

Eleven inadequate independent faith schools facing closure

Posted: Wed, 4th Jul 2018

Seven Christian and four Islamic schools were among 26 private schools served with warning notices in the latest round published by the Department for Education (DfE).

The schools will have to improve within a specified period or they will be removed from the independent schools register.

Since February the government has published warning notices to schools deemed to be failing the independent school standards a few months after they were issued. The latest notices reported were issued in February and March.

Some of the schools were found inadequate because of failings directly related to their faith ethos, as well as those relating to health and safety, governance, safeguarding, vetting and monitoring of progress.

At [Darul Uloom Leicester](#), an Islamic faith school for boys aged 11 to 23, inspectors found that "too few students make strong progress in academic subjects other than Islamic studies". The inspection did not cover the school's separate training programme for imams or Islamic theologians.

[The Promised Land Academy](#), a faith school teaching the [Accelerated Christian Education](#) programme in east London, the curriculum and range of work were found to be too narrow.

At [Kings Kids Christian School](#) in south-east London, the curriculum was found to be "inadequate": "Pupils do not study practical science or develop the skills to collect and evaluate scientific evidence. The creation story is taught in science and there is no evidence that pupils learn scientific theories about the origin of the Earth."

Inspectors also said pupils did not "know enough about other faiths, cultures and different groups of people with the full range of protected characteristics. This means that pupils are not as well prepared for life in modern British society as they could be".

The National Secular Society [highlighted](#) concerns about the teaching of the creation story at Kings Kids in February.

At [Al-Sadiq and Al-Zahra Schools](#), an Islamic faith school in north London, inspectors said: "Pupils are not clear about whether or not there are sanctions for talking to or mixing with pupils of the opposite gender during the school day. Some pupils say there are consequences for doing so, others that it does not happen."

There has been a marked increase in independent faith schools failing inspections since the introduction of new independent school standards in 2014, which the NSS [supported](#).

National Secular Society education and schools officer Alastair Lichten said: "Inspections of independent schools need to balance their autonomy with the state's interests in protecting

children's rights and well-being. That is what the independent school standards do, that is what inspections do, and that is what so many faith schools are failing to do.

"It is to be hoped that these schools can improve without necessitating closure. However if they are removed from the register of independent schools, then OFSTED, the DfE and local authorities should work together to ensure they do not simply continue operating as unregistered (illegal) schools.

"Whatever school they attend, pupils' futures should not be closed off or their prospects narrowed on account of religion or belief."

In [November 2017](#) 12 of the 26 schools the DfE issued notices to were faith schools. The previous month it [said](#) six independent Islamic schools had "serious regulatory" failings.

Earlier this year a spokesperson for the NSS [said](#) faith schools should be "held to the same standard as those which are not religiously affiliated".

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