

What is being taught in Relationships and Sex Education in our schools?

A call for a government review

A report commissioned by
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INTRODUCTION

This report is intended to communicate concerns about the implementation of the Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) curriculum in schools, and to set out the mounting evidence of widespread indoctrination and age-inappropriate teaching that has been steadily advancing for well over a decade across the national educational landscape, yet seems to have accelerated recently in schools.

Since RSE became compulsory in England under the Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education (England) Regulations 2019, and in Wales under the Curriculum and Assessment (Wales) Act 2022, many parents and teachers have observed that, contrary to the limits of the law, inaccurate or ideological information is being delivered as fact in RSE lessons, whilst contentious and sexualising theories about how to approach relationships are being promoted. This is often positioned behind very reasonable intentions to make schools suitably fair and welcoming places that cater for all.

In England, the Department for Education published statutory guidance¹ on RSE in 2019 which came into effect in 2021. However, this report presents evidence that RSE providers have openly described practices in their literature that contravene this statutory guidance, whilst in many cases, unsuitably sexually explicit resources have been prepared for children. Key third party providers have also expressed their intent to use RSE as a method by which to politicise the classroom to create social change, causing schools to breach their duty to maintain political impartiality.

Indeed, there is strong evidence that actors with a radical ideological position on sex, gender and sexuality are monopolising the RSE third sector, putting the nation's children at risk; risk of ideological persuasion to self-harm, predation online, intrusive sexualisation and being politically indoctrinated with ideas that are destructive to a sense of self, of family and even of nationhood.

Although RSE topics are mandatory, schools are given discretion over how they are taught and which resources are used, resulting in a wide variation in the quality and nature of RSE. Whilst it is beyond the scope of this report to provide a comprehensive audit of what is being taught nationwide, the report is intended to give a meaningful impression of the nature and extent of contentious RSE specifically. To do this, it draws on the observations and evidence collected by parents, parent support groups, teachers and academics – including during the process of parents making formal complaints.

To give a sense of the scale of the problem, a recently published report² by Policy Exchange, demonstrates that 73% of British school children have encountered Critical Social Justice Theory, of which radical Gender Theory is a key part that pertains to RSE. The research also finds that schools have introduced this content, which is of an inherently political and controversial nature, typically without presenting alternative perspectives.

Parents have also reported a mixture of evasiveness, secrecy and unfair treatment concerning enquiries they have made about RSE, as well as in the way that the schools have handled cases of children expressing gender dysphoria. Worryingly,

some of this secrecy and discounting of parental wishes is clearly advocated by leading providers of RSE resources. Furthermore, the complaint procedures that are required in schools have often failed to meaningfully address or resolve the issues that parents have raised, sometimes even when the complaint has been escalated to the DfE³.

Some of the teaching practice relating to novel RSE provision is based upon ethically questionable research projects that have taken place with children in school settings, conducted by university academics and charities. This research has, in turn, gained central government support and funding for controversial RSE schemes (especially relating to 'gender identity' and the management of online harms), leading to their widespread influence in schools

Of particular concern is that a political and ideological bias in RSE teaching is promoting trans identification to school pupils and could be contributing to the accelerating number of children seeking medical intervention, including puberty blockers or hormone treatment. A YouGov survey⁴, commissioned by the group Sex Matters, found that 79% of schools have at least one child describing themselves as trans or non-binary and in some schools, prevalence is as high as one child in ten.

The number⁵ of children on the waiting list for gender identity clinic services has increased to nearly 8,000⁶, which is a rise of 67% in less than two years, and previously the group Transgender Trend reported⁷ an increase in children seeking such services of over 1,400% for boys and 5,300% for girls, in less than a decade. Meanwhile, a leading medical sex-change surgeon reported to the

press⁸ that breast removal operations (which can legally take place from age eighteen) have increased "ten-fold in a decade", resulting in him carrying out twenty double mastectomies a month, often upon young people aged from eighteen to their early twenties.

Although recent coverage⁹ of malpractice by the trans charity and RSE provider, Mermaids (which secretly issued breast binders to children without parental permission), has brought an element of this safeguarding issue to light in the charity sector, the extent, severity and evolution of the wider problem of indoctrinating RSE in schools, is far from understood.

In the light of the Cass Review Interim Report¹⁰ (which notes the rapid increase in referrals to, and failures of treatment at, the NHS Tavistock and Portman's Gender Identity Development Service (GIDS)) – and given the seriousness of the harms done by inappropriate medication for trans identification – it seems imperative to understand if RSE in schools has been contributing to this surge.

This document has therefore been prepared to communicate that there is more than enough evidence to support the call for urgent investigation – in fact, enough to suggest that a moratorium on aspects of the new RSE might well be necessary in the meanwhile, to halt a widespread culture of safeguarding failure.

THE RISK TO PUBLIC TRUST IN SCHOOLING

The Evolving Remit of RSE

When sex education was first introduced to the school curriculum in 1976, it largely consisted of important factual, biological information relating to procreation, contraception and the avoidance of sexually transmitted infections.

However, the Sex and Relationship Education (SRE) 2000 Guidance¹¹ introduced significant reform. This followed lobbying¹², from the mid 1980’s onwards, by charities such as the National Children’s Bureau, the Sex Education Forum, Brook and the Family Planning Association, with particular concern to make sex education inclusive for same sex relationships, to destigmatise single parenthood, to reduce teenage pregnancy and to inform about access to abortion.

SRE required schools to depart from the purely factual and biological basis for sex education, in order to introduce the teaching of values about how to conduct relationships, and how to regard differing types of family structure. In particular, this accompanied various legal reforms concerning the rights of LGBT identifying people.

On making this significant intervention, the DfE made the following declaration in the 2000 SRE guidance:

Sex and Relationship Education Guidance

What is sex and relationship education?

9. It is lifelong learning about physical, moral and emotional development. It is about the understanding of the importance of marriage for family life, stable and loving relationships, respect, love and care. It is also about the teaching of sex, sexuality, and sexual health. It is not about the promotion of sexual orientation or sexual activity – this would be inappropriate teaching.]

Sex and Relationship Education Guidance, 2000, by the Department for Education and Employment

It is arguable that this declaration was fundamental to gaining the population’s approval as the State entered the realm of advising children upon private relationships and societal mores regarding diverse sexual practices and family structures.

Notably, this statement does not feature in the latest 2019 RSE guidance, however, it has not been replaced by a new, similarly concise definition, and is therefore still published at the outset of many (if not most) schools’ updated RSE policy documents. These documents are the key point of consultation between schools and parents concerning RSE, and therefore it is this definition that parents are most commonly being asked to expect and trust today, even under the new guidance.

However, the 2019 RSE guidance contains advice that is not compatible with this definition. For example, on pages 20-21 (the first point at which marriage is mentioned), families are said to be “important” for children only because they “can” give love. The advice then prioritises telling children they should “respect” different family types before giving a dry, legalistic description of marriage, without ascribing any value to it or explaining that it has anything to do with love, the raising of children or religious and cultural significance.

By the end of primary school:

Families and people who care for me	<p>Pupils should know</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">that families are important for children growing up because they can give love, security and stability.the characteristics of healthy family life, commitment to each other, including in times of difficulty, protection and care for children and other family members, the importance of spending time together and sharing each other’s lives.that others’ families, either in school or in the wider world, sometimes look different from their family, but that they should respect those differences and know that other children’s families are also characterised by love and care.
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">that stable, caring relationships, which may be of different types, are at the heart of happy families, and are important for children’s security as they grow up.that marriage¹³ represents a formal and legally recognised commitment of two people to each other which is intended to be lifelong.how to recognise if family relationships are making them feel unhappy or unsafe, and how to seek help or advice from others if needed.
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Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education, 2019, by the DfE

Meanwhile, examples show that the actual teaching practice occurring in schools is often even further removed from the original definition of RSE. To briefly illustrate the discrepancy, the following statement¹³ is given by a leading RSE provider, School of Sexuality Education:

"In our work with young people, we always advocate for a sex positive approach both in the classroom and in general..."

...It means stepping away from heteronormative and monogamy-based assumptions and, instead, working to understand our own and each other's desires openly and without presumption. There are a variety of sexual preferences and practices – we're all a little different. Being sex positive is about accepting and learning about that diversity in order to approach sex with a nuanced awareness of everybody's multi-faceted, fluid sexual identity. This includes being non-judgemental and accepting about sexual practices that are considered to deviate from the norm."

This explanation of 'sex positive' RSE is accompanied by an image¹⁴ of multicoloured Love Hearts sweets, which display the messages "Do U Wanna?", "That Feels Good", "Kiss Me?", "Touch Me" "Are Your Ready", "Yes Pls" and "I Love It When You..." This image seems to have contributed to the temporary suspension of the RSE provider's Instagram account because it was deemed to be 'sexually suggestive content'.¹⁵ And yet this provider works in many schools that promise parents that RSE "is not about the promotion of sexual orientation or sexual activity – this would be inappropriate teaching".

The School of Sexuality Education is not a fringe RSE provider, but a charity that has been employed by more than three hundred schools, reached over sixty-seven thousand young people, helped create teacher training programmes, held influential seminars, received mainstream sponsorship from a bank and the Lottery Fund, and is informed by leading university academics who collaborate with the Sex Education Forum and advise the DfE.

In a formal response to the DfE's draft 2019 RSE guidance, titled Our Response, Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education: Draft Statutory Guidance¹⁶, the same provider issued the following statement:

"School of Sexuality Education strives for a comprehensive, inclusive, 21st Century RSE for all. In this document we firstly aim to lay out the ways in which this guidance lends itself to an intersectional feminist, evidence-based, sex positive, LGBTQIA+ inclusive RSE."

Secondly, we detail the ways in which this guidance could be built upon, developed or how sections could be interpreted in a way that aligns with our aforementioned approach."

This interpretation of the DfE guidance promotes the political concepts of 'intersectional feminism' and 'sex positivity', and adds the abbreviations of 'QIA+', to the DfE's chosen term of LGBT. 'QIA' stands for Queer, Intersex and Asexual, whilst + symbolises a full spectrum of sexual orientation or 'gender identity'. As such, this includes highly contentious concepts (which will be considered in this report), none of which are stipulated in the 2019 RSE guidance document.

However, it seems the provider does not think the 2019 RSE guidance goes far enough to suit their vision because they also critique it, saying,

"How can this guidance be built on to ensure a modern, comprehensive sex ed?"

By being truly LGBTQIA+ inclusive

Whilst this guidance rightly states that "this content is fully integrated into their programmes of study for this area of the curriculum rather than delivered as a standalone unit or lesson", there is a contradiction in that it also states, "At the point at which schools consider it appropriate to teach their pupils about LGBT..." and "Sexual orientation and gender identity should be explored at a timely point" (paragraph 37).

Being truly inclusive of all genders and sexualities involves this message being integrated across the board and from the outset; to introduce this information "at a point" would be inherently not inclusive.

For School of Sex Ed, educating outside of cis and heteronormativity means being inclusive of all genders and sexualities from the very start – primary age – and consistently throughout RSE. Without this explicit and thorough integration of different genders and sexualities, policy makers risk tokenising certain identities and young people."

They also suggest,

"Avoid giving problematic credence to long-term relationships and marriage."

There are several references to promoting the benefits of marriage, "committed, stable relationships" and "healthy one-to-one intimate relationships", and a recommendation that marriage and its

special legal place is taught from primary age (page 21).

The guidance both explicitly and implicitly places monogamous, long-term relationships and marriage above other forms of relationships. For example, stating a link between "committed stable relationships" and "how these relationships might contribute to human happiness and their importance for bringing up children (page 27).

We see this presentation of a hierarchy of relationship types to be highly outdated, not to mention unrepresentative of a large proportion of modern day lives. For those who are personally in or whose family consists of 'non-conventional' relationships, such as co-parenting arrangements or polyamorous relationships, this would be extremely alienating and contribute to a culture of judgement and shame."

"Being Sex Positive

On a similar note, the guidance appears to suggest that sex is best had within relationships, and therefore, casual sex or multiple partner sexual relationships as implicitly negative or wrong. One could argue that this sentiment could be echoed in the switching of SRE > RSE. Significantly, the word pleasure is not mentioned once in the guidance.

This stance would undermine an integral part of our approach to Sex Education: se-positivity. It also sits as out-of-touch with the Tinder generation, therefore, also not adequately preparing some for the realities of the way in which they will choose to live their life."

Their paper concludes with the implication that parents' right to withdraw their children from parts of RSE – which is written directly into the guidance as a core legal protection and in consideration of the rights of parents over the content of classes as enshrined in Article 2, Protocol 1 to the European Convention on Human Rights – should be removed in order to observe the right of the child to access education.

