

# Two convicted of running illegal school in London

Nadia and Arshad Ali were convicted at Westminster Magistrates' Court today (12 September) of conducting an unregistered independent school under section 96 of the Education and Skills Act 2008.

Sentencing of Ms Ali is due to take place on Monday. Mr Ali and the company behind the school were fined and order to pay a victim surcharge.

In June 2018, inspectors from Ofsted's unregistered schools taskforce visited Ambassadors High School in Streatham, south London, and warned the head teacher, Nadia Ali, that they believed the setting was operating illegally. However, when inspectors returned a month later they found the school was still open. A second warning notice was issued.

In September 2018, Ambassadors 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 would not meet the Independent School Standards. However, the school remained open after failing its pre-registration inspection and continued to operate illegally.

The school charged fees of up to £4,500 per pupil, per year, but its record keeping on admissions and attendance was found to be poor. At the pre-registration inspection, inspectors were told there were 45 children of compulsory school age on the roll. Inspectors observed different numbers of children at each inspection and were given different accounts of how many pupils were on roll.

The school's leaders had not conducted even the most basic suitability checks on teachers working at the school. Inspectors also found that the headteacher had no plan or strategy to promote fundamental British values, or encourage respect for other people.

Despite Ofsted inspecting almost 260 suspected unregistered schools since January 2016, and issuing warning notices to 71 settings, this is only the second time a case has been brought for prosecution. This is because Ofsted's powers to investigate unregistered schools are severely limited, making prosecutions less likely to succeed.

HM Chief Inspector Amanda Spielman said:

Ofsted is clear that unregistered schools deny children a proper education and put their safety and wellbeing at risk. I hope today's judgment sends a clear message to these schools that Ofsted will not waver in our efforts to bring them to justice. We will continue to expose these places, and make sure they either close or

become properly registered and subject to regular inspection. Only then can we make sure all children are safe from harm and receiving a decent education that prepares them for life in modern Britain.

While I welcome today's verdict, I am concerned that this case is just the tip of the iceberg. As I have said several times over the last few years, Ofsted urgently needs stronger investigatory powers, allowing us to seize evidence and interview suspects. And we need the government to tighten the legal definition of a school. I urge them again to do so at the earliest possible opportunity.

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 97 of the Act, if Ofsted has reasonable cause to believe that an offence under section 96 is being committed on any premises, inspectors may enter the premises and take copies of any records or other documents that may be required for the purposes of proceedings in relation to such an offence.
3. 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 (within the meaning of section 22 of the Children Act 1989) or has a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan.
4. The offence is a summary offence and currently carries a maximum penalty of 6 months' imprisonment, an unlimited fine or both.
5. Between 1 January 2016 and 31 December 2018, Ofsted identified 521 possible settings that may be unregistered schools: 259 settings have been inspected and 71 have been issued with warning notices. From these, 15 settings have since closed, while 39 have changed the way they operate in order to comply with the law, and 9 have registered as independent schools. The remaining cases are still under active investigation, while more settings continue to be identified.

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## **Tens of thousands unaware they have deadly hepatitis C infection**

Public Health England (PHE) has estimated that up to 95,600 people in the UK could be unaware that they are infected with hepatitis C (HCV), which can kill if left untreated.

HCV is a bloodborne virus that can cause life-threatening liver disease,

including cancer. However, those infected often have no symptoms until decades later when their liver has been badly damaged. When symptoms do occur, they can often be mistaken for other conditions.

The virus is spread through blood-to-blood contact, most commonly in the UK by sharing needles contaminated with the virus, but even sharing razors or toothbrushes with an infected person could pass on the virus.

PHE is urging anyone who believes they may have been at risk of contracting hepatitis C, especially if they have ever injected drugs, to get tested. If people aren't sure about whether they are at risk, they can take a short quiz on [The Hepatitis C Trust](#) website to find out if they should take a test.

Latest estimates suggest that around 143,000 people in the UK were living with chronic HCV infection in 2018, yet up to two thirds (95,600) of these may not realise they have it, preventing them from getting treatment which could save their life.

Dr Helen Harris, Senior Scientist at PHE, said:

Hepatitis C can have devastating consequences but most cases can be cured if detected in time, which is why it's so important to find and treat those who may be infected.

Anyone who may be at risk of infection, in particular those who have ever injected drugs, even if they injected only once or in the past, should get tested. Given that new treatments provide a cure in around 95% of those who take them, there has never been a better time to get tested.

There are now a range of new treatments available to cure HCV and progress is being made to eliminate it as a major public health threat by 2030 at the latest, although challenges in doing so remain.

There has been a 19% fall in deaths reported from serious HCV-related liver disease between 2015 and 2018 (from 468 to 380), with a more than 20% drop in the number of people living with HCV infection within the same period. The World Health Organisation (WHO) target to reduce HCV-related mortality has been exceeded three years early in the UK.[\[i\]](#)

As well as the fall in hepatitis C deaths, greater access to new curative treatments may also be linked to a reduction in the number of people with the disease requiring liver transplants. In 2017, registrations for a liver transplant due to hepatitis C in England fell to a 10-year low of 63, a 53% decrease compared to pre-2015 levels.[\[ii\]](#)

While work must continue to identify those who are undiagnosed, it is also equally important to help those who are diagnosed but untreated to engage with treatment services. To achieve this there has been a rise in partnerships across the system, new resources and re-engagement exercises to help vulnerable people navigate the system.

In 2018, Public Health England (PHE) and NHS England launched a [national exercise](#) to identify and treat patients who have been previously diagnosed with hepatitis C.

Felicity Cox, director of transformation and delivery for specialised commissioning at NHS England, said:

Thanks to a new and highly innovative agreement with the pharmaceutical industry, NHS England has committed to eliminate hepatitis C as a major public health threat in England ahead of the WHO goal of 2030.

