

# Father and daughter sentenced for running illegal school

They had been previously convicted of the same criminal offence 2 years ago.

Nadia Ali was sentenced to 8 weeks imprisonment suspended for 12 months, 120 hours of unpaid work, a 10-day rehabilitation activity requirement, a prohibited activity requirement of not running or managing a school and ordered to pay costs of £500. Her father, Arshad Ali, was fined £300 and ordered to pay costs of £200. Ambassadors Home School Limited was fined £1,000 and ordered to pay costs of £500.

To date, there have been 5 successful prosecutions for running an unregistered school, but today marks the second time a prison sentence has been imposed.

The case dates back to June 2018 when inspectors from Ofsted's unregistered schools taskforce first visited Ambassadors High School in Streatham, south London. They warned the headteacher, Ms Ali, that they believed the setting was operating illegally.

The following September, Ambassador's High School applied to register as an independent school, with Nadia Ali's father, Arshad Ali, named as proprietor. Ofsted carried out a [pre-registration inspection](#) in February 2019, which identified serious safeguarding issues and judged that the school, which charged fees of up to £4,500 per pupil, per year, would not meet the independent school standards. However, the school remained open after failing its pre-registration inspection and continued to operate illegally.

In September 2019, Nadia and Arshad Ali [were found guilty of running an illegal unregistered school](#), contrary to section 96 of the Education and Skills Act 2008. Together they were fined £200 and ordered to pay £1,000 in costs and a total of £155 in victim surcharges. Nadia Ali was also sentenced to 120 hours of community service.

However, despite these convictions, when Ofsted inspectors returned to the school 3 more times, between November 2019 and March 2020, they found that it continued to operate.

Inspectors identified several safeguarding failings at the school. It was unclear whether teaching staff had been subject to appropriate employment vetting checks, and those in charge were unable to confirm the identities of all the adults working with children. Inspectors also found fire extinguishers were missing from brackets on walls, and fire evacuation plans displayed in classrooms were incomplete.

Inspectors were informed that children attending the setting were home-educated. However, there was clear evidence that the school was continuing to provide full-time education to at least 5 or more pupils of compulsory school

age, meaning it was legally required to register.

HM Chief Inspector Amanda Spielman said:

It is with breathtaking arrogance that Nadia and Arshad Ali continued to run this illegal school after their convictions 2 years ago. I'm pleased that the judge ruled that a suspended prison sentence was appropriate, given the seriousness of the repeat offending.

Unregistered schools deny children a proper education and put their safety and well-being at risk. I hope today's sentence sends a clear message to all those running unregistered schools that Ofsted will not tire in our efforts to bring them to justice. But as I have said many times over the last few years, and as this case demonstrates, we urgently need the legislation to be strengthened so that we can take action against these places quickly and conclusively.

1. Under section 96 of the Education and Skills Act 2008 (the 2008 Act), in England, a person must not conduct an independent educational institution unless it is registered. A person who conducts an unregistered independent school is guilty of a criminal offence.
2. Under section 463 of The Education Act 1996, an 'independent school' is defined as a school that is not maintained by a local authority, or is not a non-maintained special school, and at which full-time education is provided (a) for five or more pupils of compulsory school age or (b) for at least one pupil who is looked after by a local authority, or has a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan.
3. Since January 2016, Ofsted's unregistered schools taskforce has inspected around 390 settings where inspectors had reasonable cause to believe an unregistered school was operating.
4. Safeguarding concerns were found in around a third of inspected settings, while health and safety concerns were found in around a quarter.
5. Approximately 25% of inspected settings have a faith ethos. The remaining 75% have no faith ethos, or it is unknown. Of the settings with a faith ethos, 12% are Muslim, 5% are Jewish and 5% are Christian.
6. 106 settings have been issued with a warning notice. Over 50% of these settings have since changed their service to comply with the

legislation. Around 20% have closed, and some have registered as independent schools.

7. Ofsted has welcomed the Department for Education's intention to strengthen the registration requirements for unregistered schools, as well as the legislative powers for inspectors to collect evidence and interview those suspected of running them. These are important changes and Ofsted hopes that progress will be made soon.