

# Charity Commission launches statutory inquiry into Dar ul Uloom Islamia Rizwia (Bralawai)

These concerns include, but are not limited to, the trustees' failure to ensure that policies and procedures relating to safeguarding have been implemented, and the conduct of some trustees and staff members on social media.

The charity provides a place of worship, religious teachings, community services and also operates an educational centre for the benefit of the local community of Small Heath, Birmingham.

The regulator initially engaged with the charity in 2019 and found that safeguarding policies and procedures were not in place. The charity's trustees were issued with regulatory advice and gave assurances to the Commission that the educational centre would be closed and would not re-open until required improvements had been made. This included adequate trustee training and approved safeguarding policies and procedures developed by an independent professional advisor.

In November 2021, the Commission carried out a compliance visit to the charity's premises following regulatory concerns in relation to the social media activity of some of the charity's trustees and staff. These posts resulted in the charity receiving negative media attention and complaints being raised directly with the Commission.

As part of the compliance visit the Commission established that the educational centre had re-opened without adhering to the charity's policies and procedures. The re-opening had also taken place despite there being incomplete disclosure and barring service checks in place for those engaged in regulated activity.

The inquiry will examine:

- the trustees' failure to ensure that the charity's policies and procedures relating to safeguarding were complied with
- the conduct of trustees and senior management on social media, and whether they acted in accordance with the charity's social media policy
- whether there are unmanaged conflicts of interest in relation to working with partners
- general governance concerns including financial controls, the making and recording of key decisions and securing proper application of charitable funds

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

In addition to opening the inquiry, the regulator has also exercised its legal powers to compel the trustees to take specified action aimed at improving the administration and management of the charity.

It is the Commission's policy, after it has concluded an inquiry, to publish a report detailing what issues the inquiry looked at, what actions were undertaken as part of the inquiry and what the outcomes were.

Reports of previous inquiries are [available on GOV.UK](#).

**Ends**

**Notes to editors**

1. The inquiry has been opened under Section 46 of the Charities Act 2011.
2. Regulated activity is work which involves close and unsupervised contact with vulnerable groups including children. The full legal definition of regulated activity is set out in Schedule 4 of the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 as amended by the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012.
3. 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.

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## [UK Trade Remedies Authority proposes trade measures for biodiesel](#)

In its initial findings, the UK's [Trade Remedies Authority \(TRA\)](#) has today (15 December 2021) proposed that existing measures on imports of FAME biodiesel are kept, but that measures on imports of HVO biodiesel are removed. The TRA's provisional findings, contained in the Statements of Essential Facts, would mean that the UK's FAME production industry continued to be protected from dumped and subsidised biodiesel from the USA, including where consigned through Canada, but that HVO from these countries could be imported to the benefit of the UK's agricultural and transport industries, as well as users of oil fired heating. A 30 day period for comments is now open.

Following transition reviews, the TRA has proposed that [anti-dumping](#) and [countervailing measures](#) on fatty-acid mono-alkyl esters (FAME) biodiesel be maintained at their current levels for five years from 30 January 2021. It

has also proposed that the same measures on renewable diesel produced from paraffinic gasoil obtained from synthesis or hydro-treatment, of non-fossil origin (HVO) be revoked.

The UK has an established FAME production industry but no UK HVO production industry exists.

FAME is created using a wide variety of oils and animal fats. The most commonly used oils and fats include: Used cooking oils, animal fats/tallow, soya oil, rapeseed oil and sunflower oil. It is added to diesel from crude oil and gas oil to produce a blended road fuel, sold to consumers at fuelling stations. Current pump diesel can contain up to 7% FAME.

HVO, also known as renewable biodiesel, is made by hydrotreating used vegetable oils. As a paraffinic, renewable fuel, HVO can be used as a “drop-in” alternative to traditional diesel, and significantly reduces carbon dioxide, nitrogen oxide, particulate matter and carbon monoxide emissions from vehicles.

