

BALANCING DIVERSITY AND VALUES

AUGUST 2024

FOUNDATION

The Independent school sector is highly diverse and comprises schools of many different types and affiliations. Independent schools offer parents the choice to align their children's education with their values, cultural and religious beliefs, or specific educational philosophies.

The extent to which an Independent school seeks to exercise religious freedoms is determined by the core values of the school, the regulatory environment in which they operate and the expectations of their school community.

The ethos of each Independent school plays a fundamental role in attracting parents and students and providing an education that aligns with their values, cultural background, and religious affiliation. Any reforms should avoid undermining this unique character, which is a vital factor in school selection.

ISA therefore supports religious freedom, while respecting national and international principles of human rights and the fair and equal treatment of all individuals, including students, regardless of their sexuality.

All schools are obliged to protect the safety and wellbeing of all students and staff members, and to ensure they are protected from bullying, unfair treatment or discrimination.

STAFF IN INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

Independent schools, often founded on specific religious values and principles, have the right to maintain their religious identity and uphold their beliefs and values. This includes a right to engage staff who share the same religion, values, and ethos of the school.

This is crucial to enable Independent schools to preserve their distinct character and mission, to which parents have expressed their commitment to, and support of by enrolling their child.

STUDENTS IN INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

Independent schools have diverse approaches to education and the philosophies that underpin them. This includes policies and views that relate to religious beliefs, sexuality and gender identity.

ISA upholds the principle that no student, regardless of the school they attend, should be subject to unfair discrimination.

Legislation intended to protect the rights of faith-based schools to operate according to their faith must not diminish protection for students against discrimination.