

Islamic school segregating by sex despite ruling it's unlawful

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An independent Islamic school has been found in breach of standards after inspectors found it segregated children by sex, two years after the practice was ruled unlawful.

An [Ofsted report](#) published last week said Markazul Uloom in Blackburn separated children by sex "for the whole of their education and at social times" during an inspection in September.

The report added that the segregation caused detriment to the children's education. Markazul Uloom has 176 pupils on roll aged between 11 and 19.

In 2017 the Court of Appeal [ruled](#) that segregating children by sex within an individual school was unlawful.

The Ofsted report into Markazul Uloom said:

- Pupils are taught in two separate buildings and follow different timetables and curriculums.
- The sex segregation causes pupils detriment because they cannot study some subjects. For example, boys can study history in key stage 4, but girls cannot; girls can study textiles or geography, but boys cannot.
- The school has one science laboratory. This is in the building designated as the girls' section, so the boys cannot access it to undertake practical experiments.

The report said the school's leaders "intend to make changes to the structural organisation of the school" which will see it become two separate single-sex schools. But it added that the leaders have not yet started the process of registering two separate schools.

In response, National Secular Society spokesperson Megan Manson said: "Segregating children by sex harms children's education and undermines their ability to form relationships with children of the opposite sex."

"But alarmingly some schools are continuing to segregate within the same school long after the practice was ruled unlawful."

"The next government must ensure that schools such as Markazul Uloom do not get away with it. All schools, including independent faith schools, must be obliged to follow the law and treat male and female pupils equally."

Other independent faith schools segregating by sex

- Another Islamic school, Rochdale Islamic Academy, was also [found](#) in breach of the independent school standards this term after Ofsted inspectors [found](#) it was segregating children by sex, causing detriment to pupils.
- The government [issued warning notices](#) to two independent faith schools - one Islamic and one Jewish - which were segregating boys and girls earlier this year.

Notes

- The report came after the school was subject to an emergency inspection on 17 September. Emergency inspections are designed only to assess schools' compliance with particular standards.

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