The new report highlights that to achieve our shared goal there's a need for relentless collaboration with key partners, with a particular focus on engaging and educating at-risk patient groups to ultimately test and treat as fast as we can.

Rachel Halford, Chief Executive, The Hepatitis C Trust, said:

Whilst it is encouraging that the estimated number of people living with hepatitis C is coming down thanks to the successful roll-out of DAA treatments, it is concerning that latest estimates suggest that around two-thirds of those remaining could be living with undiagnosed infection. It is therefore essential that we increase diagnoses to ensure we achieve elimination by 2030 at the latest.

Public Health England has published a [five year strategy](#) to tackle current and future threats to public health in England, including a commitment to eliminate HCV ahead of 2030.

[\[i\]](#) The WHO target of reducing HCV-related mortality by 10% by the year 2020 has been exceeded 3 years early in the UK.

[\[ii\]](#) This data is included in the [Hepatitis C in England 2019 report](#)

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## [Treasury minister visits Tees Valley](#)

The Exchequer Secretary, Simon Clarke MP, visits Tees Valley today (13 September 2019) to explore how the Treasury can ensure towns and cities across the country enjoy the opportunities ahead as the UK leaves the EU.

On the third stop of a nationwide tour, he will discuss ambitious plans to boost jobs and growth with Middlesbrough mayor, Andy Preston.

In last week's Spending Round, the Chancellor Sajid Javid announced additional funding for the £3.6 billion Towns Fund, and Middlesbrough, Darlington, Redcar, Hartlepool and Thornaby have all been shortlisted to benefit.

Mr Clarke will also attend a roundtable on sustainable plastics, providing an opportunity for local business leaders to voice their ideas on the design of a world-leading plastic packaging tax and other ways to tackle plastic pollution and waste.

The minister will also tour a plastic recycling company to see how waste management can operate in practice. Tees Valley has a long standing plastics industry, and the government wants to see businesses like these leading the way in developing sustainable solutions to plastic waste.

Speaking ahead of the trip, the Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury, Simon Clarke, said:

We are committed to boost areas like my home region of Tees Valley, through huge investment for transport, businesses and jobs and by supporting the clean-up of the former SSI site.

I look forward to hearing innovative ideas on how to boost growth in the Tees Valley – as we look to the future with a new optimism, in part boosted by this potential multimillion pound investment from the Towns Fund.

Middlesbrough Mayor Andy Preston said:

Any money is great, especially a lot of money.

We've got big, bold plans to make great things happen here, and the Towns Fund will really help with that.

Mr Clarke is championing 45 places across the Northern Powerhouse, which could now benefit from the government's commitment to level up all regions by boosting productivity, skills and living standards.

Since 2015, Tees Valley has been benefitting from £450 million of additional government funding from its devolution deal. In addition to £75.5 million from the Transforming Cities Fund to boost transport across the region.

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# HMCTS response to National Audit Office report 'Transforming Courts and Tribunals – a progress update'.



Responding to today's [report by the National Audit Office](#) (NAO), Susan Acland-Hood, the CEO of HM Courts & Tribunals Service said:

We are pleased the NAO has recognised the progress we have made towards a more accessible and efficient justice system. More than 300,000 people have now used our online services, and two new service centres are making it easier and quicker for all to access help.

This is an ambitious and challenging programme but it is already making a significant difference. We will continue to listen and learn, working closely with our stakeholders to improve and ensure reform delivers the full benefits to all those who use our justice system.

Within this progress update report, the NAO makes four recommendations:

- HMCTS must maintain a strong grip on progress to maximise the benefits from its substantial investment in reform
- HMCTS should improve how it measures the benefits of reform, more clearly demonstrating where savings are coming from
- HMCTS should better demonstrate how it is monitoring the impact of its reforms on users of the justice system
- HMCTS should provide more clarity on how, in practice, it will meet the commitments set out in its Fit for the Future response.

The implementation of these recommendations, which are already being acted upon, will help HMCTS to continue to strengthen the way it delivers the reform programme.

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# PM renews drive to give more power to Northern regions

The Prime Minister will today reaffirm his pledge to give even more powers to people, businesses and political leaders across Northern regions.

In a speech in South Yorkshire, he is expected to reiterate that he remains committed to delivering the Sheffield City Region Deal – and to opening up negotiations with Leeds and West Yorkshire.

The government will also create a new Northern Powerhouse growth body to drive forward the region's economy, and with the powers to bring together major organisations working in the region.

A Chair will be appointed to head up the body, working closely with the Minister for the Northern Powerhouse. Speaking to local business leaders, mayors and councillors, the Prime Minister is expected to say:

It is time that we gave more people a say over the places where they live, and it is time that we gave you the proper ability to run things your way.

We are going to maximise the power of the north. And we are going to make sure that it is people here who are in control over the things that matter to them.

On entering Downing Street, the Prime Minister made it his priority to level up and unlock the potential of every corner of the UK – not just London and the South East.

Last week on a visit to Yorkshire, he reaffirmed his commitment to delivering Northern Powerhouse Rail. The first step will be the Manchester to Leeds route, with detailed plans published this autumn, following the review into HS2.

The new route is expected to cut journey times significantly and provide additional capacity for people across the region.

Today the Prime Minister will reaffirm that one of his top domestic priorities will be to give more powers to local leaders to ensure communities are in control over the things that matter to them, such as transport, infrastructure and housing.

He will conclude his speech by saying:

If we succeed in levelling up opportunity across our country, and if we truly put the power in your hands, then I believe you will do for the North – and for our whole country – what the railways did two centuries ago.

That is the true potential of this Northern Powerhouse Partnership. And this is a Government that will back you to deliver it.