"Finally – what about the right to withdraw?"

Ultimately the guidance currently states that secondary school age children can still be withdrawn from SRE by their parents. It is important to consider how this prioritises the parent's perspective, and begs the question: but what about the sexual rights and health of the child? Under a rights-based perspective, and as advocated by the World Health organisation, all children would have access to fundamental information about their health and well being."

Influential campaign group Schools OUT UK also opposed the original definition in the 2000 SRE guidance in an essay¹⁷ in 2017, in which they offer their consultation to the Government about the reforms and interpretations of RSE that they wanted to see, some of which have since come about, as this report will later detail, such as:

"It is essential to assert the moral equivalence of same sex and opposite sex partnerships and relationships – as well as other relationships involving intersex or non-binary/agender people. Everyone has a right to be straight, cis, lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, intersex, agender, gender non-conforming, pansexual, asexual and sexually fluid. Prejudice must be persistently challenged. Ensuring

the above will help us avoid crass and dubious statements about 'promoting' a particular sexuality."

There is a key issue here, whereby those who had been campaigning for the removal of Section 28 (especially what was thought to be a prejudiced prohibition on the 'promotion' of homosexuality) continued to object to the SRE's use of the word 'promotion' even when it pertained equally to any sexual orientation or sexual activity, which was no longer discriminatory but had the important function of protecting children from sexualisation.

Schools OUT UK then explained that:

"By detailing all sexual practices – including sensitive subjects such as fisting – we are ensuring there are no nasty surprises later in life for students. There is a balance to be drawn here between (not) making judgements and ensuring that students are aware of the mental and physical implications – both short term and long term – of some practices."

It is important to uncouple sexual practice from sexual orientation (e.g. the association of vibrators with lesbians or anal sex with gay men), as such assumptions are ignorant and may encourage stereotyping and prejudice. In fact it is a good idea to distinguish between sexuality and sexual orientation. Sexuality is what people find arousing whereas sexual orientation is whom people are attracted to. So if you like having your earlobes nibbled that is part of your sexuality rather than your sexual orientation."

The campaign group also wished to see RSE made fully compulsory, or for it to be made difficult for parents to withdraw children from it:

"We would like SRE lessons to be compulsory for all pupils and the opt out for parents with particular religious sensibilities to be removed. However we accept that the religious lobby is a powerful pressure group which governments of any hue will be reluctant to challenge in the near future. Peter Tatchell suggests adapting the law to state that pupil can only be removed if the parent/guardian comes to the schools and escorts them off the premises. He stated that this was tried in two schools in Northern Ireland and no parent chose the opt out clause. Maybe this would be a good compromise."

These examples of the evolving expectations of RSE by influential parties, seem to indicate that the intentions behind some RSE provision is now floating free of any meaningful relationship to the majority public sentiment and to school RSE policies, and indeed the DfE's own guidance. This is contributing to a rupture in trust that is being increasingly felt between parents and schools.

Political Bias in the RSE Sector

Schools are naturally keen to meet their new RSE obligations but, understandably, many are wary about the sensitivity of the topics it obliges them to introduce – especially given that the 2019 RSE guidance is very open ended. The following sections of the guidance in particular leave huge scope for interpretation.

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT)

36. In teaching Relationships Education and RSE, schools should ensure that the needs of all pupils are appropriately met, and that all pupils understand the importance of equality and respect. Schools must ensure that they comply with the relevant provisions of the Equality Act 2010, (please see The Equality Act 2010 and schools: Departmental advice), under which sexual orientation and gender reassignment are amongst the protected characteristics.

37. Schools should ensure that all of their teaching is sensitive and age appropriate in approach and content. At the point at which schools consider it appropriate to teach their pupils about LGBT, they should ensure that this content is fully integrated into their programmes of study for this area of the curriculum rather than delivered as a stand-alone unit or lesson. Schools are free to determine how they do this, and we expect all pupils to have been taught LGBT content at a timely point as part of this area of the curriculum.

29. Provisions within the Equality Act allow schools to take positive action, where it can be shown that it is proportionate, to deal with particular disadvantages affecting one group because of a protected characteristic. This should be taken into consideration in designing and teaching these subjects. A school, could, for example, consider taking positive action to support girls if there was evidence that they were being disproportionately subjected to sexual violence or sexual harassment.

30. Schools should consider the makeup of their own student body, including the gender and age range of their pupils, and consider whether it is appropriate or necessary to put in place additional support for pupils with particular protected characteristics (which mean that they are potentially at greater risk). Schools should consider what they can do to foster healthy and respectful peer-to-peer communication and behaviour between boys and girls, and provide an environment, which challenges perceived limits on pupils based on their gender or any other characteristic, including through these subjects and as part of a whole-school approach.

31. Schools should be alive to issues such as everyday sexism, misogyny, homophobia and gender stereotypes and take positive action to build a culture where these are not tolerated, and any occurrences are identified and tackled. Staff have an important role to play in modelling positive behaviours. School pastoral and behaviour policies should support all pupils.

Excerpts from RSE Guidance 2019, Department for Education

Simply telling schools they are “free” to “teach their pupils about LGBT” or tasking them to take “positive action” so that “gender stereotypes... are not tolerated” – without meaningful qualification or parameters – is arguably such unsuitable instruction for official government guidance that it implies either a troubling degree of naivety or an intention to permit radical interpretation, on the part of the policymakers.

This lack of clear guidance has caused most schools to employ the assistance of independent RSE professionals, some of which are RSE-specific providers, whilst others are long-standing lobby groups, private school resources companies or large charities with other key functions.

A cursory glance at the sector shows it is staffed (in the majority) by providers with a politically progressive outlook – many of whom might be better described as activists than as educators. Indeed, some openly describe their work in these terms, for example Dr. Elly Barnes and Dr. Anna Carlile explain in their RSE guidebook,

“In a nutshell, we are asking teachers to ‘change, and not simply mirror our society’ (Casper and Schultz 1999, p.15)...”¹⁸

They also explain that:

“Yes, some positive changes have occurred, but we are still having to challenge negative attitudes that are influenced by the current political climate, bigotry, the excuse

of ‘tradition’ and the perceived reality of the ‘heteronormative’ model.”¹⁹

Another prominent RSE guidebook called Great Relationships and Sex Education, by Alice Hoyle and Ester McGeeney, dedicates a chapter to “Gender and Sexual Equality”, in which they present a diagram titled “Injustice, Equality, Equity, Liberation”²⁰. Ester McGeeney is a leading RSE academic, who undertook a research project sponsored by Brook about teaching the topic of pleasure in RSE. In a talk about the project, she describes her work as “innovative and politically sensitive”, and reports that RSE practitioners,

“think that talking about pleasure is really important, but they were really concerned about the kind of backlash from parents, from Governors, from the Daily Mail...”

...the Pleasure Project is a kind of project for social change. It’s calling for a more feminist, or a more inclusive model of sexuality, and that we can’t front load that onto practitioners to do all of that work without providing them with the necessary institutional, and arguably a kind of political support, as well.”²¹

McGeeney also explains in the conclusion of her PhD thesis What is good sex?: Young People, Sexual Pleasure and Sexual Health Services²², that,

“In conducting this work in collaboration with Brook I hope to draw on and contribute to their campaign work around challenging society’s negative attitudes to sex and promoting a ‘sex positive’ culture, drawing on the insights from the research about the challenges of putting this into practice.”

To achieve this aim, she explains that she plans to develop,

“an accessible document that provides the rationale and evidence for conducting this work that can be made publically [sic] available for use by practitioners and organisations needing support in dealing with ‘conservative parents’ (Allen 2007b: 259) and enraged school governors.”

Meanwhile, Lucy Emmerson, the Chief Executive of the influential Sex Education Forum (SEF) (which cites McGeeney in its publications), presents the following strong opinion about RSE on the SEF’s home webpage, which might be interpreted as advocating a politicised approach to education:

“Gender and power dynamics needs to be a thread throughout relationships and sex education.”²³

The SEF is the leading voice for the RSE providers’ market and yet it also describes itself as having a thirty year campaign history²⁴ for its own specific vision of RSE, including that it becomes fully compulsory (with no parental right to withdraw), and is ideologically ‘sex positive’, pro-LGBTQIA+ and mindful of ‘intersectionality’, as their most recent publication Relationships and Sex Education: The Evidence explains;

“Professionals identify best-practice RSE to be interactive and engaging, be taught in a safe environment, be delivered through a spiral curriculum and take a ‘sex-positive’, culturally-sensitive and life-skills approach.”

“It is important to note that many students will experience multiple forms of discrimination described above at once - the concept of ‘intersectionality’.”²⁵

During their campaigning years, the SEF was part of the National Children’s Bureau, which was founded to champion

the interests of looked after or neglected children. But this perspective and special interest does not reflect the needs of all children and families – most British children receive the loving care and sound advice of their parents.

The SEF only gained their privileged position as a representative for the RSE sector after forming a coalition with the Church of England Marriage Advisory Panel and the Catholic Marriage Advisory Council (Marriage Care) in the 1980's²⁶. This enabled them to receive DfE funding to help develop a universally acceptable, compulsory RSE curriculum.

However, neither of these Christian groups have continued as official partners of the SEF, and yet the SEF's ratifying influence remains. In their 2018 document, *Having Faith in Comprehensive RSE*²⁷, the SEF appear to be presenting a picture of a diversity of thought behind their organisation that is no longer the case, since they point out that Marriage Care was a founding member of the organisation, which demonstrates "consensus", but omit the fact that it left the coalition as long ago as 2013.

"When the Sex Education Forum was created 30 years ago the founding group included the sexual health charity Brook and the Catholic Marriage Advisory Council, amongst others, and showed from an early stage how faith and health perspectives could work together to identify common ground. Our role has always been to demonstrate the consensus of support for evidence-based RSE and to help explain why RSE is an entitlement for every child and young person."

Thereafter, the document includes a call for more central government control over

what faith schools must include in RSE, which raises unsolved questions about how faith schools can properly observe or express their beliefs and whether the SEF is the right body to speak for the RSE sector as a whole.

"What mustn't be allowed to happen is for schools to exclude particular topics or information because of the faith or beliefs of parents, or the religious status of the school. Updated government guidance must make this absolutely clear."

Likewise, charities and activists that formerly campaigned for the repeal of Section 28 and LGBT interests, such as Stonewall and the LGBT Consortium (which both received substantial public funding²⁸ and access to Government), form a disproportionately large part of the RSE sector, given that the LGBT grouping represents the interests of less than 10%²⁹ of the British population.

This campaigning has often been entwined with a wider political position. For example, the national LGBT+ programme, Educate & Celebrate, run by Dr. Elly Barnes, had its foundation as "a training arm" of Schools OUT UK, which included members of the Socialist Workers Party in the 2000's and also forged links with the teaching unions, as it built its influence over the sector. In the following, illuminating article³⁰ from 2014 in the Socialist Worker, Sue Caldwell interviews Tony Fenwick of Schools OUT UK, who expressed a clear interest in opposing academies, religious schools and Conservative policy and conflated teachers' employment interests with LGBT campaigning.

And as a further indication of the "political activism"³¹ within the movement to include LGBT issues in education, a conference in 2010 called

Creative Responses to Education and Equality included a cabaret act called Tit Bits by Bird La Bird, "a shell breaking performance artist who puts the camp back in communism".³²

The conference was convened by Gendered Intelligence, hosted by The Central School of Speech and Drama and contributed to by representatives of Schools OUT UK, GIREs, No Outsiders, the National Union of Students and the Government Equalities Office. It was introduced as follows:

"The Trans Community Conference 2010 was a one-day gathering featuring a series of workshops for members of the trans community from across the UK, as well as professionals who work with the trans community. The trans community includes family members, partners and lovers and friends and allies. The conference celebrated our diversity of identities and knowledge, as well as the different groups, organisations and projects that our community offers."

The conference took a more creative approach to the themes of education, equalities and diversities, policy and practice, political activism and work carried out in the voluntary and community sector. As our host was Central School of Speech & Drama, we disseminated various projects that have used art, drama, applied theatre, voice work, and creative writing as practical measures that educate and work towards equality, including encouraging body positivity for trans people and their loved ones, and finding ways of getting our voices and stories heard. We also heard from those who use creative tools as a way into the education and discussion around gender diversity."

The conference raised the following questions by Dr. Louise Chambers of Goldsmiths' College London

- to what extent could Foucault's genealogies be applied to the emergence of 'transvestism' and 'transsexualism' in the early twentieth century, and could it therefore be argued that people who identify as transsexual or transgender are the 'last of the inverts'?

