

Charity Commission launches inquiry into religious charity over serious regulatory concerns

Press release

Statutory inquiry opened into The Saint George Educational Trust (1043158) due to concerns including about potential political activity.



The Charity Commission has opened a statutory inquiry into The Saint George Educational Trust over serious regulatory concerns that there is or has been misconduct and/or mismanagement in the administration of the charity.

In particular, concerns have been identified in relation to activities carried out by the charity that do not appear to further its religious purposes, including material it had posted online and political activity or campaigning. The Commission also has significant concerns that the charity has associations with an extreme right-wing organisation and how this furthers its religious purposes, something that the Commission has previously investigated.

The charity, based in Andover, Hampshire, has charitable purposes that include the advancement of the Catholic religion.

The inquiry will examine:

- the administration, governance, and management of the charity by the trustees – including, but not limited to, its relationships with external organisations and individuals, and use of the internet and social media
- the financial controls and management of the charity, and whether its funds have been properly expended in accordance with the charity's purposes and can be accounted for
- the conduct of the trustees
- whether or not the trustees have complied with and fulfilled their duties and responsibilities as trustees under charity law

The Commission may extend the scope of the inquiry if additional regulatory issues emerge.

Immediately following the opening of the inquiry, the Commission took action to freeze a bank account holding the charity's funds so that no one can access or move them without the Commission's prior consent.

The Commission has also ordered the trustees to review and remove content from the charity's website and social media pages that does not further the charity's purposes, and directed them not to allow such material in future. At this time the charity's website is no longer available to view.

ENDS

Notes to Editors

1. The Charity Commission is the independent, non-ministerial government department that registers and regulates charities in England and Wales. Its purpose is to ensure charity can thrive and inspire trust so that people can improve lives and strengthen society.
2. The charity has been the subject of three previous statutory inquiries, two of which opened in 1997 and 1999. The second inquiry was opened to consider the charity's association with an extreme right-wing organisation. On 25 July 2022, the charity became part of the Commission's Statutory Class Inquiry, having failed to submit financial information to the Commission for two or more years over the last 5 years. The charity ceased to be part of the Class Inquiry with the opening of this new inquiry, however its accounting information (for the financial years ending 31 March 2020 and 2021) remains outstanding, which will be considered as part of the new inquiry.
3. This latest inquiry was opened on 7 October 2022, under section 46 of the Charities Act 2011 ('the Act').
4. Section 76(3)(d) of the Act gives the Commission power to order any person who holds any property on behalf of a charity not to part with that property without the approval of the Commission.
5. Section 84 of the Act gives the Commission power to compel trustees to take specified action(s) which the Commission considers to be expedient in the interests of the charity.
6. Section 84A of the Act gives the Commission power to direct trustees not to take or continue to take a specific action(s) if the Commission considers the action(s) would constitute misconduct or mismanagement in the charity's administration.

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