

Over half of independent schools warned in March were faith schools

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Three Jewish schools which shielded children from knowledge about different types of people, including LGBT people and people from non-Jewish backgrounds, were among 10 independent faith schools warned in March.

Last week the Department for Education (DfE) published [warning notices](#) which it sent to 16 independent schools which Ofsted inspectors have identified as failing in March. The schools included four Islamic schools, three Jewish schools and three Christian schools.

One of the Islamic schools had a book in the library which promoted death for adultery. Another had failed to respond to a "very serious" allegation relating to safeguarding. Safeguarding was also a concern at two Christian schools.

The three Jewish schools were all criticised for failing to teach children about people with the protected characteristics outlined in the 2010 Equality Act, which protects people from discrimination.

Beis Ruchel Girls School, an all-through Orthodox Jewish school in Manchester, was "unwilling to compromise with regard to the teaching of aspects of the Equality Act", meaning pupils were not taught about "different kinds of families and gender issues". Pupils made slow progress in writing because most speak Yiddish at home and have "little access" to English reading materials.

Ofsted [noted](#) that pupils were "not as well prepared for life in modern Britain as other pupils" because of their "unfamiliarity with technology" and "lack of understanding about the wider world".

Inspectors also [observed](#) a reluctance to teach aspects of the Equality Act at Tiferes High School, a girls' secondary school in London that aims to "educate its pupils to fill the traditional role of a Bas Yisroel [Jewish woman] in the modern world".

The school's anti-bullying policy did not "refer specifically to homophobic bullying as a form of discriminatory bullying", and pupils did not "routinely get opportunities to meet people with different faiths and cultural traditions".

Ofsted also said the school building was "not maintained well enough to secure pupils' safety and welfare", and outdoor spaces are "unsuitable" for pupils to socialise and relax.

Tashbar of Manchester, a Jewish school for primary age pupils in Salford, was [criticised](#) for failing to provide for "development of pupils' awareness or understanding" of "any matters concerning sexuality, transgender status or other religions".

It was also criticised for its "restricted" time spent on secular education, including by teaching no science in Year Six. The school supports teachers to attend training on religious education, but teacher training in secular subjects is "infrequent".

Lantern of Knowledge Secondary School, a boys' Islamic school in London, was [rated](#) 'inadequate' by Ofsted after a book that said "a person who is married and commits adultery, and who either confesses or whose act is proven, pays for it with his life" was found in the school library.

The book also said homosexuals "advocate a view of human relationships that is at odds with the natural order and stability of human society" and "tolerating homosexuality and promiscuity means encouraging them and pushing more and more people to practice them".

The school was also criticised for its leaders' "overgenerous" view of the school's performance, as the standards of pupils' work were "generally below what is expected for pupils of that age".

Darul Uloom Dawatul Imaam, an Islamic boarding school for boys in Bradford in West Yorkshire that accepts pupils from ages 11 to 25, was also [rated](#) 'inadequate'. According to Ofsted, "insufficient action" had been taken in relation to a "very serious" allegation relating to safeguarding that is being investigated by the police.

Additionally, the school's shower and toilet areas were described as "unsanitary and unsafe", with "exposed electrical wiring" that poses "a serious risk of harm" as a result of leaking water coming into contact with electrics.

There were also a "number of failings in relation to fire safety", a lack of staff training on keeping pupils safe from criminal exploitation, and limited common room space for pupils to spend leisure time together.

Ofsted [criticised](#) Mehria School, an Islamic school for primary age children in Luton in Bedfordshire, over failures relating to the most able pupils, pupils who require additional support, internet safety, employment checks, the school website and accessibility plans.

At Madinatul Uloom Al Islamiya School, an Islamic boarding school for boys aged 11-28 in the Worecestershire town of Kidderminster, Ofsted [said](#) pupils were reluctant to report incidents of bullying.

It also said the time pupils could use payphones or their mobile phones to contact families was limited, which "potentially prevents them from talking to key family members" when they have any concerns or worries.

Safeguarding standards were not met at two independent Christian schools. At [Clifton College](#), a Church of England boarding school in Bristol, recruitment procedures were "not suitably rigorous" and staff were sometimes employed before all "necessary recruitment checks are undertaken".

Christian boarding school [Plymouth College](#) had not always followed statutory safeguarding guidance "in relation to day pupils who are not collected from school".

[St Joseph's Convent School](#), a Catholic primary girls' school in London, does not have a "strategic approach to risk assessment" and risks are not identified in "significant areas of school life". Additionally, the information made available to parents, inspectors and the Department for Education "is not sufficient", with no details of the proprietor published and no information available on the school's arrangements for many aspects of school life.

Schools that receive warnings must improve within a specified period or they will be removed from the independent schools register.

In April the DfE [published](#) warning notices which it had issued to 11 independent schools, including six faith schools.

National Secular Society campaigns officer Megan Manson said: "We should be deeply concerned that so many independent faith schools are failing to give children a decent education or in some cases even to uphold basic safeguarding procedures.

"In many cases, the reasons for failure relate directly to the faith ethos of the school. Libraries containing books that endorse death for adulterers and promote homophobic views, a refusal to teach about LGBT people, and prioritising religious education to the detriment of secular education result from faith schools' desire to prioritise inculcation of religion above preparation of children for life in British society."

"The government must make it clear that all independent schools, regardless of their ethos, will be held to the same high standards and expectations."

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