- what are the limits/limitations of queer theory, and particularly the work of writers like Wilchins (1997)³ and Butler (2004)⁴?

- to what extent can recent theories of 'embodiment' and 'affect' offer an alternative to psychopathology and performativity?

- does the concept of a 'Body without Organs' offer an alternative to dyadic and polymorphous models of gender?

The evening entertainment was described as:

"Political Partying"

Bird la Bird

Bird Club is a cabaret space which promotes and celebrates queer femininity including feminist strippers on roller skates, parody, pomo queer burlesque, brainwashing, film, interactive performance and stand up comedy. In Spring this year Bird Club created a series called Cum the Revolution, three parties which drew inspiration from different revolutions: The Civil Rights Movement, Communism and the French Revolution. Combining interactive performances such as Soviet Santa Grotto with Santa Karl Marx and her elf Lenin with specially commissioned works responding to the

G20 protests Bird Club joyfully hops between high camp and earnestness.”

Unethical Or Misleading Research

Several RSE providers justify their expertise by referring to academic research, some of which includes practices that could be said to be unethical, misleading or scientifically unsound, and yet have set a precedent for RSE practice, as well as how schools should accommodate trans identifying children.

An early, key example of this is the work³³ of Gendered Intelligence, which received seed funding and/or support in the mid 2000's from the Wellcome Trust, Pfizer, sex transition surgeons and the Science Museum. This resulted in a project called Sci:identity – What's the Science of Sex and Gender? which seemed to give a veneer of scientific standing to what were in fact persuasive art and drama activities, with experimental sociological interventions in the classroom.

For example, in 2006 an academic from The Central School of Speech and Drama, Catherine McNamara, facilitated drama workshops at which the charity's founder, Jay Stewart, and a colleague “outed” themselves as trans during the lesson with children, as a means to persuade them that “you don't need a penis to be a man”.³⁴

In the Sci:identity Project Evaluation Report: Phases 3 and 4, written by Dr. Alison Rooke of Goldsmiths University, she details the way in which children reacted and had their minds changed about sex and gender when their comments were “troubled productively for the next hour and half”, with allusion to biology and science, but seemingly no

sound proof aside from the opinion and appearance of the teachers.

“The moment when Jay explicitly said he was assigned female at birth was interesting. The processing of that statement was tangible, and 2 or 3 students repeated it for clarification. This was a critical moment that shifted into looking at the question of how a person moves from being a girl, to being a man.”

She also details that Jay Stewart reported “I believe Participant N (and myself) benefitted from the careful lead-up to allow for our trans-ness to be in the room”, whilst there was no ethical consideration recorded about what it might mean to present children with these unscientific ideas as a surprise – especially as the workshop was said to be,

“Aiming to get them to think about trans:

- Birth sex

- Hormonal &/or surgical intervention”

The report does not discuss whether parental permission was given for this activity, but it does refer to the fact that it was quite difficult to find schools willing to participate in the project. It had been hoped that the workshops would be presented in biology lessons, but in the end, it was drama departments that accepted them. The following extracts describe the activities taking place:

5.3. The Gender Matrix

This exercise is a teen-magazine style quiz, designed to further encourage discussions of gender stereotypes and issues of policing gender. (See appendix 2 for copy of the matrix) This was an individual exercise that could be shared

voluntarily with the group afterwards. The idea was to circle the statements that the workshop participant thought applied to themselves. These were classed as either 'male' or 'female', or 'masculine' or 'feminine' characteristics. The statements were then added up to create a 'score' or amount male or female, masculine or feminine attributes the workshop participant possesses. The gender matrix might then find that they were very much female but had more masculine qualities, or vice versa. Or that they were half female, half male in terms of sexed characteristics, but that their personalities and interests were very masculine, or feminine. That is to say that their bodies might be androgynous but their gendered identity was more fully developed as very much a 'boy' or 'girl'. The questions were met with mixed responses. Some of the workshop participants, including the workers, liked the quiz because it gave them an opportunity to reflect on their own identity and experiences. In discussion workshop participants might volunteer their findings with “I agree with what this quiz says about me”, or “I don't think I am like this at all”. The general response was that the quiz was fun, but that they did not think it was accurate in describing or allocating their gender, i.e. that it was not scientific in its approach or findings. The statements were built up as a mixture of biological, psychological and cultural signifiers of sex and gender. The idea was to demonstrate that sex and gender cannot be defined through one single measure, but rather through a matrix of signifiers and codes, including anatomical ones, which produces us as sexed and gendered beings. It was important to begin to muddy the boundaries between sex and gender. For instance, locating the sex of someone does not mean that that

is their gender, or that by understanding the importance of gender and gender expressions, or wanting to be read as a particular gendered being, we might begin to understand the power of sexed signifiers, for example: facial hair, deep voice, muscle mass, and why these might be required or desired in order to be read as 'male'.

5.5. Key Concepts: The Binary Spectrum/ Truth

The outreach team made decisions about which terms and concepts should be introduced to workshop participants. Careful use of language and ways of thinking were key strategies here. The outreach team wanted to encourage workshop participants to experiment with new words. The team had talked about the age/ stage when they had first become aware of the complexity of gender, and first came to understand and use terms to help to communicate how we learnt about our sexed and gendered selves and the world around us. The outreach team felt if these workshops could provide a way for young people to explore these matters, this would be a successful outcome. In fact, many of the end-of-session evaluation cards demonstrate that the terms 'gender binary' and 'gender spectrum' were enjoyed and retained. The evaluation form asked participants to describe their gender identity and sexual identity. It is indicative of the effectiveness of these sessions in disaggregating the meanings of sex and gender, the language surrounding these issues and the ways that gender identities are enmeshed in sexual identity that workshop participants described their gender in inventive ways such as: 'fucking confused', 'butch femme looking female', and their sexual identities as 'boi' 'lesbian', 'asexual', 'who knows', 'me!!!! just me!!!!',

'genderqueer bi dude'.

In his session evaluation Jay Stewart says:

What made this session unique is that there was a specific moment where (Participant N) and myself "outed" ourselves as trans, which had a huge impact on the rest of the session. The opportunity to do this has not always arisen [sic] and I would argue sometimes inappropriate in other sessions. We recognised the work that it could do, in planning sessions and the very beginning of the phase. I would say that it was this session where it worked, as it engaged people all the more and gave them a very tangible experience of what it means to be trans, and then relating that back to the workshop and ideas of the science of sex and gender. The original part of this session was also to talk about the psychiatric route of trans and relating that back to their studied play text. They had already learnt empathy with regards to what it means to be part of the psychiatric system and I felt then that this furthered their thinking and related it to experiences of gender and the normalizing mechanics of the mental health system.

There was a specific moment when (Participant N) said, "obviously Jay and I are here because we are happy to answer questions and we want to talk about ourselves being Trans. We are not ashamed of being Trans". It was nice for me to reflect upon this space of predominantly non-trans people in relation to the workshops for young trans people last summer. Certainly the trans youth were not ashamed of being trans but there was a tangible idea that being trans in a non-trans space is hard. It was nice that being trans in this specific non-trans space was indeed not hard at all. I believe Participant N (and myself)

benefited from the careful lead-up to allow for our trans-ness to be in the room in a safe and creative way, given that the lesson started with an overwhelming consensus in the comment that "you can't be a man if you haven't got a penis". This comment was troubled productively for the next hour and half and opinions were changed (see comments on Student 1).

Catherine McNamara also reflected on this moment:

At one point, there was a round of applause for Jay & Participant N. The group vocalised their awareness that the two facilitators were being open and honest and talking about their personal experiences in a candid way, in an effort to give the group an understanding of the complexities of gender. The moment when Jay explicitly said he was assigned female at birth was interesting. The processing of that statement was tangible, and 2 or 3 students repeated it for clarification. This was a critical moment that shifted into looking at the question of how a person moves from being a girl, to being a man.

As well as gathering evaluation forms, each facilitator was asked to monitor and reflect on a few of the students through 'reflection-on-action.' In her session evaluation Catherine McNamara says of Student 1 (self-identified as 15yrs old, mixed-race British male, heterosexual from Lewisham).

This student was closely monitored and 'policed' by the teacher, with specific targeted encouragement to listen well, engage etc, and though he showed some signs of having a limited attention-span (being intrigued by the screen-saver on the laptop, rather than the conversation at times!), he was excellent in terms of

his questions and comments throughout, his evaluation form and his apparent shift in opinion in terms of sexed & gendered identity categories. He wanted to shake Jay's hand to demonstrate his appreciation of the session and Jay's honesty with the group. He commented that he had learned how to accept people, and that 'you don't need a penis to be a man' (monitoring form)

In Appendix 3 the "Wider Outcomes" of the research were listed in the report and they included:

"The Department of Health's Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Advisory Group (SOGIAG) and the Department of Education and Skills in association with the Anti-Bullying Alliance.

Performance Studies International 2, June 06 Queen Mary, University of

London Panel Presentation 'Queer as Fuck or Living with the enemy: Towards not reconciling the state with queers, transies and children'. Catherine McNamara (Project Coordinator) with Dr. Stephen Farrier and Selina Busby."

Gendered Intelligence also produced an art exhibition sponsored by the Wellcome Trust, called GI's Anatomy, that displayed images that seem to depict considerable psychological distress amongst the young artists, with titles such as 'Nearly Dead!'³⁵ For example one collage displayed a representation of a person surrounded by pill packets, tarot cards and a blood filled syringe, and placed a number of wooden spikes pointing at the belly or sexual organs, from which a representation of blood was apparently pouring across the picture. In another case a figure with a safety pin attached through an arm, presents a diamond shaped hole where

their sexual organs would be, with a string hanging out of it.

The charity went on to contribute significantly to defining trans inclusion in schools, receiving public funds, Government approval and training other organisations and teachers. For example, the Gendered Intelligence Biennial Report 2009 – 2011³⁶ records that the charity,

"worked with 26 PGCE students from University College, St Mark & St John, Plymouth (Teacher Education), where we looked at gender diversity in Primary School settings and disseminating our No Outsiders work. At Royal Liberty School (Boys), Romford, a Specialist Science College and also a Microsoft IT Academy, we worked with 120 Year 10 students exploring gender diversity and sexual orientation. One of these workshops was observed by a member of the Department for Education's Anti-bullying Team."

Recently, Gendered Intelligence has contributed to the Tate Gallery's controversial exhibition titled *Let Me Show You a Body*³⁷, which encourages teachers to deliver their lessons using 'they/them/their' pronouns and to ask children to "write and draw what they feel about their bodies, gender and sexualities".

Another example of controversial, interactive academic research, conducted with children in schools, took place in 2020, co-authored by Jessica Ringrose (UCL), Kaitlyn Regehr, (University of Kent) Amelia Jenkinson (former CEO of School of Sexuality Education) and Sophie Whitehead. They created a project called *Play-Doh Vulvas and Felt Tip Dick Pics: Disrupting Phallocentric Matter(s) In Sex Education*³⁸ and their academic paper openly declares an

activist approach that seems more concerned with the political meaning of the project than the wellbeing and safeguarding of the children involved.

The researchers prepared a series of workshops in schools that resulted in a spontaneous decision to engage children from ages twelve to sixteen in drawing sexually explicit images, including hands masturbating erections with the words 'Wanna See Me Cum!' and "Now It's Your Turn – Ride Me" written on them. Described as a "breakthrough in the fieldwork" this was done partly in order to enable children to communicate what they had been sent on their mobile phones, but apparently also as a sort of therapeutic approach to "empower the girls" to turn "phallogentric control into a form of clitoral validity". The paper records:

"Disrupting Dick Pick Dismay through Drawing

During one of the workshops, after an extensive discussion of dick pics, the girls asked tentatively if they should draw what they "actually" received. This was responded to in the affirmative by the researcher. Amidst a heightened feeling of "wonder" and intensity in breaking taboos in school (MacClure, 2013) the girls set about drawing the dick pics they had received. There was a sense of solidarity amongst the girls in their experience as they discussed the pictures they had received from "random old men" on Snapchat. The ability to recreate what they had received in somewhat comical drawings seemed to empower the girls and worked to reimagine what had been an assumed silence, taboo and phallogentric control into a form of clitoral validity.

