

Three plead guilty to running illegal school

Press release

Two people and a charitable trust have pleaded guilty to running an illegal school, following an investigation by Ofsted.



In a hearing at Sheffield Magistrate's Court, Shahjan Yasmin Hussain, Chair of Trustees; Dr Shatheha Zamzam, Manager; and Yorkshire Tuition Centre have admitted to running an unregistered school.

The case was heard on 5 January 2022 and is the latest successful prosecution of those running unregistered schools.

Deputy Senior District Judge, Tanweer Ikram, made a clear judgement that the defendants in charge "wanted to carry on under the radar without the requirement of regulation".

The illegal school, Aysha Tuition Centre (ATC), was located at premises previously used by a registered private school, Oak Tree High (OTH), which had closed because it was failing to provide pupils with a good education. Ofsted inspectors found ATC was operating on the same site and employing many of the same staff as OTH to teach former pupils of the failed private school.

ATC was investigated by Ofsted's unregistered schools taskforce during 2021. Inspectors found evidence that the setting, which claimed to be a tuition centre, was in reality providing up to 28 children with full-time education.

Ofsted Chief Inspector, Amanda Spielman said:

This case shows the length some people will go to side-step the law and mislead parents into believing they can provide their children with a good education.

Many of the children at this illegal school were allegedly being home educated. But in fact they were receiving all of their

education at the Centre.

Cases like this are why I have long called for a register for children who are being home educated – so we can know where they are and that they're getting a good education. We also urgently need legislation to be strengthened so that we can take strong action against illegal schools and close them down.

The sentence handed down by Judge Ikram included:

- £500 fine for Yorkshire Tuition Centre, a charitable trust which oversaw the illegal school, ATC
 - Hussain and Zamzami to undertake 80 hours of unpaid work and be subject to a community order for 18 months
 - £500 contribution to be paid between the 3 defendants toward the cost of the prosecution
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 investigated 850 suspected unregistered schools and inspected over 400 settings.
 4. Over a quarter of settings investigated were found to be alternative provision. Over a quarter were general education settings (which offer academic education, normally a range of subjects, like that typically provided by a school). Around 15% were providing religious instruction.
 5. London has the highest proportion of unregistered schools' investigations (21%) and the highest proportion of warning notices issued (20%). This is followed by the West Midlands with 13% of investigations and 15% of warning notices issued.
 6. Safeguarding concerns have been found in around a third of inspected settings. Health and safety concerns have been found in around a quarter.
 7. Approximately 25% of inspected settings have a faith ethos. The remaining 78% have no faith ethos, or their faith ethos is unknown. Of the settings with a faith ethos, 11% are Muslim, 6% are Jewish and 5% are Christian.
 8. 114 settings of these settings have been issued with a warning notice. Over 50% of settings have changed their service to comply with the legislation. Around 20% have closed, and some have registered as independent schools.
 9. 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.

Published 11 January 2022