

Independent Islamic school segregating children by sex, says Ofsted

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An independent Islamic school in Greater Manchester has been found in breach of the independent school standards for segregating children by sex, two years after the practice was ruled unlawful.

Rochdale Islamic Academy, a school with 221 pupils on roll aged between 11 and 16, was [criticised](#) in an Ofsted report published last week.

The Court of Appeal [ruled](#) that segregating children by sex within the same school was unlawful in 2017.

Ofsted's report said:

- The school was segregating pupils by sex "for the whole of their education and at social times".
- The school's buildings were on two separate sites – one for boys and the other for girls.
- Pupils didn't have "the choice to socialise or work with pupils of the opposite sex", and this was "detrimental to their education and social development".
- Boys and girls followed different curricula, their choice of subjects was limited by their sex and segregation denied them "opportunities to work and socialise with pupils of the opposite sex".
- Girls have "more time and lessons dedicated to learning secular subjects than boys do", with boys spending "every morning taking part in Islamic studies".

The report also noted that the school's leaders are applying to register its two sites as separate schools, one for boys and one for girls.

In response, National Secular Society head of education Alastair Lichten said: "It is concerning that two years after sex segregation within the same school was ruled unlawful, some schools with a religious character are persisting in treating boys and girls unequally.

"Gender segregation and stereotyping harm pupils' access to equal opportunities and their ability to form healthy relationships with people of the opposite sex.

"The government must make clear that all schools, including independent faith schools, are obliged to follow the law and treat male and female pupils equally."

Notes

- The report came after the school was subject to an emergency inspection on 18 September. Emergency inspections are designed only to assess schools' compliance with particular standards.
- The government [issued warning notices](#) to two more independent Islamic schools which were segregating children by gender earlier this year.
- Ofsted [conducted](#) another inspection of Rochdale Islamic Academy in May 2019, when

inspectors said the school met the independent school standards.

See more: [School breaking the law by keeping boys and girls apart, Ofsted says](#) – report in *Manchester Evening News*.

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