It is important to note that the first dick pick drawings did not emerge until our third research school and were experienced by the team as a sort of breakthrough in the fieldwork. Author one remembers walking into a workshop led by Author two and saying "wow; this has generated something really important!" From here we gained confidence to prompt other groups to draw any "explicit" content. It is also significant that drawing penises is more conventionally laddish behaviour connected to displays of masculinity (Bantjes and Nieuwoudt, 2014). Giving girls in particular the opportunity to draw penises in a way to show their experiences of unsolicited content disrupts this convention. Almost universally, the task at first created laughter, and hilarity which we as researchers sought to mediate through a focus on the seriousness of the task and our need to know and understand the type of content they were sent and where it came from "for science".

It is clear from the academic paper that this engagement of the children was spontaneous at first, and therefore could not have occurred with the permission of their parents, nor senior teachers or governors. Likewise, the spontaneity would suggest that no serious ethical consideration was given to the appropriateness of engaging children as young as twelve in this way, during their school time – some of whom might not have received such images and therefore were being needlessly exposed to this sexualising activity.

The academics clearly acknowledge that they were breaking taboos and suggest that,

"The fact that the felt tip drawings of masturbating videos and dick pics are so

shocking reveals an important truth about our collective will to construct a false notion of "childhood innocence" (Renold et al., 2015) that ultimately, if maintained, works to place children in harm through lack of information and guidance in the name of protection and "safeguarding".

It is difficult to conceive of the ideological perspective that could lead an academic to think that asking pupils of twelve to draw sexually explicit imagery at school, without parental permission, was in the children's best interests – and to conclude that just because their innocence might already have been intrusively or abusively breached by unwelcome text messages, this means we should reject the "notion" of childhood innocence as being "false" and therefore reintroduce them to the sexualising material.

But this experimental, pseudo-therapeutic practice, seems to have been accepted without question by all parties, due to the idea that childhood innocence is an unhelpful social construct – a view which seems to be significantly shaping the sector's approach, including amongst senior, government-approved academics, such as the advisor to the Welsh Government, Professor Emma Renold, who is cited in the passage above.

Notably, one of the co-authors, Professor Jessica Ringrose, describes the broad impact of her work on her UCL profile page, as follows:

"Impact: My impact profile includes public engagement as consultant and expert advisor for Association of School and College Leaders, The Department for Education, The UK Government Equality Office; The Mayor of London; Stonewall; The British Council, Womankind Worldwide, The UK Youth Select

*Committee into Body Image; The NSPCC, The Office of Children's Commissioner (England), The Sexualisation of Young People Review (Home Office) and more."*³⁹

The matters highlighted above should perhaps be addressed by the ethics committees of the renowned universities that have given their names to the research and any Government departments that might be relying on it.

Secrecy and Evasiveness

The DfE’s 2019 RSE guidance has given parents a specific right to be fully consulted and informed in advance of their child receiving any RSE teaching:

Working with parents/carers and the wider community

40. The role of parents in the development of their children’s understanding about relationships is vital. Parents are the first teachers of their children. They have the most significant influence in enabling their children to grow and mature and to form healthy relationships.

41. All schools should work closely with parents when planning and delivering these subjects. Schools should ensure that parents know what will be taught and when, and clearly communicate the fact that parents have the right to request that their child be withdrawn from some or all of sex education delivered as part of statutory RSE.

42. Parents should be given every opportunity to understand the purpose and content of Relationships Education and RSE. Good communication and opportunities for parents to understand and ask questions about the school’s approach help increase confidence in the curriculum.

Excerpts from RSE Guidance 2019, Department for Education

However, many parents report vague consultations that present only lesson titles, generic examples, brief outlines or summaries that omit any controversial matters of substance, which nevertheless do feature in the actual lessons.

Romantic Relationships 2	Personal space and touch	What is the age of consent? Why?	Consent - what does sexual consent mean?	Sexual violence - myths and reality	Abusive relationships (gaslighting, coercion, grooming)	Consent recap	Positive sexuality: Sex trends a new metaphor TED talk
Disability Inclusion	Dyspraxia at a glance - what is it?	Autism Inclusion	Young carers	Paralympics, why are they important	Guide dogs for the blind	Dementia	Disability at work
Religious Equality	Basics of Christianity and religious tolerance	Basics of Islam and religious tolerance	Good examples of interfaith cooperation and why it is important	Religious intolerance - how can we reduce it?	Freedom of religion - how far should it go?	Corymedia Case Study	What is happening in Palestine?
Racial Equality	Racial stereotypes and how to reduce them. Racial Terminology	Racism and football - what are the problems and how is it dealt with?	What is black history month and why is it important? Link to John Agard poem	Windrush	Refugees/asylum seekers. Definitions, rights and responses.	Institutional racism - Black Lives Matter, Stephen Lawrence - impact on race relations	Microaggressions
LGBTQ+ Equality	How to challenge homophobic language/LGBTQ+ terminology recap	Homophobia and transphobia in sport - what can be done about it?	Homophobia and transphobia case studies	The gender spectrum / binary vs. non-binary Focus on gender neutral toilets	What do we mean by being transgender and how to support trans people	LGBT media coverage and stereotypes	Asexuality
Gender Equality	Gender stereotypes - why are they harmful	Positive female & male role models	Non-binary equality and understanding	Are men and women equal yet?	How to get women into positions of power debate - quotas/positive discrimination	Gender - the spectrum and terminology	Gender pay gap
Extremism and Intolerance	What is extreme behaviour? How can I spot it?	Knife crime	Far right extremism	Religious extremism	Gang exploitation	Honour violence	Tackling extremism

Example PSHE/RSE consultation material from an academy school

The leading RSE provider, Educate & Celebrate, even gives the following pieces of advice to schools about how to minimise parental awareness, in their guidebook called How to Transform Your School Into An LGBT+ Friendly Place, co-authored by Dr. Elly Barnes and Dr. Anna Carlile.

“Should schools consult with parents and carers before planning a celebration?

Remember, LGBT+ inclusion is mandated by law and by Ofsted. Legally, it should already be part of the fabric of your school! Sometimes schools choose to carry out open consultation with parents before conducting celebrations that draw on LGBT+ themes. But this can cause problems: as one headteacher noted:

In hindsight, too much information was given to parents, which gave too much room for misinterpretation. In the end, we simply put the objectives and the learning outcomes for the event on the website. That was a real success story; you can’t argue with those!”

Likewise, the book explains,

“The Educate & Celebrate programme developed the community events model after a headteacher told us:

Our gaps are on the community side of things. How do we get our community involved in this work? It might be a much longer road that we have to take with our parents. If I said to my parents, ‘There’s an LGBT+ event in our area’, obviously we have to get permission to take their kids out of school and I know there will be a lot of parents who would say no. But this won’t stop us doing what we can do in school!

After this conversation, the programme was developed to encourage schools to hold their own in-house events rather than just attending outside events. On a practical level, schools can tap into existing calendared events, including LGBT people and issues as part of already established school events, such as Anti-Bullying Week and Black History Month. This can enable schools to find an accessible ‘way in’ to start breaking down the perceived barriers within their local communities. We carefully say ‘perceived’ barriers, as we can never be sure how a community will react! In some schools where we expected adversity, we did not receive it.”⁴⁰

Notably, the same scheme even sought to control parents’ opinions, by insisting that they sign equality pledges in order to gain access to their children’s schools. This exemplifies the culture of secrecy and social pressure that some parents and carers describe encountering.

“A primary school in a rural area in the north of England has an electronic message on the digital signing-in station in the reception area, stating: ‘Our school welcomes everyone from all walks of life. Everyone must welcome and celebrate others in our school.’ The visitor then has a choice to ‘accept’ or ‘not accept’. If they do not accept, then they cannot gain access to the school. Each visitor who accepts then receives a printed lanyard with an equality statement mounted on a rainbow background. The theme continues on the wall, with a flag display representing all the different nationalities of students, with a Rainbow Flag among them showing an intersectional approach to the school’s equality agenda.”

Importantly, this compulsory pledge is specifically detailed in a Final External Evaluation Report⁴¹ from 2016, that

assesses the effectiveness of the Educate & Celebrate scheme, funded by the Government Equalities Office (GEO) and the Department for Education. It says,

“Key element:

Environment

Examples of activities:

Welcome notices in school foyers, explaining that the school celebrates diversity according to all the characteristics in the Equality Act.

Key exemplification emerging from the evaluation:

Many electronic sign-in protocols required school visitors to agree to uphold the commitment to value everyone regardless of gender identity, sexual orientation, ethnicity, religion, age, and pregnancy before they could enter the school.”

This indicates members of the Government were party to this controlling measure and were apparently unconcerned about the implications it has for the rights of parents and other citizens, because they continued to support the scheme.

Notably, the independent evaluation was conducted by Dr. Anna Carlile of Goldsmith's University who went on to co-author the scheme's guidebook that was published shortly after her report, in 2018.

Ostensibly, the GEO and DfE commissioned research into this scheme, specifically for the

laudable aim of preventing Homosexual, Bisexual and Transgender (HBT) bullying and therefore that is all the scheme was evaluated for. However,

the corresponding scheme in schools, drastically exceeds this specific ambition, as this report will detail. Indeed 'anti-HBT bullying' seems to have been a label that has repeatedly secured Government funding and approval for schemes that, in reality, have far broader ambitions – all of which have therefore been taking place without meaningful monitoring or assessment from the Government departments that are funding them.

Moreover, the GEO/DfE sponsored research records that by one measure the Educate & Celebrate pilot scheme caused HBT bullying to worsen slightly, and the data also showed it was better received amongst teachers than pupils generally. And yet the scheme went ahead nationwide, apparently without any subsequent research.

“Respondents who never ‘heard people or things being called ‘gay’, ‘lezzer’, or ‘lesbian’ as a put down inside of school’ rose slightly overall, but for students this fell a percentage point. It is possible that the more frequent discussion of LGBT people and issues may have given student more opportunities to use the word ‘gay’ as a negative, but this can provide opportunities for teachers to work through the issue openly.”

Meanwhile, secrecy and evasiveness also seem to feature in the research paper referred to above, Play-Doh Vulvas and Felt Tip Dick Pics: Disrupting Phallocentric Matter(s) In Sex Education, when the authors call for:

“a form of feminist guerrilla warfare and “injecting viruses” into normative power relations – and we would add, injecting feminist viruses into the RSE curriculum – in ways that can create new openings for feminine desire and pleasure.”⁴²

They continue to explain how the idea of asking young people to craft vulvas from Play-Doh might be an effective way to surreptitiously “undo phallocentric power relations” via the RSE curriculum. (Notably, the use of art, craft and drama as a vehicle for masking political activism, seems to be a common theme amongst radical RSE provision.) They explain that,

“We have demonstrated how the creating [sic] Play-Doh feminine genital materials reshapes the masculinist focus on disease and risk via the object of the male penis, which has been placed as the primary referent to manage in both wider culture and RSE. The vulva and clitoris-making reorients biology towards clitoral validity, subverting heteropatriarchal logics in ways that may be able to be snuck into the curriculum.”

They conclude with explaining the method by which they wish to influence the RSE sector, including policy makers, saying,

“Through continued dialogues between ourselves as researchers, teachers, and RSE facilitators, and through building connections with schools, policy makers, and other stakeholders, we seek to create further webs and tendrils of phEmaterial praxis (Ringrose and Renold, 2019) that challenge and transform phallocentric orientations, re-mattering the parts and plumbing of normative RSE curriculum and practice.”

Parents report a further failure of transparency is occurring when schools refuse to share RSE resources with them, on the grounds that their third-party providers are withholding the materials in order to protect their intellectual property and commercial interests.

In a landmark case, concerning withheld RSE resources at a secondary academy school in London, the ICO has issued a Decision Notice⁴³ explaining that the commercial interest of the independent RSE provider takes precedence over the public interest of parents to have full access to what their child was shown and taught in school.

Likewise, the ICO decided that the privacy of the workshop facilitators presenting the RSE in the classroom is more important than the parents' interest to know who came into contact with and taught their child, and so the name of visiting RSE practitioners can be withheld, which is an inevitable obstruction to safeguarding. This decision also seems to lack a fundamental and necessary respect for the primacy of the parental-child relationship, setting a concerning precedent that state funded actors can teach children without parents knowing who they are. The case is progressing to an appeal at a First Tier Tribunal.

However, the following communications pertaining to the case, obtained by Subject Access Request seem to indicate that the reasoning for this withholding is not only for the protection of commercial interests, but is also to avoid opposition or unpleasant discord on social media, regarding controversial topics, such as teaching about 'QIA+', or the subject of 'heteronormativity', neither of which are specified in the DfE's 2019 RSE guidance.

On Mon, Nov 8, 2021 at 2:27 PM [REDACTED] wrote:

Dear [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] – the Principal of [REDACTED] – has passed to me your contact details.