The TRA’s investigations found that government-subsidised producers in the US would be likely to dump FAME biodiesel in the UK in the future and cause harm to UK industry if the measures no longer applied. Although the TRA found that dumping of subsidised HVO would also be likely to occur if the duty were no longer applied, there would be no damage to domestic manufacturers/businesses as there is no HVO industry in the UK and the higher prices for HVO would mean that it did not displace UK produced FAME. The TRA also established that there is demand for HVO in the UK for use in heating buildings as it offers a cost-effective and more environmentally friendly alternative to existing heating fuels.

TRA Chief Executive Oliver Griffiths said:

The TRA’s findings on biofuels shows how we can tailor existing measures to better suit the UK economy. Our proposals would ensure that British biodiesel producers continue to be protected from unfair international competition from subsidised US products, while helping to drive down prices for users of a type of biodiesel that is not made in the UK.

Following today’s publications, there will be a 30-day period in which interested parties can comment on the reports. Comments can be submitted to the TRA via the [Trade Remedies Service website](#).

The TRA will then consider and produce Final Recommendations, which will be sent to the Secretary of State for International Trade who will make the final decision on whether to uphold the TRA’s recommendations.

## Notes to editors

- The [Trade Remedies Authority \(TRA\)](#) is the independent UK body,

established in June 2021, as the first non-departmental public body of the Department for International Trade, that investigates whether trade remedy measures are needed to counter unfair import practices and unforeseen surges of imports.

- Read more about the TRA's mission in its [Business Plan](#).
- Read the [full Statement of Essential Facts in the anti-dumping transition review](#). Read the [full Statement of Essential Facts in the countervailing transition review](#).
- HVO and FAME biodiesel have different production processes.
  - HVO biodiesel is produced through hydrotreatment, whereas traditional FAME biodiesel is produced through esterification (the reaction of an alcohol with acid).
  - FAME biodiesel production requires other reagents such as methanol and produces glycerol as a by-product. FAME is seen as a transitional alternative to fossil fuels as, while it does offer some environmental benefits, it is not without its drawbacks. Some of the problems of high fame content include: Relatively short shelf life, water contamination due to higher water content, encourages diesel bug growth, increased chance of injector fouling, higher fuel consumption rate due to the fuel being less powerful, gradual degradation of fuel due to oxidation and hydrolysis, which can damage machinery.
  - HVO Biodiesel is considered a type of "drop-in fuel" which, theoretically, can be added pure to diesel-powered fuel tanks without any modification to engines.
- Anti-dumping duties allow a country or union to take action against goods sold at less than their normal value, which is defined as the price for 'like goods' sold in the exporter's home market. Countervailing, or subsidy, duties counteract imports being subsidised by their place of origin that cause material injury to a domestic industry.
- Anti-dumping and countervailing measures are two of the three types of trade remedies – along with safeguard measures that address sudden, unforeseen floods of imports – that are allowed by the World Trade Organisation (WTO).
- Trade remedy investigations were carried out by the EU Commission on the UK's behalf until the UK left the EU. [Forty-three EU trade remedy measures of interest to UK producers](#) were carried across into UK law when the UK left the EU and the TRA is currently conducting a programme of reviews of each measure to assess whether it is suitable for UK needs.

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# School resource management adviser programme – 3 years on

## **The school resource management adviser (SRMA) programme**

Following a successful pilot phase in 2017/18, a further 979 establishments, including 79 local authorities, took up the offer to work with a SRMA in the period up to March 2021.

The recent National Audit Office report into the [financial sustainability of schools in England](#) reviewed the overall cost-effectiveness of the programme. This confirmed that SRMAs had identified total potential savings of £303 million and that stakeholders were broadly positive about the school resource management adviser programme.

Our follow up survey received 257 responses from academy trusts and local authorities schools, of which 84% rated the experience of the visit as 'good' or 'very good'.

The head of schools finance at Hackney Council said:

"I would highly recommend the process as both a remedial and preventive measure to help secure the financial health of schools, particularly in authorities carrying surplus pupil places. The SRMA was professional, approachable, flexible and extremely knowledgeable. We would happily have all schools reviewed using this methodology."

