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27 April 2016

**Sir Michael Wilshaw**  
Her Majesty's Chief Inspector

Rt Hon Nicky Morgan MP  
Secretary of State for Education and Minister for Women and Equalities  
Department for Education  
20 Great Smith Street  
London  
SW1P 3BT

Dear Secretary of State

### **Segregation in independent faith schools**

I am writing to you not only in your capacity as Secretary of State for Education but also as Minister for Women and Equalities.

As you know, I wrote to you on 24 November 2015 to raise serious concerns about the segregation of staff and governors in independent schools. I am writing again to report that Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) continue to find that staff are being segregated because of their gender in Muslim independent schools.

On 5 April 2016, officials in the Department for Education (DfE) requested an emergency follow-up inspection of three independent faith schools currently judged inadequate by Ofsted. These inspections were carried out between 12 April and 21 April 2016.

HMI who inspected the Rabia Girls' and Boys' School in Luton expressed their concern when, at the initial meeting with inspectors, the school insisted on segregating men and women through the use of a dividing screen across the middle of the room. This meeting was not carried out in a religious setting but in a classroom. HMI also gathered evidence that male and female staff are segregated during whole-school staff training sessions. Male staff sit in one room and the session is simultaneously broadcast to female staff in another part of the school.

HMI were so concerned about the behaviours modelled by the leaders of this school they informed the proprietor that the school would remain in the inadequate category despite improvements being made elsewhere. This sort of behaviour manifested by the leaders of this school clearly does not conform to the spirit of the equalities legislation which underpins the spiritual, moral, social and cultural standard.

Despite the changes introduced in 2014 by the DfE to strengthen the independent school standards in relation to fundamental British values, it is clear that these are not being followed by some independent schools. Indeed, it is my view that these revised standards are being actively undermined by some leaders, governors and proprietors. HMI will remain vigilant in ensuring that such behaviour, which clearly flouts the requirement to promote British values, is identified and reported. Any form of segregation, without a good educational reason, is likely to lead to an inadequate inspection judgement for leadership and management.

I urge you, Secretary of State, to further review the DfE guidance to independent schools on these matters and, if necessary, write to the proprietors of independent faith schools to clarify your expectations and to reaffirm the government's commitment to the promotion of British values.

I would be pleased to offer the support of HMI to work with your officials on this matter.

Yours sincerely

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

**Sir Michael Wilshaw**  
Her Majesty's Chief Inspector