Your team did a presentation (attached) to pupils at the school in September, the focus of which was 'consent'.

I believe you are aware that one of the parents has complained quite strongly about the presentation – particularly the reference to society being heteronormative. She has asked for a copy of the PPT.

I would like to be able to share it with her as I believe that she would be entitled to it under a FOI request but fully accept that it is your IP and I assume has copyright. I am confident that she will progress to such a request and refusing to share it at this stage might be counter-productive.

I met with the parent concerned last week and refused to share it but said that I would seek your permission to do so, ideally by the end of this week.

If you are not prepared for me to release it, it would be helpful to have an explanation as to why which I could share with her.

I look forward to hearing from you and thank you for your time.

Email, from a Multi Academy Trust to the School of Sexuality Education, obtained by Subject Access Request

CEO [REDACTED]

On 8 Nov 2021, at 19:25, [REDACTED] <[\[REDACTED\]@schoolofsexed.org](mailto:[REDACTED]@schoolofsexed.org)> wrote:

Dear [REDACTED]

Thank you for your email. I am very sorry to hear that this is ongoing.

We would really prefer that you **do not share our slides with the parent**. You are welcome to say that 'School of Sexuality Education says that it does not share its resources including slides for copyright reasons'. (These slides are our intellectual property so such a procedure is completely normal and reasonable.) The parent is welcome to pursue an FOI request if they choose to though as a charity it's unlikely we'd be subject to this.

We have been happy to share the slides with [REDACTED] College but hope that this is just for the purposes of clarifying what was covered - though presumably the staff who attended the session can also provide this information and comment on whether anything concerning was said - and we would request that the slides are then deleted and not shared more widely.

Separate to the copyright matter, I have various other concerns regarding sharing the slides with the parent:

- That seeing the slides won't actually appease the parent if their complaint is that we talk about particular definitions of sex being heteronormative - because we do! This is in line with the DfE RSE guidance which states that teaching should be LGBT inclusive and take an integrated approach to this.
- That the parent generally has an issue with the fact that our approach to RSE is LGBTQIA+ inclusive - which again, it is. There are some fringe parent groups which have an issue with organisations like ours because we are explicitly LGBTQIA+ inclusive, and this parent could in theory be part of one of these groups. These groups have done fairly unpleasant things in the past like trolling us on Twitter, screenshotting photos of our trans facilitators and posting pictures of them on Facebook groups, and posting hate comments underneath. I am therefore extremely wary about what might happen if we start sharing materials with members of such groups, and I am sceptical that the parent will simply look through the slides and be put at ease.

I am more than happy to arrange a phone call to discuss this in more detail. We're also very happy to explore some alternative solutions, e.g. one of our team could attend a meeting with the parent where we show them the slide on one of our devices and talk them through the content?

Reply from the School of Sexuality Education to the Multi Academy Trust

Similarly, the Telegraph reports⁴⁴ that,

"In correspondence seen by The Telegraph, Jigsaw Education, one sex education materials provider, warned a school that it may take legal action if the school discloses any of its materials or otherwise puts them in the public domain "by means of allowing formal inspection".

Jan Lever, the chief executive of Jigsaw Education, said: "Jigsaw is happy for parents to see all the materials the school will use in its lessons but stipulates that this needs to be done in the school so a teacher can explain the rationale and the progression in learning and most importantly how the particular school intends to use and differentiate the generic Jigsaw Programme to suit the needs of their pupils."

The mooted solution to the restrictions of commercial secrecy presented in both cases above – namely that parents be permitted to view third-party resources on the school premises, under supervision – is very problematic. Apart from the inconvenience and potential social pressure this might cause, it is likely to create a situation whereby parents are drawn into a tacit agreement of commercial secrecy – indeed, the very assertion of protecting copyright to maintain secrecy, suggests that the children receiving the RSE lessons are themselves being made party to commercially sensitive, secret intellectual property, merely by attending school.

This raises the possibility of families being vulnerable to legal claims by third party providers if children or parents broadcast what they have seen. Moreover, without access to a copy, parents cannot discuss the teaching with their children with similarly privileged

access to the resources that the teachers had, nor can they seek professional advice or consult with other parents. Crucially, they cannot enter the materials into a formal complaint procedure, which effectively puts third-party resources beyond scrutiny and criticism, including by school governors. Indeed, it is questionable whether Ofsted can even access these resources or include examples in their reports.

The following excerpt from the complaint procedure referred to above demonstrates this problem very well, since it records that the Stage 3 Complaint Hearing Panel, made up of governors and a representative of the DfE, was unable to draw any conclusion about the suitability of the hidden RSE lesson in question, due to the absence of evidence.

"The Panel noted that the School had been told by the SoSE that for copyright reasons the School could not supply copies of the slides for the Consent session to Ms ____ [parent] and the Panel understood the School had received legal advice from its outside lawyers that in those circumstance it should not supply copies."

*"As mentioned above, there was conflicting second-hand evidence from Ms ____'s [parent's] daughter and Ms ____ [teacher] as to what was said about Heteronormativity and Sex Positivity and the Panel had no evidence as to how incidental that was to the teaching on Consent."*⁴⁵

Given the concerning and contentious nature of the RSE being promoted in the third sector, which this report will now detail, the secrecy and evasiveness described here, along with

the obstruction it causes to formal complaints, has profound implications for public trust and safeguarding.

THE NATURE OF CONTENTIOUS TEACHING

Gender Theory

Gender Theory, which claims that biological sex and 'gender identity' are two distinct factors of a human being, is chief amongst the controversial information being delivered to children, as if it is fact.

According to this theory, it is said that whilst biological sex is purely material and incidentally 'assigned at birth' based on the outward appearance of the body, 'gender identity' is an internal sense of whether you are male, female, neither or somewhere in between, which will be realised or declared later, independently of one's body. Likewise, it is explained that 'gender expression' (i.e. how you might dress or present yourself) is another distinct aspect of one's identity and one is further defined by who it is you are physically or emotionally attracted to.

Each of these factors are considered potentially fluid, independent of one another and can be described as residing somewhere on a spectrum. Even biological sex is sometimes implied to be a spectrum, by referring to intersex conditions and cross hormone treatment as a justification for this scientifically questionable view. This produces a panoply of potential combinations and self-identifications.

This is expressed in diagrammatic form by The Gender Unicorn diagram⁴⁶, created by Trans Student Educational Resources.

Olly Pike, a leading in-school 'LGBT Edutainer' who runs the brand Pop'n'Olly, presents a video⁴⁷ called Gender Explained for Kids – Part 1 on his Instagram account, which demonstrates one of the many ways the concept of a spectrum of 'gender identity' is introduced to children in primary school. It presents a "sliding scale that most people sit on somewhere", from 'Female' to 'Mostly Female', 'Partly Female', 'Both or Neither', through to 'Partly Male', 'Mostly Male' or 'Male'.

Olly Pike also introduces primary school pupils to his cartoons, such as Jamie – A Transgender Cinderella Story⁴⁸, which retells the fairy tale as a magical, overnight change sex, achieved by a change of clothes and hairstyle, that solves both bullying by Jamie's wicked stepbrothers and the fact that she does not 'feel right' in her body – without giving any qualification that there might be many reasons or remedies for this discomfort.

Campaign group, Mermaids, provides another sliding scale graphic⁴⁹, numbered one to twelve, which places an image of a Barbie doll in a pink ball gown at one end and an image of G.I. Joe in military uniform at the other, which muddles aspects of personality with 'gender identity' and implies that only the most feminine and masculine of children are simply girls and boys respectively, and that everyone else must be a mixture of the two. Mermaids then asks children "Where on the spectrum might your gender identity be?"

Meanwhile, Educate & Celebrate describes how nursery and primary schools can refashion themselves to be "gender-neutral" and suitable for "children of all genders" because young children are "fluid". This includes

persuading children to take on role play in the opposite sex, after they have previously declined to do so, as well as restricting their access to certain toys. Their book states:

"Nursery: gender-neutral play areas and songs about families

Children are so open-minded and ready to listen, they have no set views and they are fluid in their ideas and understanding and readily accept, given the opportunity to do so. To support them, teachers need to be ready with songs, books and examples in their repertoire and jump at any opportunity to challenge preconceived views in young children.

Role play

Dana encourages children to chose who they want to play the part in their stories regardless of gender. She says, 'A girl once said she didn't want to play a knight, so we looked at three books that have females as heroes. She then happily played the knight!'

Block play

Provide blocks in abundance throughout your setting, indoors and out, large and small. Dana advises that blocks are the most 'gender-neutral resource' on offer. In her classroom, there are no pre-made structures like dolls houses, garages or pirate ships, and children are encouraged to make the structures they need for their own play. Children of all genders make museums, parks and houses and use a variety of small-world resources to relive their own experiences."⁵⁰

Secondary school children are also definitively informed about Gender Theory, by many leading RSE providers, as if it is proven fact and without a

balance of opposing opinion.

There is also an extensive body of books in school libraries, many targeted at very young children, delivering controversial messages about identity, family and society, in persuasive narratives, that raise significant questions about how they might affect children psychologically. For example, GIRES promotes a story that presents two penguin parents explaining to their small child that they cannot always tell whether the child is a boy or a girl and are waiting to be told by the child themselves, at which point the parents will change the child's name and give them a party.

"Who are you?

We can't always tell if you're a boy or you're a girl. But either way, we love you – just the same."

You can tell us later, and we will change your name, and we'll love you just the same.

So tell us when you're ready – there's no hurry. We'll love you still – don't worry."

...

"So we will have a party and all your friends will come. We'll tell them you're not Polly and were really always Tom!"⁵¹

Several mass-market providers of school resources, which serve millions of customers worldwide, also subscribe to the idea that Gender Theory is fact; this hugely amplifies the reach of this concept. For example, a resource by Twinkl⁵², which presents the outline of three figures in pink, purple and blue explains,

"Gender identity is an individual person's sense of their gender; it is how they experience, feel, view and label it. This is unique to each person, and is separate from the sex they were registered with at birth, although someone's gender identity may align with this."

They continue to explain:

"Contrary to historical Western beliefs, gender is not binary. This means that people do not necessarily identify as only 'male' or 'female'. Some people view gender as more of a spectrum, with male identities at one end and female identities at the other. Other people reject the spectrum model because they feel that it does not encompass the nuances of non-binary gender identities. There are a number of different labels that people may use to describe their gender and everyone's individual experience of their gender is valid."

However, school PSHE Leads also produce their own in-house resources based on the information they receive from third party providers and their own teacher training. The following lesson plan, prepared by a secondary academy, not only defines Gender Theory as fact, but asserts that 'gender identity' is "a much more intrinsic part of you" than your "male or female parts", claiming that an inner sense of gender takes priority over the biological reality of the body.

Gender identity and sexual orientation

LO: To understand the difference between gender, sex and sexuality.

Do now: keywords recap
 Discuss with your partner and match the keyword to the correct definition

Gay
Transgender
Sexuality
Lesbian
Bisexual
Queer
Gender Identity

Who you are attracted to (male, female, both)

 The gender with which you identify. This isn't the same as your sex (whether you are born with male or female parts) but is a much more intrinsic part of you. It's how you feel in your head about who you are

 A woman attracted to other women.

 A man attracted to other men. Also used to describe a lesbian. (Opposite: Straight)

 Someone attracted to more than one gender

 Someone who identifies as a gender which is different to the sex they were given at birth. (Opposite: Cisgender)

 An umbrella term for those who are not heterosexual (straight) or cisgender

Check your answers



Sexuality – who you are attracted to (male, female, both)

Gender Identity – The gender with which you identify. This isn't the same as your sex (whether you are born with male or female parts) but is a much more intrinsic part of you. It's how you feel in your head about who you are.

Lesbian – A woman attracted to other women.

Gay – A man attracted to other men. Also used to describe a lesbian. (Opposite: Straight).

Bisexual – Someone attracted to more than one gender.

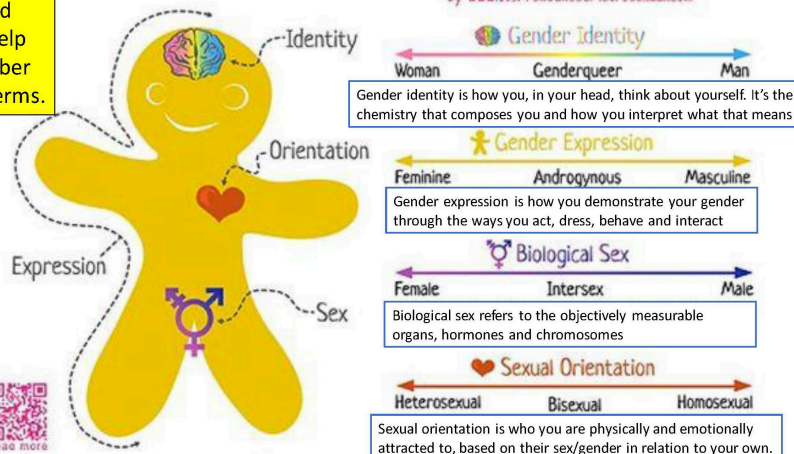
Transgender – Someone who identifies as a gender which is different to the sex they were given at birth. (Opposite: Cisgender).