The SRMA programme aims to embed financial excellence across the sector and promote the effective use of school resources for the benefit of pupils. Due to the positive impact of the programme in supporting schools to make the best spending decisions, ESFA has [extended the SRMA programme](#) for another 3 years, to August 2024.

During the deployment at Minerva Learning Trust, the SRMA identified a range of cost savings. This highlighted specific areas of development and improvement resulting in expected savings of around £5.2 million over a 3-year period.

[Read more about The Minerva Learning Trust](#)

## SRMAs

SRMAs are practising sector experts, such as school business professionals, that work collaboratively with schools and trusts. They provide independent, expert advice and tailored support to address current or future forecast deficits where these exist. In all cases they help trusts and schools identify opportunities to make better use of their funding, enabling them to target resources where they will have the most impact on outcomes for children.

All deployments include a review of data with school or trust leaders. The SRMA then produces a report which summarises the historical, current and projected state of the budget, as well as an overview of how financial matters are managed at a high level.

Every report should contain an analysis of the budget using the [Integrated Curriculum Financial Planning \(ICFP\)](#) tools. This can be used to make recommendations as to where resources could be reallocated to support school improvement priorities that promote strong educational outcomes. While ICFP tools are important to the way SRMAs approach resource management, it is recognised that one size does not fit all and reports will pay close attention to the unique circumstances and educational priorities of each setting. All recommendations are strictly advisory and there is no obligation to implement them.

The headteacher at St Ives Infant School said:

“The SRMA’s work has saved us weeks of research and time that we simply don’t have at the moment. In many cases we would have not known were to start the research. The impact of personalised support is that we can apply the suggestions with real purpose and be proactive.”

Six months after a deployment, the SRMA will conduct a brief follow up visit to establish which of the recommendations the school or trust has considered appropriate to adopt and to assist with any queries about effective implementation of the recommendations.

## Find out more about working with a SRMA

SRMA visits may be requested for a variety of reasons and can also be used as part of a wider package of help, for example supporting schools in regional Opportunity Areas.

Following the positive response from schools that received practical assistance during the COVID-19 pandemic, ESFA continues to offer flexible or ‘bespoke’ deployments where there is urgent need for short term, hands-on business support.

ESFA will continue to make SRMA support available to all schools, free of charge and any school that wishes to take up this offer should contact ESFA

using the enquiry form.

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## [Catch up learning accelerates with £10m for maths and literacy](#)

Over £10 million of funding will go to programmes identified by the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) to help disadvantaged pupils catch up, as part of the government's Accelerator Fund, the Schools Minister, Robin Walker, has announced today (15th December).

The fund, originally announced in February and worth a total of £22m, aims to scale up and spread effective teaching practice to ensure pupils have the best chance of catching up following the pandemic. Just under half (£10m) of this [funding](#) has already been used to focus on English and Maths catch-up sessions.

The other half, confirmed today, will prioritise three regions that have experienced significant learning loss according to research commissioned by the department – the North of England, East Midlands & Humber, and West Midlands.

Schools Minister Robin Walker said:

Strong maths and literacy skills are fundamental in unlocking young people's futures, setting them up for later stages of education, training and the world of work.

This work with the EEF will provide focused support to those most in need, complementing our already ambitious recovery programme including high quality tutoring and world class teacher training, helping to ensure no child is left behind from the pandemic.

Professor Becky Francis, Chief Executive of the Education Endowment Foundation, said:

We know teachers and school leaders are keen to engage with evidence and implement practices that are supported by the wider research base for the benefit of their pupils.

This is a hugely exciting opportunity for us build on the foundations we have laid together, and further ingrain evidence use in English classrooms.

In the long-term this initiative will broaden schools' access to

programmes with the potential to make a real, positive difference to pupils' attainment.

