

Edmund Matyjaszek Aug 2022

It is a sign of the times we live in, and the dangers to children's welfare, that the question posed in the title of this talk needs to be asked at all. You send your child to school to learn, to exercise, to socialise - the role of schools for millennia. For the first time ever on a national and official scale, children are being taught about adult sexual practices and adult sexual identities in a way that was unthinkable only a few years ago.

How has this come about? And what can parents and children do to defend themselves?

What I hope to cover today in this short talk is:

Firstly, how did this come about?

Secondly, what are the specifics of government and educational policy that have created this issue

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Thirdly, what are the procedures and strategies available to parents for whom this represents a threat to their children or contradicts their values.

Make no mistake, it is in black and white that children must learn about LGBT issues (para 37 RSE Guidance 2019 "...we expect all children to have been taught LGBT content..." ) and in this must learn about the T of LGBT – lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender - that is dominating the headlines with the damning report on the Gender Identity Service of the Tavistock.

This has come about as a result of Regulations enforcing the new compulsory RSHE or Relationship, Sex & Health Education – that were passed on May 9 2019, followed up by Statutory Guidance issued on June 26 2019.

There is however a major disconnect between current practice, and even government guidance, and the actual law. I work for an advocacy organisation called ParentPower, as well as being a Headmaster of a small independent Christian School on the Isle of Wight for the last 13 years. We have now considerable experience among us of engaging with schools on behalf of parents, when they come up against what is to them unacceptable materials and approaches to children that breach the values of the family.

To understand all this, we need to turn back 40 or 50 years to trace how we got here so that when as parents you encounter the opposition to any objection to a school's procedures, you may understand where its force and contempt shown to you as parents comes from.

In the 60s and late 70s the idea that the main task of a society was to liberate itself and its citizens from the oppressions of the past took general hold in the culture. Society and human beings were seen in terms of a “progressive” march to a future of harmony and community by exposing and eradicating age old prejudices. Oppressed or victim or minority groups were championed in their liberation and much legislation of an entirely beneficial nature resulted: civil rights, feminism, disability awareness, anti-ageism.

Finally, in the early 70s the Gay Rights or Gay Liberation movement arose – note the word, liberation. In 1967 Homosexual conduct that had been criminalised – and still is in many countries – was made legal between consenting adults in the UK.

Much of this development was incorporated into law by the HRA of 1998, and then finally codified in the Equality Act of 2010 which introduced a novel legal status into English Law – the protected characteristic.

The 9 characteristics are as follows: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.

The Equality Act 2010 makes it unlawful to discriminate against people with a 'protected characteristic'. However this has come to mean with the whole concept of “victim groups” that to disagree with someone about what they think or do, because you may hold other ideas about, for example, the role of sexuality in life, has come to mean that you wish to hate or oppress that person, or the “group” to which they are deemed to belong.

This view became embedded in our legislation and then in the Department of Education thinking. Over the last 20 years Stonewall, the Gay Rights Group, has become embedded in the Department; the Gay Pride was used internally at the Department in Sanctuary Buildings, Westminster; and Nick Gibb, Schools Minister, angrily wagged his finger over the lectern in a House of Commons Committee Room when asked if there would be a problem for parents of Christian, Muslim or Jewish faith faced with this mandatory LGBT teaching when those religions teach that same-sex relations are not acceptable to their faith, shouting “You will teach LGBT! You will teach LGBT!”

The law on RSE was passed in 2019, and had to be put into practice by September 2020, delayed due to Covid & lockdowns. Various resources and materials were brought out by various rms. The DfE refuses to approve or not and leaves that to the schools. And that is the situation where in your child's school now you may have your children coming home stating he or she can change to be a girl or a boy; now two men or two women can have babies; how you can love anyone in any way and it is quite right; and then and if you take this up with the school you will be told you are the one in the wrong, the bigot, the homophobe, and you cannot do anything about it as it is government policy now.

There are two great weapons parents have: the law, and the simple matter of safeguarding your child.

FACT 1: Sex Ed and LGBT content are NOT compulsory in Primary Schools (para 65)

FACT 2: Right to withdraw children from Sex Ed is ABSOLUTE in Primary Schools (Guidance, para 49); and a right in Secondary School dependent on the Head's approval until the child is 15 then they have the right to decide.

FACT 3: ALL Schools MUST consult parents before an RSE policy is made (Guidance, paras 13/24/41); and MUST consult on any review of the policy and the policy is meant to be reviewed regularly.

FACT 4: Schools MUST show parents class materials and state when they will be taught (Guidance, paras 13/24/41).

FACT 5: 'Relationships Education' and 'Sex Education' are supposed to be distinct so that parents are able to identify 'sex ed' lessons or elements and withdraw their children (Guidance, para's 45-50)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/relationships-education-relationships-and-sex-education-rse-and-health-education>

These clear legal rights are distorted in practice to allow the dominance of the prevailing DfE approach "You will be taught LGBT!".

But they are the law!

In the issue of Primary Schools after successive Ministers stressed primary schools should teach LGBT, in an Ofsted Research Commentary in July 2021 Chris Jones, Director of Corporate Strategy at Ofsted stated: "Primary school can opt not to teach LGBT issues if they do not deem this age appropriate and after consultation with parents". There is your opportunity!

The duty to show materials and resources has also been bedevilled with conflict. Many of the standard resources used in schools – Jigsaw, Ten-Ten in Catholic Schools, Twinkl in primary schools as well as the more notorious No Outsiders or Respect Yourself – state that copyright forbids parents seeing their materials. This is just wrong.

The Guidance again is clear "parents should know what is being taught and when (Para 41)" so that their child can "be withdrawn from some or all of sex education being delivered as part of statutory RSE".

Now the cases we have had success with at ParentPower have hinged every time on the exercise of these rights through the complaints procedure in the school.

Always if you can combine with other parents both for your support and to reinforce the legal duty to consult with parents.

To take the last Fact, Fact 5, some schools will explain that no parent has any right to check materials or withdraw their child if and when the school badges content as “Health” or “Relationship” education. One school tried to do this when parents objected to their daughter being taught about masturbation and the teacher strenuously argued this was Health Education not Sex. Oh please!

The law is that if it is of a sexual nature however it is “badged” by the school or the external resources, then it falls within “sex education” and parental rights adhere.

So these are the kinds of instances that may be quoted to you as parents if you take exception to what is being taught to your child; or you are becoming disturbed at what he or she is bringing home as ideas or terms.

What is so dangerous to my mind in the explosion of RSE the last 3 years is the fact that we are producing in classrooms the experience – if not necessarily the intent – of grooming.

The definition of grooming by the NSPCC is : Child grooming is befriending and establishing an emotional connection with a child, and sometimes the family, to lower the child’s inhibitions with the objective of sexual abuse.

Remove the term sexual abuse and what you have is the process now happening in schools. We have by RSE turned our schools into grooming factories. This idea was mentioned in Miriam Cates MP’s great speech just recently and is circulating in America.

Strangers – for even teachers are relative strangers never mind those brought in from outside – are teaching children to link sexual issues to their discussion in class and not within their families.

The school or the teacher or the presenter is becoming linked in the child’s mind with this use. Not their mother and father and the values their family might have. This will affect the way the child sees the world and will connect in his or her mind sexual matters with outsiders or those external to its home. Exactly the breeding ground for abuse. I would not hesitate to raise this issue of the dangers of “grooming” if material on adult sexual activities or practices is brought into your child’s school.