

Government issues notice to Jewish school which taught creationism

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The government has issued a statutory notice to a Jewish independent school which failed an inspection after being found teaching creationism as science and refusing to enter pupils for GCSEs.

Bnois Jerusalem Girls School in north London was [found 'inadequate' in all areas](#) in an Ofsted inspection in December 2019 and has failed to meet standards in multiple recent inspections.

The National Secular Society raised its case in a letter to the Department for Education in June, as it warned that several independent faith schools had been allowed to fail inspections repeatedly.

In a letter to the NSS, education minister Elizabeth Berridge has now said the department issued the school with a notice after inspections resumed last term.

Independent schools that are issued with statutory notices are required to submit an action plan for improvement, and are then monitored more tightly than other schools.

That process can ultimately lead to a school being removed from the register of independent schools, meaning it can no longer legally operate.

Ofsted findings

In its [report on the December 2019 inspection](#), Ofsted said the school was teaching creationism in geography and science.

Legal standards allow independent schools to teach creationism as part of a belief system, but also say "it should not be presented as having a similar or superior evidence base to scientific theories".

Ofsted also said:

- The school did not enter pupils for exams at GCSE level because leaders were not allowed to censor exam papers.
- Leaders had limited the curriculum to fit within Orthodox Jewish teaching.
- Leaders did not allow inspectors to talk to pupils, apparently at the request of parents.
- Inspectors found redacted text and images in textbooks.
- The school only stocked library books in Yiddish, and pupils lacked confidence with English language.

The school was previously rated 'inadequate' in another full inspection in June 2018 and failed to meet some standards in a follow-up inspection in March 2019.

NSS response

NSS chief executive Stephen Evans said: "Bnois Jerusalem Girls School has multiple serious

failings and appears to be prioritising religious indoctrination at the expense of providing an education worth the name.

"The Department for Education should take whatever action is necessary to protect the fundamental rights of the children at this school.

"This should also remind the government and inspectors to ensure children's educational rights are protected regardless of the religious outlook of the school they attend."

Note: Vine Christian School update

The DfE's letter also said the government was considering what action to take over the Vine Christian School, an independent faith school in Berkshire.

The NSS [raised the school's case with the department](#) in November as it highlighted the fact that the school was claiming to teach creationism as science.

Read more: [Jewish private school hit by government action for teaching creationism in science](#) – iNews

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