Queer – an umbrella term for those who are not heterosexual (straight) or cisgender.

TASK: Draw and label your own genderbread person to help you remember these key terms.

The Genderbread Person

by www.ItsPronouncedMetrosexual.com



An RSE PowerPoint prepared by the PSHE Lead of a secondary academy school in 2021, obtained by Freedom of Information request

Emphasis is also placed on the lack of connectedness of these aspects of a person's identity, for example stating that your gender "may" align with your sex (as was asserted by Twinkl), implies that gender and sex are not only different factors but that the factors are quite likely to be of different types in any one individual, or that any alignment is arbitrary. This gives the impression of a greatly exaggerated likelihood of gender dysphoria occurring.

In his essay titled Breaking Through the Binary⁵³, Sam Killerman (who produces the opensource Genderbread Person shown in the lesson above), explains that,

"Gender identity, gender expression, biological sex, and sexual orientation are independent of one another (i.e., they are not connected). People's sexual orientation doesn't determine their gender expression. And their gender expression isn't determined by their gender identity. And their gender identity isn't determined by their biological sex. And also, every other mismatch of A isn't determined by B combination you can dream up from those inputs. Those things certainly affect one another (i.e., they are related to one another), but they do not determine one another."

Given that the Office for National Statistics⁵⁴ reports that only 0.5 % of the population express that their sense of gender and sex are not the same, these statements give a confusing and leading picture to children that they are often different.

It is far from understood what it means to tell a generation of children and teenagers that there is a clear separation and potentially likely dislocation of the gendered mind and sexed body – and that the mind should take precedence over, or be disassociated from the body – but what can be asserted is that it is profoundly experimental and without proof that it is true, or beneficial for all children to learn this.

Gender Theory is not entirely fixed but has been gathering new diagrams, concepts and a growing glossary of words and definitions that pertain to both the spectrums of 'gender identity' and

sexual orientation, including terms such as 'genderqueer', 'non-binary', 'gender fluid', 'asexual', 'bisexual', 'allosexual', 'pansexual', 'demisexual', 'aromantic', etc. Many are defined in a glossary⁵⁵ hosted on the Brook website, which includes twenty three pages of specialist or novel terminology.

The term 'non-binary umbrella' refers specifically to 'gender identities' that are said to be not solely male or female, and a resource⁵⁶ by The Rainbow Project in Northern Ireland lists the terms pertaining to this, including "Genderqueer, Pangender, Demiboy, Demigirl, Genderflux and Trigender" before explaining to pupils that,

"Non-Binary People can:

- *Use any pronouns*
- *Use any label*
- *Present any way*
- *Identify with more than one gender*
- *Use any language*
- *Vocally reject the binary*

Meanwhile, the Proud Trust, which runs the highly influential Rainbow Flag Award has developed its own diagrammatic interpretation⁵⁷ of 'gender identity' that states,

"From the moment we are born, most of us are treated like (and told) we are either a girl or a boy. This is called gender assignment. This can make things difficult to figure out when our gender identity doesn't match the gender we were assigned or given."

Jigsaw PSHE⁵⁸ repackages a resource by Action Canada for Sexual Health and Rights, which poses the following question to fourteen-year-old pupils, “Gender and sexual identity – is it a spectrum or a galaxy?” before suggesting “add you own planet (comet or moon)! Make your own solar system or galaxy!”, offering example terms such as “agender”, “neutrois”, “3rd gender”, “gender queer” or a “two spirit galaxy”.

One resource, produced by Allsorts⁵⁹ for Brighton and Hove County Council, which they provide to all of the schools under their local authority, defines the term ‘trans’ as pertaining to those,

“who have a gender identity which we do not yet have words to describe.”

Providers also make contentious assertions about the consequences of Gender Theory, for example RSE provider It Happens, broadcast an illustration of tampons on their Instagram account with the slogan “all genders can menstruate”⁶⁰. And the following piece of writing⁶¹, provided by a sixth form student attendee of a School of Sexuality Education workshop, illustrates how Gender Theory is received by students; specifically, that it is believed to be factual reality, and that biology does not indicate if you are male or female.

“I really liked how the workshop remained inclusive and it was acknowledged that not all people with boobs & vaginas are female or that penis = male and is inclusive and mindful of the trans/non-binary community. I also liked that there was no obligation to contribute.”

Importantly, the theory asserts that everyone has a ‘gender identity’, and if it is the same as your biological sex, this

is described as ‘cisgender’ – referring to a ‘cis-man’ or a ‘cis-woman’. This means that everyone is codified within this ideological system, which is just one of the many points of contention about this teaching, since not all people are prepared to accept that they have a ‘gender identity’ or adopt the prefix of ‘cis’ to their previous understanding of being a ‘man’ or ‘woman’.

The application of ‘cis’ (and Gender Theory in general), is described in an animated video called What is Gender?⁶², created by Off The Record and Educational Action Challenging Homophobia (EACH). This resource is part of the Inspiring Equality in Education⁶³ programme, which display logos explaining that it is “supported by Department for Education” and “funded by Government Equalities Office”, along with a PSHE Association ‘Quality Assured Resource’ mark – indicating that Gender Theory has been ratified as being fact by the Government, which indicates a serious situation whereby the education authorities (or at least some exponents of them) are imposing their own ideological position upon the nation’s children.

Of course, some people express that Gender Theory describes their experience and that this is important to them – especially if they describe having a ‘gender identity’ that does not match their biological sex. This is usually defined socially as being transgender (or some of the many other terms already discussed) but it is also described in clinical terms as ‘gender dysphoria’. It is argued that seeing the world other than through the lens of Gender Theory is therefore ‘transphobic’, because it denies the experience of those who describe themselves as transgender.

Hence, within Gender Theory, no room seems to be permitted for the opinion that a ‘gender identity’ does not meaningfully exist – or at least that the concept should not take precedence over the immutability of biological sex in law, language and social settings like schools. This idea is sometimes described as a ‘gender-critical’ view, whilst others hold the belief as part of their religious conviction or simply think it is a common-sense or scientific understanding.

These differing assertions are causing a profound conflict between different protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 (namely between ‘sex’, ‘gender reassignment’ and ‘fundamental or religious belief’), as well as under the Human Rights Act (HRA), and this is raising considerable political, ethical and legal dispute across society, and so in schools.

Whilst this report does not attempt to address the validity of the differing opinions (not least because the matter is not settled in law nor fully defined by the Government or medical opinion), it simply notes that the DfE Impartiality Guidance 2022 indicates that such a situation as this, should rightly be considered a political issue. The guidance states that,

*“It is important to note that many ongoing ethical debates and topics will constitute a political issue. This can be the case even when the main political parties and other partisan groups agree on a view, but there is not a wider consensus in public opinion. Instead, there is continued debate, where different legitimate views are expressed.”*⁶⁴

It seems that Gender Theory meets this description very well, and the Education Act 1996, sections 406 and 407⁶⁵ are

clear that such political issues should be taught with a balanced presentation of opposing views. However, despite the lack of consensus about Gender Theory it is often applied intolerantly, as if the matter is settled and with the expectation that it will be the only theory taught in RSE, for fear that any other vision excludes children who describe themselves as ‘trans’.

For example, the following RSE lesson outlines make it clear that children are expected to be not only informed about Gender Theory, but to “state” the theory as fact, whether they do or don’t believe it.

“Year 7: Learning Outcome:

All: To understand the key word [gender] and use it correctly. To be able to explain what identities we may have and why we may have more than one.

Most: To understand the differences between gender identity, sexuality and biological sex.

Some: To be able to explain the negative consequences of stereotyping in relation to the LGBTQ+ community.”

“Year 12: Learning Outcome:

All: To be able to state the difference between sex and gender.

Most: To explain what is meant by Queer Theory and heteronormativity.

Some: To discuss the concept of heteronormativity.

Date	Week	Theme	Year 7	Year 8	Year 9
18/10/2021	8	Identity and stereotypes	Title: Introduction to Identity and Stereotypes Learning Objective: To consider what identities a person may have and to understand what a stereotype is. Learning Outcome: All: To understand the key word and use it correctly. To be able to explain what identities we may have and why we may have more than one. Most: To understand the differences between gender identity, sexuality and biological sex. Some: To be able to explain the negative consequences of stereotyping in relation to the LGBTQ+ community.	Title: Sex Discrimination and Gender Stereotypes Learning Objective: To consider the effects of gender stereotyping. Learning Outcome: All: To understand the key word and use it correctly. To state examples of gender stereotyping. Most: To explain what gender stereotyping is, and why gender and sex are different. Some: To evaluate the idea that gender is socially constructed.	Title: Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation Learning Objective: To understand the difference between gender, sex and sexuality. Learning Outcome: All: To understand the key words and use them correctly. Most: State ways we can be respectful and supportive of the LGBTQ+ community. Some: Explain why using someones correct pronouns is so important.
	Keyword of the week		gender	stereotype	pronoun

Year 10	Year 11	Year 12	Year 13	Key dates and events
Title: Identity over Time Learning Objective: To consider how people's identities have been challenged throughout history. Learning Outcome: All: To understand the key word and use it correctly. Most: Explain how identities can be put under threat. Some: To explain some ways people have fought for equal rights.	Title: Intersectionality Learning Objective: To understand what intersectionality is and why some people think it is important. Learning Outcome: All: To understand the key word and use it correctly. Most: To be able to explain the concept of Intersectionality and state examples. Some: To discuss ways in which intersectionality can lead to discrimination or disadvantage.	Title: Queer Theory Learning Objective: To understand the main arguments of Queer Theory. Learning Outcome: All: To be able to state the difference between sex and gender. Most: To explain what is meant by Queer Theory and heteronormativity. Some: To discuss the concept of heteronormativity.	Title: Reporting Discrimination Learning Objective: To know what I should do if I am subject to discrimination or a hate crime. Learning Outcome: All: To understand the key words and use them correctly. Most: To state why it is important to report hate crime. To understand rights when discrimination has taken place. Some: To consider why hate crime statistics are increasing.	Show Racism the Race Card 22nd Oct
identity	intersectionality	heteronormativity.	hate crime	

RSE lesson outlines from a secondary academy school, 2021

Notably, these lesson outlines show extensive training in Gender Theory (and associated Queer Theory) across all years of the secondary school, which illustrates that the theory is sometimes repeated and built upon, year after year, as one might treat factual knowledge, rather than open-minded discussion of a contentious subject.

This is a worryingly illiberal approach that potentially breaches the school's duties under the Education Act 1996, mentioned above. To promote one-sided political opinions is problematic enough, but to instruct children to repeatedly state a theory they don't necessarily believe, on a matter of great personal and political sensitivity, is a degree and method of indoctrination that should be of great concern to the Government. It is also likely to fail duties under the Equality Act 2010 if a school instructs children to "state" something that is against their fundamental belief.

But it is not surprising schools are taking this one-sided view, given that the DfE has instructed them in the 2019 RSE guidance, under a section headed "The Law", to consider "gender identity" as having "legal provisions", even though the correct legal term for the protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010 is 'Gender Reassignment'.

The Law

82. It is important to know what the law says about sex, relationships and young people, as well as broader safeguarding issues. This includes a range of important facts and the rules regarding sharing personal information, pictures, videos and other material using technology. This will help young people to know what is right and wrong in law, but it can also provide a good foundation of knowledge for deeper discussion about all types of relationships. There are also many different legal provisions whose purpose is to protect young people and which ensure young people take responsibility for their actions. Pupils should be made aware of the relevant legal provisions when relevant topics are being taught, including for example:

- marriage
- consent, including the age of consent
- violence against women and girls
- online behaviours including image and information sharing (including 'sexting', youth-produced sexual imagery, nudes, etc.)
- pornography
- abortion
- sexuality
- gender identity
- substance misuse
- violence and exploitation by gangs
- extremism/radicalisation
- criminal exploitation (for example, through gang involvement or 'county lines' drugs operations)
- hate crime
- female genital mutilation (FGM)

RSE Guidance 2019, DfE

Likewise, the DfE's online blog, The Education Hub⁶⁶, further invokes a special legal status to 'gender identity', without explaining what that means, when it says of secondary schools:

Pupils should be taught the facts and the law about sex, sexuality, sexual health and gender identity in an age-appropriate and inclusive way. There should be an equal opportunity to explore the features of stable and healthy same-sex relationships.

