

Muslim state schools ordered not to discriminate on the basis of gender

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Following concerns raised by the National Secular Society three Muslim state schools have been told not to discriminate against job applicants on the basis of gender.

In January, the NSS [submitted evidence](#) to the Department for Education (DfE) of a number of adverts placed by the Leicester based Madani Schools Federation which prohibited women from applying from teaching and non-teaching jobs at an Islamic boys' school. Adverts included one requesting a "male science teacher" and another for a 'Male ICT Technician'. Additional adverts were placed for the Madani Girls' School requiring 'female only' teachers.

After investigating the complaints, the DfE said there "did not appear to be any justification as to why these post holders would need to be of a particular sex."

The DfE asked Leicester City Council to investigate the matter. After doing so the Local Authority advised the DfE that the schools would ensure these advertisements were withdrawn.

A spokeswoman for the City Council confirmed the advert did not comply with the act, saying: "Exceptions to the 2010 Equalities Act do not apply in this instance."

However, the executive head teacher at Madani Schools Federation, Saqub Sheikh, refused to accept the adverts were unlawful and released a statement stating the school does not discriminate against anyone and acts "within the Equality Act 2010."

Capita Education Resourcing, which placed the adverts on behalf Madini Schools Federation issued a statement saying: "Based upon the information provided by the client, we believed we acted in accordance with the Equality Act 2010."

Another Muslim state school, Feversham College in Bradford, has been asked to provide evidence of their recruitment policy after the British Humanist Association discovered it also required every member of staff to be female.

The DfE has rejected calls from the National Secular Society for explicit guidance to be issued to schools to make clear that such discrimination must not be accommodated within the state education system.

A spokesperson for the DfE said: "We already provide non statutory advice to schools on the Equality Act 2010, which contains a link the Equality and Human Rights Commission's Statutory Code of Practice on Employment, which we expect schools to follow."

Stephen Evans, campaigns manager for the National Secular Society said: "We are grateful for the clarification from the Department for Education that such discrimination is wrong both in principle and in law – but it is concerning that faith schools appear to be acting unlawfully and with impunity until these matters are exposed by organisations such as ourselves."

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