the Independent Schools Council – the umbrella body representing most fee-paying education in the UK – and other smaller associations. Some of them are very small, serving only a handful of pupils.

Although schools do not have to follow the Government's National Curriculum, Ofsted warned that the quality of lesson content "can vary considerably", adding: "Schools must demonstrate how the curriculum engages the pupils and helps all of them to achieve their best."

The new inspection system will also have a tighter focus on preparing children for life in multicultural Britain particularly as many independent schools "serve distinctive faith communities", Ofsted said.

This comes after repeated concerns raised about the curriculum in some Islamic schools. A *Panorama* documentary shown on BBC1 in 2010 claimed to have unearthed evidence of textbooks being used in a network of 40 private Muslim schools that make reference to chopping off thieves' hands.

Ofsted is [seeking views](#) on its proposals for a revised framework for the inspection of independent schools. The closing date for the consultation is 17 April 2012.

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