

Six independent Islamic schools had serious failings, says DfE

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Six independent Islamic schools in England had "serious regulatory" failings during recent inspections, according to newly-published warning notices from the government.

The Department for Education's independent education and boarding team issued the notices to schools in London, Leicester and Wolverhampton in October 2017. It published them online last week. All six schools were rated 'inadequate' in their most recent full Ofsted inspections.

The DfE said [Al Ashraaf Secondary School](#) in east London was failing to prepare pupils for life in modern Britain and pupils there had a "limited understanding about people of different faiths from their own". The letter to the school said it should produce policies, plans and schemes of work which did not undermine the [fundamental British values](#) of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs.

[Buttercup Primary School](#) in east London was told to preclude "the promotion of partisan political views in the teaching of any subject in the school". It had also failed to check visiting speakers to ensure they did not promote partisan views, prompting a National Secular Society spokesperson to say "schools should not have free range to inculcate partisan religious or political views".

In 2016 NSS research [found](#) that only 16% of schools had a policy or policies concerning the partisan promotion of religious or political beliefs by external groups, visitors or speakers.

In all of the schools which received the new warning letters safety or safeguarding arrangements were among the reasons for failure. Inspectors identified poor fire safety arrangements at [Al Falah Primary School](#) in South London.

Safety arrangements were lacking at Buttercup, Al Ashraaf and the [Leicester International School](#). Safeguarding arrangements were inadequate and premises including toilets were in poor condition at the [Imam Zakariya Academy](#) in north London.

Inspectors also failed the [Islamic Preparatory School](#) in Wolverhampton on the basis of its quality of their education, its checks on staff and the quality of its leadership and management.

The notices called on the schools to submit action plans, explaining how they intended to respond, by November. They were to be implemented by January and could be rejected at the secretary of state's discretion.

The DfE also published warning notices which were sent to four religiously unaffiliated independent schools.

The government [published](#) nine similar warning notices in February. In those cases three of the schools were Islamic, one Orthodox Jewish and one Christian.

In 2014 the National Secular Society [supported](#) the introduction of new independent school standards. In November 2017 Ofsted [said](#) almost half of independent faith schools had been rated

as 'inadequate' or 'requires improvement' since the introduction of the new standards.

All private schools are measured against the independent school standards. Ofsted only inspects around 1,000 small schools in the private sector, as these do not belong to the Independent Schools Council.

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Please note: this story was updated on 5 April 2018 to reflect the fact Ummid Independent School in Bradford does not have a religious affiliation.

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