What Do Children and Young People Learn in Relationship, Sex and Health Education, DfE

Hence Gender Theory tends to be taught with insufficient regard to the protections or rights of those who do not subscribe to it, nor even with regard to whether it is in the best interests of those children who do.

Crucially, the influential PSHE Association, which is referred to in the DfE's RSE guidance's Annex B Suggested Resources, also advises schools to teach Gender Theory as fact, according to their Programme of Study, which says:

"CORE THEME 2: RELATIONSHIPS

KS3 Learning opportunities in Relationships and Sex Education

Students learn...

*R4. the difference between biological sex, gender identity and sexual orientation"*⁶⁷

This translates into lesson plans such as an example from 2018 prepared for a Local Education Authority, which stipulates that children not only come to understand the spectrum of gender identities but to "respect" it, saying (amongst other directions):

"Context:

This lesson explores the distinctions and key terminology regarding sexual orientation and gender identity.

Learning Objectives:

We are learning to understand and respect the spectrum of gender identities and sexual orientations.

Intended Learning Outcomes:

I can explain the difference between sexual orientation and gender identity.

Climate for Learning:

Sexual orientation and gender identity is a topic that is likely to raise a lot of discussion. Some students may have strong beliefs which can influence their attitudes originating from their families, culture or their faith. Equally some students in your class may be lesbian, gay, bisexual, and/or transgender, or questioning (LGBT+) and have a right to learning that is relevant to them in a safe environment."

Lastly, Gender Theory is a key part of UNICEF's Rights Respecting School Award⁶⁸ (RRSA), which has been running since 2006, in collaboration with Stonewall's Schools Champions Award⁶⁹.



Excerpt from UNICEF RRSA website

The UNICEF award scheme follows the Comprehensive Sexuality Education framework, designed by UNESCO, which also declares a commitment to Gender Theory as fact, saying,

"3.1 The Social Construction of Gender and Gender Norms

Learning objectives (5-8 years):

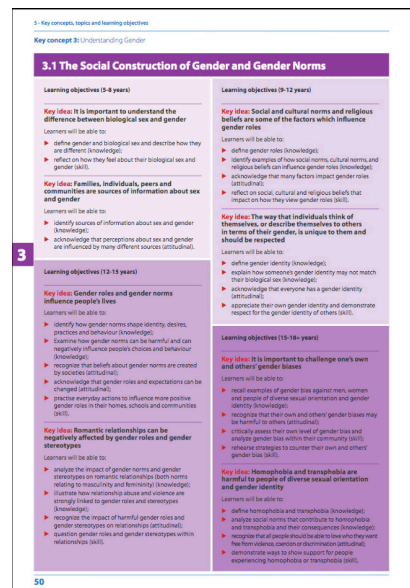
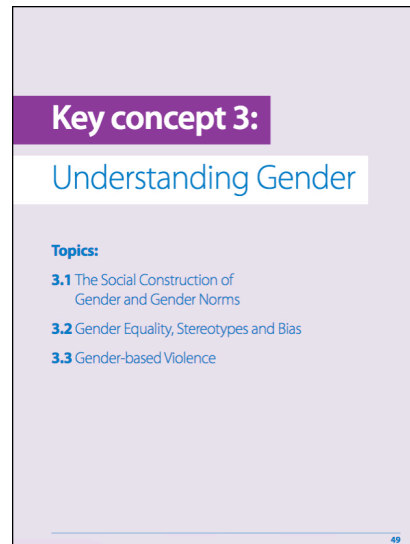
-Learners will be able to define gender and biological sex and describe how they are different

-Reflect on how they feel about their biological sex and gender

Learning objectives (9-12 years):

- Define gender identity
- Explain how someone's gender identity may not match their biological sex
- Acknowledge that everyone has a gender identity
- Appreciate their own gender identity and demonstrate respect for the gender identity of others⁷⁰

All four parts of the UK are signatories to this international framework, run under the auspices of the UN, which enshrines an ideological view into British education that has no scientific proof and is not ethically, politically or legally settled amongst the British people. This therefore presents a serious problem of democratic and even constitutional significance.



Excerpts from International Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education, by UNESCO

Transition and Pronouns

In conjunction with the ideological belief of Gender Theory, third-party providers have advised schools how to treat children who describe themselves as transgender, as well as how to prepare the culture of schools to accommodate them through RSE. In several cases the advice is definitive and authoritative, even though no clear reference to this subject is made in the 2019 RSE guidance and many of the advisors have no clinical qualifications. Some of this advice even seems to be misleading, out of step with statutory guidance or potentially unlawful.

Educate & Celebrate recommends instant affirmation of trans identity and social transition, including the application of new names and pronouns and using the toilets and changing rooms of the child's choice. They advise that children can be referred to a General Practitioner or Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) without parental permission, but do not mention the necessary application of the Gillick competency test.

In their guidebook *How To Transform Your School Into An LGBT+ Friendly Place*⁷¹ Educate & Celebrate have also led schools to understand that 'Gender Identity' and 'Gender' are the protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010, instead of 'Gender Reassignment' and 'Sex'. For example, they advise:

"Staff discussion: the protected characteristics

Look at the Equality Act's protected characteristics and identify where they feature in your curriculum. Depending on the type of institution, you might divide staff into subject areas to conduct a curriculum-mapping exercise. In a

nursery, you might conduct a learning walk, looking at the resources, learning areas, wall displays and toys available. Maybe there are some areas that are more visibly diverse in your school or nursery than others. Think about why that might be, and why we may be more – or less – comfortable talking about some of these issues:

age

disability

gender

gender identity

marriage or civil partnership

pregnancy

race and ethnicity

religion

sexual orientation"

E&C also produced a poster for the reception areas of Primary Schools declaring,

"Our Code of Conduct – We respect each other's: Age, Disability, Gender, Gender Identity, Marriage or Civil Partnership, Pregnancy, Race and Nationality, Religion or Belief, Sexual Orientation."

This poster included the logo of the GEO and names Ofsted, and these inaccuracies about the protected characteristics have also been ratified by the DfE and the GEO in Dr. Carlile's Final External Evaluation Report, referred to earlier. This misinterpretation of the Equality Act can now be found broadcast on many school websites, as follows:



The school explains the terms under which they understand the consultancy they have received:

"Assisting schools and academies to comply with this legal duty, 'Educate & Celebrate' is a national initiative designed to prepare children and young people for life and to give them a good understanding of how Equality and Diversity is protected by the Equality Act

2010.

The approaches used in 'Educate and Celebrate' have been recognised by Ofsted as best practice..."

Further details of Educate & Celebrate's extensive instructions include:

"What to do if a student comes out to you as trans

If you are in a conversation with a student and they tell you they don't identify with the gender assigned to them at birth – don't panic! Very simply, believe them, and ask how long they have felt like this. Ask if they have talked to their parents or carers or their friends about it, and whether they would like to talk further with someone in school. If the student is in agreement, then you can refer them to your school learning mentors or counsellors, who will gather further information and work with the inclusion manager to make a decision as where best to access further support if needed. Usually this is either a referral to CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services) or a recommendation to see their GP (doctor). This is with a view to attaining a diagnosis of 'gender dysphoria' for ongoing support (this can be rather pathologizing – see the Glossary of Key Terms below for a discussion on this term). Both of these can be done without parental consent. It is always best wherever possible to involve parents, but unfortunately there are times when parents or carers do not support their child's explorations about their gender identity. Some CAMHS are able to accept self-referrals, and 13-16-year-olds have the same rights to confidentiality as adults when going to their GP."

Educate & Celebrate also report on how other pupils should be expected to change their language and belief:

"Moments of Change

We have a boy in Year 10 who's trans; he was a girl in Year 9, and he came back in September as a boy. And he joined the boy's football team. And another kid came up to me and asked, 'What do I call them? Do I call them "he"?' I said, 'Yes, of course, he's a boy' and so they do, they call him 'he' and 'him' and he's just one of the lads on the team now, nobody bats an eye. (A rural secondary school teacher)"

On name changes and single sex spaces, Educate & Celebrate explain:

"Common concerns: names, toilets, PE and uniforms

Teachers often worry that if we allow one student to change their name, perhaps all the children will want to do it! However, you can reassure them that even if a child is not trans or non-binary we willingly call them by their desired name. Changing a name for this reason is no different from our usual processes where a child might have a name change due to their parents' marriage, for example.

Toilets often come up as a topic of concern among parents and carers, as well as staff. Which ones should your trans student use? Well, the answer is that they should use whichever they feel more comfortable using. You are aiming to have provision for all genders. For example, you may have all gender-neutral toilets throughout the school, or you may have a mixture of male, female and gender-neutral toilets in each building. Many organisations find it useful simply to change the signage on the disabled toilet to 'gender neutral' to accommodate this need."

Educate & Celebrate also provide a table that lays out a number of alternative

pronouns, including 'they/them/their'(singular), 'ey/em/eir', 'ze/hir/hir' and the title Mx. They advise schools that,

*"Wherever there is an opportunity to make these additions on dropdown menus and application forms and school paperwork, then grab that chance!"*⁷²

The organisation also provides suggestions for an extensive calendar of cultural events, such as:

"23rd September: Bi Visibility Day

Listen to the music of bisexual artists like David Bowie and Lady Gaga, or look at the story of historical bisexual figures like Julius Caesar."


"20th November: Trans Day of Remembrance

Invite community members to a photography display or poetry performance about Trans Day of Remembrance."

"3rd December: United Nations International Day of People with Disability

Look at poetry or art of LGBT+ people with disabilities such as: Edward Lear (epilepsy, asthma and sign impairment); Stephen Fry (bipolar disorder); or Frida Kahlo (chronic pain). Have a multi-school dyslexic artists event in celebration of Leonardo da Vinci."

In a special inspection report⁷³ dedicated to anti-homophobic bullying, dated 2012, Ofsted endorsed the Educate & Celebrate programme as an example of "Good Practice" that supports staff "nationally". This is recorded in Dr. Barnes paper Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation: *How to Make Your School LGBT+ Friendly*⁷⁴, for the Boarding Schools'



A whole-school approach to tackling homophobic bullying and ingrained attitudes: Stoke Newington School and Sixth Form


URN: 100279
Local authority: Hackney
Date published: 3 February 2012
Reference: 120105

Brief description

Stoke Newington has a curriculum which meets the needs of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender students (LGBT) and extends all students' understanding of diversity. Training for all staff, their commitment to equality and diversity and their approach to poor behaviour have successfully tackled homophobic language, attitudes and bullying.

Overview – the provider's message

'We began our LGBT history month initiative back in 2005 as a response to students' widespread use of homophobic language in and out of the classroom. As the new Head of Year 7, I was able to create a culture of acceptance and understanding with the new cohort. From small beginnings of an introductory assembly, staff from the Year 7 team taught subject-specific LGBT lessons. They organised a student performance of 'Small town boy' in a school assembly. The project grew into a whole-school, community and national event each February'.



Elly Barnes, Head of Year 7

The good practice in detail

A serious problem

Senior leaders and staff report that prior to 2005, homophobic language in the school was rife and many students had anti-gay attitudes. Intimidation and harassment were also issues. Three teachers, all heterosexual, told inspectors about their experiences. One

Stoke Newington School and Sixth Form College
 Good practice example: Schools

1

Another simple but highly effective action was to enhance the behaviour referral forms to include reference to homophobic language. This meant that all staff would look out for, record and report issues as they arose. Where necessary, this also meant that the police could take the forms and see whether action needed to be taken. This joint work with the police was highly effective.

The school is outward looking and outward thinking. It takes a strong lead on this issue with other schools in the borough, its feeder schools, Hackney Learning trust, the local church, government departments and national agencies. Teachers write lesson plans which cover LGBT issues which are then collated by the diversity coordinators and put on to the [website](#) for teachers across the world to use.



Students attend the Hackney and Tower Hamlets LGBT History Month

The school's practice has been commended and rewarded by a number of national and local bodies and agencies. It provides professional development opportunities for other teachers, support staff, local authorities and teacher training providers. In the Diversity Training Centre, Elly trains teachers and supports staff nationally in how to make their own schools LGBT friendly through a programme she devised called *Educate and Celebrate*, which was featured in the *Independent*. Previous delegates evaluated the training as, 'highly interactive, full of interesting debate.' This sentiment was echoed by another delegate who commended the programme because it provided, 'far more practical resources than I expected'.

