

Appeals fail for two found guilty of running illegal school

Following a criminal investigation by Ofsted, Suleyman Folami and Mujanet Daniah were found guilty after a trial at Westminster Magistrates' Court in March 2020. They were each handed a four-week custodial sentence, suspended for a year. However, the pair appealed to the Crown Court against their convictions and sentences.

On Thursday (20 January), at Southwark Crown Court, Judge Griffith upheld the previous convictions and sentences for each appellant. The Judge said the pair were "clearly trying to bend the rules" and ordered that they should pay additional total costs of £640.

Ofsted's unregistered schools team inspected Advance Education Centre in Brent, north-west London 3 times between December 2018 and March 2019. Inspectors found that the ground floor of the building was being used as a registered independent primary school, but the floor above was being used as an unregistered school for children of secondary school age. Inspectors noted an overlap in staff working in the registered school on the ground floor and the unregistered school upstairs.

Mr Folami and Ms Daniah claimed they were offering a supplementary school. But Ofsted inspectors found as many as 66 children being taught on the upper floor and evidence they were attending for at least 25 hours a week. Students' workbooks and teacher plans showed that the unregistered school set homework, issued detentions and was operating full-time.

Inspectors also identified several safeguarding risks at the setting, including inadequate supervision of children and unidentified adults walking unchallenged through the setting. Inspectors described the setting as 'chaotic' and said the adults in charge appeared to have significant difficulty managing pupils' behaviour.

The couple running the setting were fully aware of the requirements for registration. But, despite repeated inspections and warning notices, they continued to operate illegally.

Amanda Spielman, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector, said:

The people in charge of this setting were fully aware they were running an unregistered school, but they chose to break the law anyway. So I am very pleased the Crown Court has reinforced the verdict returned by the Magistrates' Court last year.

Unregistered schools deny children a proper education and put their well-being at risk. We will continue to expose these places and make sure they either comply with the law or cease operating altogether. But, as I have said several times over the last few

years, the government urgently needs to close the loopholes that allow places like this to exist on the edge of the law. I am also concerned that individuals convicted of running unregistered schools may still be involved with children's education in registered schools. This is not appropriate, and we are working with DfE and other authorities to take action on this.

1. Under section 96 of the Education and Skills Act 2008, a person who conducts an unregistered independent school in England is guilty of a criminal offence. The offence is a summary offence and carries a maximum penalty of 6 months' imprisonment, an unlimited fine or both.
2. Since 1 January 2016 Ofsted has investigated over 850 suspected unregistered schools and found reason to believe that more than 400 settings were operating illegally. Of these, 114 have been issued with warning notices. Over 50% of these settings have changed their service to comply with the legislation, while 20% have closed, and some have registered as independent schools.
3. Ofsted publishes [management information about unregistered schools twice a year](#).