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1 October 2014

Mr Jonathan Rabson
Executive Director
National Association of Orthodox Jewish Schools
13 Beaufort Gardens
London
NW4 3QN

Matthew Coffey HMI
Chief Operating Officer

Our ref: 304463

Dear Mr Rabson

Unannounced Ofsted Inspections of Jewish Schools

Thank you for writing to us. I am grateful for this opportunity to comment on the points you make to the Secretary of State for Education, the Rt Hon. Nicky Morgan MP, in your letter dated 24 September 2014.

I note your belief that, in recent months, Jewish schools have been disproportionately targeted with unannounced inspections. I can assure you that this is not the case.

With regard to maintained schools, we have undertaken approximately four thousand inspections since January 2014. Ten of these inspections were of maintained Jewish schools, and only two of these were unannounced. In common with other faith and non-faith schools, one school was selected for unannounced inspection because the curriculum information on the school's website required by statute was incomplete. The second school was selected because students' achievement had declined, and a number of complaints had been received about the school.

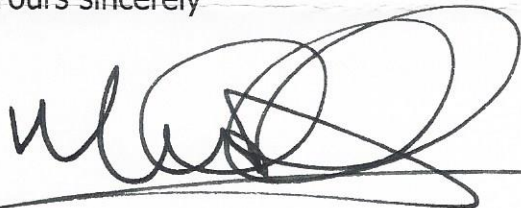
During the same period, we inspected 184 non-association independent schools. Twelve of these are registered with Department for Education as Jewish. In three cases, inspections were commissioned by the Department for Education and were unannounced.

In short, I am unable to find grounds to support your assertion that, in recent months, '30% of maintained schools have received unannounced visits from Ofsted and many.....independent orthodox Jewish schools have also received no-notice inspections'.

You write that 'Jewish schools now have the sense that Jewish values and ethos are being questioned'. I can assure you that this is not our intention or desire.

Inspectors must, however, ask questions that probe the extent to which pupils are prepared for the next stage in their education, or for employment, and for life in modern Britain. I am sorry if these questions have seemed insensitive or offensive. We ask inspectors to use age appropriate questions to test out students' understanding and tolerance of lifestyles that may be different to their own, and which may not be rooted in orthodox Jewish values. We do not expect pupils to espouse values which are contrary to their faith; we expect them simply to be able to demonstrate that they are able to take a stance which is neither intolerant nor discriminatory of others who hold, within the rule of law, values which may be different to their own.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Matthew Coffey", written over a horizontal line.

Matthew Coffey HMI
Chief Operating Officer