



independent
schools
council

Strict embargo: 0001 Friday 12 March 2010

ISC response to Maurice Smith Review

The Independent Schools Council is concerned by the findings of the Maurice Smith review regarding the independent sector and dismayed by the commissioning of a further review.

Mr Smith's conclusions about the entire independent school sector appear to be based on a specific concern about links between certain Islamic schools and Hizb ut-Tahrir.

David Lyscom, Chief Executive of ISC, commented on the report today:

“Maurice Smith's report was commissioned by the Secretary of State as a full and detailed review of the provisions which prevent the promotion of racism in maintained schools, with a particular emphasis on the question of whether membership of the British National Party should represent grounds for barring teachers in the state sector. The independent sector was not included in the terms of reference.

Shortly before Christmas - three months into the four month review - we were asked by the review team if we would like to comment on their questions from the perspective of independent schools. It appears now that this was in response to questions raised about certain Islamic schools which are not ISC schools.

We emphasised to the review team that independent schools, by their very nature, are regulated by a framework which is different in scope and detail to state-maintained schools. If this were not the case, they would not be independent. But these differences should not be mistaken for loopholes or gaps to be plugged. The absence of a particular statutory duty which applies across all schools is not a legislative oversight, rather it is representative of the different ways in which independent schools are held accountable.

Independent schools operate within a framework of law and accountability that gives appropriate weight to the importance of diversity and the prohibition of discrimination. All independent schools must attain standards prescribed by the Secretary of State to promote tolerance. All teachers undergoing induction at an independent school are similarly required to meet the same professional standards as

those in the maintained sector. It is the strength of teaching in the sector that continues to attract parents.

We have not been informed either by Mr Smith or DCSF that there are any concerns arising in ISC schools with regard to partisan political activities or, more generally, equality, discrimination or community relations. So we are dismayed that the Secretary of State has felt it expedient to commission a further review that covers the whole sector. If there are issues in individual schools or types of school that raise concern, action should be taken in those schools.

We will of course cooperate with any further review and continue to celebrate the excellence of schools in the ISC family of schools.”

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Notes to editors

ISC Mission Statement

The Independent Schools Council (ISC): working with its members to promote and preserve the quality, diversity and excellence of UK independent education both at home and abroad.

Additional information

ISC represents the eight leading independent schools associations in the UK, collectively educating more than 500,000 children in 1,260 schools in the UK and select British schools overseas. In total, there are around 2,600 independent schools in the UK.

Maurice Smith Review - Terms of Reference can be viewed here:

<http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/mauricesmithreview/tor.shtml>

ISC's responses to the Maurice Smith Review may be viewed here:

http://www.isc.co.uk/publication_7_0_0_10_745.htm

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