

Written evidence submitted by Humanists UK

Illegal schools – a timeline

2014:

- Humanists UK first establishes contact with pupils who attended unregistered Jewish schools operating in Hackney around the time that two appear on *Dispatches*. Humanists UK begins arranging media coverage with the pupils and organises an [APPHG meeting](#) with them.
- DfE instructs Ofsted to investigate a number of settings they suspect are operating as illegal schools.

2015:

- In response to the growing media coverage Humanists UK secures, Ofsted Chief Inspector Sir Michael Wilshaw writes a [series](#) of [advice notes](#) to Secretary of State Nicky Morgan outlining his grave concerns about illegal schools.
- Humanists UK's work on illegal yeshivas is highlighted in an [exposé on BBC London News](#).
- Government [publishes proposals](#) to crack down on religious supplementary schools, which would incidentally close the loopholes around illegal schools.

2016:

- Ofsted establishes a task force to tackle the issue of illegal schools. Humanists UK is the first external group to meet with the team.
- Humanists UK also organises the first meeting between the team and former pupils, which is also attended by Amanda Spielman and Matthew Coffey.
- Humanists UK [reveals](#) that a Charedi Jewish school in Stamford Hill has been permitted to operate illegally for 40 years. [Covered in the Evening Standard](#).
- An [investigation](#) carried out by Humanists UK reveals eight unregistered Charedi schools identified by the DfE are nevertheless registered as charities.
- A [joint Humanists UK/Independent investigation](#) reveals that Hackney Council destroyed evidence of thousands of children being educated in illegal schools.
- A Humanists UK [exposé](#) on illegal Jewish schools in Stamford Hill is aired on *Newsnight* and our work is featured on BBC2's [Victoria Derbyshire](#).
- Humanists UK [launches Faith Schoolers Anonymous](#), a website highlighting the [shocking experiences](#) of former pupils of unregistered schools.
- Sir Michael Wilshaw sends [another advice note](#) to the Secretary of State updating her on Ofsted's Unregistered Schools Team and saying that new legislation is needed to shut them down.
- In line with evidence submitted by Humanists UK, [the Casey Review on integration](#) criticises 'lax regulation' with respect to unregistered schools.

2017:

- Hackney Council [launches an inquiry](#) on illegal religious schools in the borough in which Humanists UK [participates](#). The [final report](#) sees the Council also conclude that the law must change.
- Ofsted calls for [better regulation of home education](#) because it is being used as a cover for unregistered schools.
- Government [announces](#) it will consult on revised guidance on home education.
- Government [quietly abandons](#) proposals around supplementary schools – it later emerges due to [unfounded Church of England concerns](#) about the knock-on impact on Sunday schools.

2018:

- A [joint BBC/Humanists UK investigation](#) on abuse at illegal religious schools airs on *BBC News at Six and Ten*.
- Ofsted [criticises the Church of England](#) for frustrating efforts to regulate unregistered schools.
- Government [publishes](#) its [Integrated Communities Strategy](#) green paper. This includes a commitment to crack down on illegal schools but formally [scraps plans](#) to regulate out of school settings. Government also launches a [public consultation](#) on elective home education, including draft guidance for local authorities and parents.
- [First successful conviction](#) of the proprietors of an illegal religious school as Ofsted [reiterates calls](#) for [tougher powers](#).

2019:

- Government announces proposals for a [compulsory register of home educated pupils](#), and launches consultation on the matter. As of February 2021, its response is yet to be published.
- New data [published by Ofsted](#) estimates as many as 6,000 pupils are at risk in unregistered schools across England.
- Second successful prosecution of the proprietor of an illegal school takes place but [she vows to continue to operate](#).

2020:

- [New figures show](#) that Ofsted has investigated more than 100 suspected illegal faith schools since the Unregistered Schools Team was established. Hackney Council [complains](#) that 'no real progress has been made' on the issue, as Ofsted voices [further frustration](#) on Government inaction.
- [DfE consultation](#) on proposals to tighten the law on illegal schools is launched. Humanists UK [urges swift action](#) but, in May, consultation is paused due to the pandemic. It is [relaunched](#) in October. The DfE is yet to announce its outcome.
- [Third successful prosecution](#) against the proprietor of an illegal religious school.
- Ofsted Chief Inspector Amanda Spielman [gives evidence](#) to the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse. She highlights 'astonishing' issues with safeguarding in unregistered settings. In [evidence](#) to the same inquiry, Hackney Child Safeguarding Commissioner Jim Gamble says it is impossible to map the full extent of the problem unregistered schools pose due to lack of engagement with safeguarding.
- Government's voluntary code of practice for out-of-school settings is [launched](#) but compliance won't be monitored or enforced.
- Chair of the Education Select Committee Robert Halfon [publicly gives his support](#) for a home education register as the Committee plan inquiry into elective home education.

2021:

- An [exclusive report by Humanists UK](#) (also covered in [the i newspaper](#)) establishes that unregistered Charedi schools are teaching full to capacity classes during lockdown.

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