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Sir Michael Wilshaw
Her Majesty's Chief Inspector

Dear Secretary of State

Al Khair School Croydon

I am writing today following the article in the Sunday Times stating that a boy was excluded from Al Khair School in Croydon for speaking to a girl. The article suggests that this interaction was an innocent communication and that the exclusion was a result of inappropriate school policies that undermined equalities legislation.

This exclusion occurred before the Ofsted inspection of this school in September 2015. I can confirm that Her Majesty's Inspectors investigated the circumstances of the incidents leading up to the exclusion during the inspection and concluded that the action taken by the school was proportionate and appropriate.

Inspectors established that the exclusion followed a series of lesser sanctions which proved unsuccessful in deterring this boy from behaving in a totally inappropriate and intimidatory manner which left a female pupil feeling exceptionally uncomfortable and vulnerable.

During the inspection, Her Majesty's Inspectors scrutinised the curriculum and the opportunities available for boys and girls.

The school, in effect, runs as three separate units. Primary aged pupils attend a mixed sex school, where boys and girls learn and play together. The secondary provision is split into two schools; one for boys and one for girls. In many ways, there is very little difference between the organisation of this school and those of other single sex schools, whether in the independent or state sector, operating elsewhere. The two secondary schools share one building and one staffing establishment, with some facilities being used by children from both schools.

Leaders within the school emphasised that the reason for boys and girls being educated separately was a reflection of parental choice and the belief of the proprietor that this was the best model for raising standards of achievement for both boys and girls.

Inspectors looked carefully at the equalities implications of single sex education as part of their inspection and found that:


- boys and girls are taught the same curriculum by the same teachers
- teachers do not behave or dress differently for boys and girls
- boys and girls are equally ambitious, achieve as well as each other and go on to university and high status employment
- boys and girls have the same opportunities for extracurricular activities, and attend a number of extracurricular events together
- the headteachers, both female, are seen as ambassadors for the rights and aspirations of young Muslim women
- the curriculum promotes British values and encourages boys and girls to be aspirational and productive British citizens.

As you know, this school was part of a reinspection exercise by Ofsted that reviewed the work of the Bridge Schools Inspectorate. You will recall that after this review took place, Ofsted found that a significant number of schools failed to meet the Independent School Standards. However, having reviewed the evidence base for the inspection of this institution, I am of the view that this school does meet the Independent School Standards in all respects.

Nevertheless, I was uncomfortable about the school's policy statement on 'free mixing' and the disjunct between this and the practice seen on the ground by HMI. Therefore, I asked two senior HMI to return to this school without delay to ensure that parts one, two and three of the Independent School Standards are met. They confirmed to me this morning that the school continues to meet these standards. Inspectors also found that the school has removed the reference to 'free mixing' from their policy and, as a consequence, the school's behaviour policy now reflects the practice inspectors found on the ground.

I am pleased that a school with an Islamic ethos can effectively prepare both boys and girls to take their place in modern British society.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael Wilshaw". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Sir Michael Wilshaw