The Accelerator Fund is part of the Government's wider ambitious education recovery plan worth nearly £5bn. The plan continues to roll out across the country, with investment in high quality tutoring, world class training for teachers and early years practitioners, additional funding for schools, and extending time in colleges by 40 hours a year for pupils/students.

The EEF will support a number of programmes for schools in these three regions, particularly those showing the most promise in increasing student attainment. The EEF will also ensure programmes are ready to be accessible at a larger scale, whilst maintaining their high quality and impact.

Detail around the projects will be announced in the new year.

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## Minerva Learning Trust

The Minerva Learning Trust is based in Sheffield, South Yorkshire and provides education for 5,500 pupils aged 11-19. The trust has 4 of the largest secondary schools in Sheffield and recently transferred in a small sixth form situated close to its largest school.

### **SRMA deployment**

The Minerva Learning Trust's 2016/17 financial statements reported a cumulative deficit. Following a period of financial recovery in 2017/18 when 3 schools joined, the trust forecasted a declining financial trajectory later that year, which if left unchecked would lead to a future cumulative deficit.

The Minerva Learning Trust's actions, together with ESFA's school resource management adviser (SRMA) support, allowed the trust to focus on financial recovery to ensure long-term financial health and sustainability.

The aims of the SRMA deployment were:

- to gain an external and independent view of the issues
- to identify areas of potential efficiency to deliver a sustainable financial and strategic approach

Prior to deployment, the SRMA met with the Minerva Learning Trust's executive team and finance director to understand the context of the organisation, its historical position and journey to growth, how the trust board operated and its plans for the future.

The approach was transparent with open dialogue. This allowed the SRMA to



access and validate the information shared and importantly to maximise the time available to explore financial data, without having to wait for responses to requests for information.

## Outcomes following the SRMA deployment

The SRMA identified a range of actions that could reallocate resources and provided specific areas of development and improvement, with realistic savings expected to be in the region of £5.2 million over a 3-year period.

By incorporating some of the SRMA recommendations into its strategic plan, the trust was able to maintain a surplus position and plans to save £6.5 million over 6 years, providing a healthy foundation to build on.

The trust has implemented its own and the SRMA recommendations through its strategic action plan and contract renewal process.

The trust adopted actions recommended by the SRMA, including:

- centralising core functions (finance and HR) with professional development routes for team members to strengthen quality of provision
- restructuring the trust's school business manager roles and recruiting a dedicated procurement and projects manager, allowing the trust to focus on service and contracts efficiencies with a clear procurement strategy and action plan
- rewriting the scheme of delegation to make accountability and responsibilities clearer. This provided a greater level of internal control and financial oversight for the executive team and trustees and assurance of compliance to statutory and regulatory frameworks
- reviewing all curriculum models in each school in line with [ICFP principles](#). This resulted in greater financial efficiency with a shift from a teacher contact ratio of 0.71 to 0.77 average across the schools, leading to a saving of £1.6 million over 3 years and increasing the time teachers spend in front of a classroom.

The Minerva Learning Trust's CEO and CFO summarised their experiences of working with an SRMA.

"The SRMA deployment and report facilitated and opened up discussions about the financial performance of the trust with all key stakeholders. Fundamentally this provided a catalyst for us to bring about a change in culture.

One of the positives from our involvement with the SRMA has been to increase trustees' understanding of the role financial planning and efficiency plays in sustaining our overall organisational health and supporting strong educational outcomes. We have seen an increase in understanding at board level and in the schools.

Other key factors in these changes have been strength in leadership, a strong centralised finance team and much stronger focus on governance structures and

functions. There has been a significant shift in the management of risk, with a key focus on reporting and monitoring through routine application of our risk management strategy.

Developing and ensuring a greater understanding of financial management within a trust setting has been a primary focus within the trust strategic plan. This is underpinned by a program of professional development for school leaders and governors and routine and focussed strategic discussions about schools and financial performance.”

SRMA support is available to all schools, free of charge and any school that wishes to take up this offer should contact ESFA using the enquiry form.