

# **NAJOS** *National Association of Orthodox Jewish Schools*

*Protecting and Advancing the Interests of Orthodox Schools in the UK*

13 Beaufort Gardens, London NW4 3QN

t: 020 8432 6327 f: 0844 5450044 e: info@najos.org

Executive Director: Jonathan Rabson BSc (Eng) PGCE MSc

24 September 2014

The Rt Hon Nicky Morgan MP  
Secretary of State for Education  
House of Commons  
London SW1A 0AA

By email: [ministers@education.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:ministers@education.gsi.gov.uk)

Cc: [nicky.morgan.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:nicky.morgan.mp@parliament.uk)

Dear Ms Morgan

## **Unannounced Ofsted Inspections of Jewish Schools**

I am writing to you on behalf of the Governors, Principals, Headteachers, Parents and community stakeholders of schools in NAJOS - National Association of Orthodox Jewish Schools. We represent the interests of a wide range of schools from across the orthodox Jewish faith sector, from modern orthodox to strictly orthodox ('charedi') Jewish, including both maintained (VA, Free Schools and Academies) and independent schools whose combined pupil numbers now exceed 30,000 (some 85% of Jewish pupils).

The DfE recently announced a plan to trial unannounced, no-notice inspections, with a figure of approximately 40 being mentioned, a small proportion of the faith schools in the UK.

We would like to bring to your urgent attention our extreme concern that in recent months, we believe that Jewish schools have been disproportionately targeted with unannounced inspections. To set this in perspective, 30% of maintained Jewish secondary schools have received unannounced visits from Ofsted and many of our independent orthodox Jewish schools have also received no-notice inspections.

We should point out that we fully respect the need for and benefit of school inspections, and we always comply with Ofsted visits. In fact, overall, the Jewish schools achieve extremely high grades from Ofsted across the UK and we recognise the importance of inspections in raising school performance. However, the targeting of Jewish schools is unacceptable and we feel this suggests another agenda which is extremely worrying, particularly in the current climate where anti-Semitism is on the rise and our community is placed under attack.

Jewish schools have always upheld the importance of a broad, thorough education, and our Jewish values exceed the British values that you have been asking all schools to promote. Unfortunately, during these inspections, Jewish schools now have the sense that our Jewish values and ethos are being questioned. We have experienced a campaign to discredit Jewish schools and to challenge the values we espouse.

In a recent inspection of a Jewish secondary school, the Ofsted inspectors asked hugely inappropriate questions and bullied the pupils into answering insensitive and anti-religious questions which have no place in a strictly orthodox faith school.

For example, the inspectors asked secondary age girls:

“Do you have a boyfriend?”

“What do you know about two men being married to each other?”

“What do you think about Facebook?”

“How do you manage without a Smartphone?”

*These are offensive as pupils in strictly orthodox/charedi schools do not mix or interact socially with members of the opposite sex; they are not exposed to same-gender marriage; they are not given any access to the internet at school or home and would not know about Facebook, Twitter etc., nor would they possess iPads or Smartphones.*


The girls felt bullied into answering their questions and the pupils and staff were left feeling traumatised. Our experience is that Ofsted are specifically trying to catch our pupils out and somehow prove that Jewish schools are non-inclusive. We fear that this is prompted by recent statements from DfE about faith schools and the associated media hype fuelled by the Accord Coalition and British Humanist Association who appear to have significant influence over government policy.

We ask you to take this matter extremely seriously. We feel that Ofsted is targeting the Jewish community with unannounced inspections. This is totally unjustified and we need to express our extreme dissatisfaction to this prejudice and apparent anti-Jewish agenda.

We look forward to your urgent response to this matter, and would be happy to meet up with you at the earliest opportunity to discuss this face to face with senior representatives of the Jewish community.

With kind regards

Yours sincerely



Jonathan Rabson  
Executive Director  
jrabson@najos.org

cc:

Sir Michael Wilshaw, Ofsted, Chief Inspector of Education

Ivan Lewis, MP (Bury South)

Graham Stringer, MP (Blackley and Broughton)

Mike Freer, MP (Finchley & Golders Green)

Matthew Offord, MP (Hendon)

Diane Abbott, MP (Hackney North and Stoke Newington)

David Lammy, MP (Tottenham)

Bob Blackman, MP (Harrow East)

Gareth Thomas, MP (Harrow West)

Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis, Chief Rabbi

Stuart Pollack, Conservative Friends of Israel