

Independent school still not teaching about evolution after warning

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An independent faith school which was recently subject to government regulatory action after being found teaching creationism as science has failed a further inspection.

In January it was revealed that Bnois Jerusalem Girls School, a Jewish school in north London, had been [given a statutory notice](#) after it failed to meet standards in multiple inspections.

And this week an Ofsted report has revealed that "teaching about the scientific theories behind the origins of life" was still "completely omitted" at the school during an inspection in March.

The report also said the content of the school's secular curriculum "remains narrow" and pupils were "not allowed to talk about" same-sex relationships or gender reassignment "at any time".

The school's previous failings have included teaching creationism in geography and science and failing to enter pupils for exams at GCSE level because leaders were not allowed to censor exam papers.

Poor report for Lubavitch Senior Boys' School

Meanwhile another independent Jewish school, Lubavitch Senior Boys School in north London, has been given a similarly poor [report in an additional inspection](#).

The school had previously been told it devoted insufficient time to secular studies. In the new report inspectors said leaders had made "no progress" in improving "the breadth of the secular curriculum" and the range of subjects taught remained "very narrow".

NSS response

The National Secular Society wrote to the government last year to [raise concerns over children's rights at several independent faith schools](#) which had repeatedly failed inspections, including both Bnois Jerusalem and Lubavitch Senior Boys.

The NSS has now written to ministers again to ask them how they plan to respond.

NSS chief executive Stephen Evans said: "Schools which substantially restrict their secular curricula, including in some cases by refusing to teach about evolution, are failing the children they serve and should be held to account.

"Ministers should take robust action to protect children's educational rights. They must ensure schools can't simply defy reasonable oversight."

Statutory notices and follow-up

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.

Legal position on creationism in schools

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".

Failings in independent faith schools

In 2020, 80 independent faith schools were given [warning notices](#) – a less severe penalty than a statutory notice – after failing inspections.

Common failings at these schools have included gaps in secular education, failing to teach about LGBT+ people and safeguarding issues.

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