The outcome of the school's work

A significant outcome of the school's work has been the confidence of LGBT staff and students to be themselves and to be honest about their sexuality without fear of reprisals or harassment. There is a LGBT student group and an LGBT staff group. One student observed, 'I thought we weren't allowed to talk about these things but now we are; I don't feel ashamed anymore'. A teacher agreed and noted, 'We have done so much to challenge people's attitudes, and to have gay students getting up and reading poems about their sexuality is amazing. I wish I had come to a school like this. It would have saved me a whole lot of worry'.

4

Stoke Newington School and Sixth Form College
 Good practice example: Schools

Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation: How to Make Your School LGBT+ Friendly, by Elly Barnes

It seems evident that Ofsted intended their endorsement to be well publicised, since The Independent article signposted in their report gives details of "The IoS Pink List 2011", presenting Elly Barnes in first position, saying:

"Dozens of people emailed The IoS to tell us about Elly Barnes, the teacher who claims the exceptional achievement of eradicating homophobia in her school, and is now helping others to do the same. Some of those who nominated Barnes had worked with her on her "Educate and Celebrate" course for teachers, PGCE students and psychologists, run under the auspices of Ofsted".⁷⁵

Stonewall, GIRES, Mermaids, Diversity Role Models, Just Like Us and Gendered Intelligence are some of the other trans advocacy and RSE consultants that describe

similarly definitive, yet experimental and even potentially unlawful approaches to providing schooling for children who describe themselves as transgendered. For example, in 2017 GIRES issued advice⁷⁶ that included instructions on the provision of toilet and changing facilities:

“These must be immediately available in line with the young person’s affirmed gender and their wishes; the school may include unisex facilities, not for the children who transitions, but for others who don’t want to share or who are non-binary and prefer these. Providing only unisex toilets with high level of privacy, is an option.”

Similarly, Gendered Intelligence suggest⁷⁷ offering “all gender toilets” and claim that, “being trans is not inherently a safeguarding matter, either for the young person or their peers.” They also tell schools to,

“Respect their chosen name, pronoun and other gendered language; this may mean changing name/pronoun more than once or using different names/pronouns in different spaces. It may also mean updating records and ID.”

Meanwhile, The Key⁷⁸, which advises thousands of schools on regulatory compliance and thus exerts a strong influence on the sector, prepared a template “action plan for supporting a trans pupil”. This consists of a table that contains questions and solutions that present the scenario in which a pupil might be socially transitioned by the school without their parents’ knowledge and instructs that other children or teachers should be subject to “serious disciplinary action” if they do not comply. For example:

Topic: Names and pronouns.

Questions to ask the pupil: Do you want to use a different name or pronouns?

Situation: The pupil wants you to use their preferred name or pronouns

Actions to take: Begin to use the pupils preferred name and pronouns as soon as they ask you to.

Questions to ask the pupil: When we speak to your family should we use your preferred names and pronouns?

Situation: The pupil’s parents aren’t aware, or disprove of the pupils trans status.

Actions to Take: Use the pupils legal name on all home school communications.

Questions to ask pupil: Has everyone started to use your preferred name and pronouns after you told them to?

Situation: Staff or pupils refuse to use the correct name or pronouns.

Actions to take: Take serious disciplinary action in line with your behaviour policy.

Some of the instructions given by the companies above, go against the recent advice of the former Attorney General, Suella Braverman, in her speech⁷⁹ of 10th, August 2022. They also contradict the latest NHS guidance and interim findings of the Cass Review and some aspects of the Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2022 guidance.

In the Equality and Health Inequalities Impact Assessment (EHIA) for the Interim Service Specification for Specialised Services for Children and Young People with Gender Dysphoria (Phase 1 Services), NHS England make it clear that the application of the protected characteristic of Gender Reassignment

is a clinical matter and does not pertain to those without a medical diagnosis, explaining that children and young people “who are without a diagnosis of gender dysphoria, do not share the protected characteristic of ‘gender reassignment’ as a class or cohort of patients”⁸⁰.

Whilst some statements of caution and clarification regarding instant affirmation have been made by the DfE – specifically that schools should not use materials that indicate that “non-conformity to gender stereotypes should be seen as synonymous with having a different gender identity”⁸¹ – the consultancy of trans supporting charities and RSE providers is still being delivered and their training is thoroughly embedded in the education sector given some of these seminal schemes have been running for a decade or more.

Indeed, some exponents of this teaching are unconcerned with the proper authority of government guidance and law, given the sector-wide support to the contrary. For example, Dr. Mary Bousted of the National Education Union, is quoted by Mermaids as telling schools to “ignore” the Attorney General on these matters, as follows:

“Dr Mary Bousted, Joint General Secretary of the National Education Union, said:

“Discrimination against trans pupils is illegal under the 2010 Equality Act. Schools should ignore the misleading advice from the Attorney General and continue to treat their trans pupils with dignity and respect they are entitled to.”⁸²

Some schools have enshrined this positive affirmation approach in their RSE policies. In one example, a school added a ‘Transgender Statement’

as an appendix to their policy, that explains that the “Public Sector Equality Duty requires schools to eliminate discrimination on the grounds of ‘Gender Reassignment’”, which they claim means “supporting a young person to social transition, to be treated in their self-identified gender”. The statement then goes on to define Gender Reassignment and seems to conflate all trans self-identification (including in children) with this protected characteristic, effectively operating ‘self-ID’ in the school.

It is therefore not surprising that the following pieces of testimony, of which there are many more, have been given to the Bayswater Support Group⁸³, by parents whose children have told their school that they are transgender:

“Despite me not giving permission, some of the teachers started calling my daughter he/him and using a boy’s name. A few months ago she was also diagnosed with Asperger’s Syndrome. I contacted the school but they are not listening to my views. The head of wellbeing said they want to keep my daughter happy at school so she achieves well. There are 14 girls in the same year group who are questioning their genders.”

“Our daughter’s school has socially transitioned our child, changing her name without our consent or permission and despite us asking for them to first consult with her therapist. We are in complaint proceedings with the school as a result. We have sent our complaint to Ofsted too.”

“Fast forward to January 2020 and the school changed her name and pronouns, but did not ask for our consent. We do have to consent for theatre trips, though. We were not granted a meeting to discuss

our concerns until September 2020, after six months of my emailing various aspects of what I had learned about the risks of affirmation, social transition, medical & surgical transition, and certain odd aspects of Mermaids, Stonewall and Diversity Role Models all promoted by the school. At this meeting, it was proposed that I attend parenting classes, so that I could come to acknowledge that I in fact had a son."

"During Pride Month my daughter (13) took some books home from school about being trans, they were part of the Pride display and also available in the school library. They showed in words and pictures how to inject yourself with hormones, how to get hold of them. There were big displays in school about how it can help to come out as trans (not only during Pride Month but throughout the year). We also got an email (sent to all parents) that the school was in their right not to discuss with the parents if a child wanted to change pronouns/name in school"

"Our daughter told me when she was 13, about to start Year 9 (August 2019), that she wasn't sure she was a girl. What I didn't know until six months later (March 2020) was that she had been to a presentation at school by an adult trans person two weeks before her declaration. She did, later, tell my husband about this: the trans person's life had been very hard, until they transitioned...when all their problems melted away. A teacher told me this person had been sent by an agency called Diversity Role Models (which officially stands for all types of diversity, but mainly seems to concentrate on trans.)"

"We wrote to the school explaining that we did not support socially transitioning

and wanted to keep our daughter's options open until she was older. She was 14yrs old at the time. Three days later I was copied into an email saying that the change was going ahead and my daughter would now be known as 'new name' and he/him pronouns. No further discussion with us as parents and zero thought for how this may affect my son at the same school. I am absolutely devastated about how the school handled this. They absolutely lit a bomb under our family which I'm not sure we will ever recover from. The speed at which they carried out her request was totally out of step with any other school request, there was no regard for our wishes as parents and zero thought for her brother."

As these testimonies reveal, the stark reality is that schools are now trained to both misinterpret the Equality Act and enact social transition – including in cases of self-ID – according to third sector advice, the PSED, the 2019 RSE guidance, various advisory bodies and even historical Ofsted endorsement.

They have been acting upon this in ways that have huge, sometimes devastating consequences for children and their families and indeed potentially for the liability of the schools – and perhaps even for the Government or Ofsted, given that a clear line of endorsement has been issued for some of the contentious guidance being enacted in schools. Given the numbers involved, it seems quite possible that some of the children socially transitioned by schools in recent years will take medication and proceed to surgery before regretting their actions and identifying the school's intervention as a seminal moment that is responsible for harm done.

Importantly, many families have felt

unable to question or complain about these practices because they fear the effect it will have on their relationship with their child, as well as the difficulty of speaking about a problem that is so politically controversial and subject to vehemently expressed opinions. Parents are also rightly concerned about the authority that schools, counsellors, medics and social workers can exert between them on this controversial subject, when there are conflicting visions for the best way to treat their child.

And this problem does not only affect families; it places teachers who believe it is not right to use gender neutral pronouns or to socially transition a child without parental permissions (and who consider it a matter of free speech or conscience to express this), at odds with their employers. Some have even lost their jobs over this issue and are seeking redress in court.⁸⁴

These concerns raise the question of whether the proposed new DfE guidance regarding gender dysphoria in school pupils (due in 2023 but not yet offered for consultation), will arrive soon enough and be adequate to address the deeply entrenched confusion and malpractice – or whether the extensive, sector-wide training for instant trans affirmation needs to be concertedly undone with a similar scale of re-training programme.

Heteronormativity

Rejection of Gender Theory is described by its exponents as a function of 'heteronormativity', which is said to mean either the assumption that people are only, or should be, heterosexual or that one's gender cannot differ from one's biological sex, or that people can only be male and female. The first idea is thought

to be homophobic, the latter is said to be transphobic.

'Heteronormativity' is therefore described quite openly with condemnation as a prejudiced view, or as requiring active opposition. For example, in How to Transform Your School into an LGBT+ Friendly Place, Dr. Elly Barnes and Dr. Anna Carlile describe Educate & Celebrate's ethos for RSE as follows:

"The Ethos

To smash heteronormativity

by encouraging intersectionality

through the usualising pedagogy

To create the land of social justice, where all are treated equally and fairly

Heteronormativity is the assumption that everyone is heterosexual. For the purposes of this book, we use the term to also include the assumption that everyone is male or female."

They also define 'heteronormativity' in their glossary:

"Heteronormativity: A much-challenged societal viewpoint that assumes everyone is heterosexual and stereotypically 'male acting' or 'female acting' instead of there being many possibilities. For example, the assumption that a girl will grow up and marry a man is heteronormative, as is the idea that boys will not want to become ballet dancers."

The charity continues its critique of this proposed heterosexual 'normativity' in subtle ways. For example, whilst it describes 'gender fluid', 'genderqueer' or 'homosexuality' as identities pertaining to "someone", a "person" or "people", as follows...

“Gender fluid: This describes someone whose gender expression and/or gender identity might change from day to day, or from year to year. A gender-fluid person may or may not identify as non-binary (see below).”

Genderqueer: A useful term, genderqueer people might also identify as non-binary. Many use the word as an umbrella term to explain that they are not cisgendered, but don't want to be labelled male or female. See also 'Non-binary'.”

...it then describes the term 'heterosexual' not as pertaining to people with the majority sexual orientation, but rather as a “state”, saying,

“Heterosexual: The state of being attracted to the other gender within a binary model of gender which understands the existence of 'male' and 'female' only (see 'Straight').”⁸⁵

Given that some heterosexuals hold the opinion that there is a spectrum of genders (and they just happen to be at one end of it and are attracted to people at the other end of it), we see here a counterfactual claim that denigrates heterosexuality as a ‘state’ of limited understanding. This is a revealing entry that seems to demonstrate a will to actively demote or confuse children about the majority sexual orientation, conflating it with the proposed prejudice of ‘heteronormativity’ – thus the supposedly justified attack upon ‘heteronormativity’ can be transferred to heterosexuality itself.

This kind of ‘straw man’ tactic is further exercised by some academics and RSE providers by conflating the concept of ‘normal’ as in typical, usual or common, with the idea of ‘normative’ as in a judgemental sense of what is acceptable,

healthy or proper. This conflation is sometimes used to justify an attack upon an assertion of what is ‘normal’ in terms of being merely common, when it is not necessarily presenting any prejudice against the less common. This small, technical mechanism is being employed to great effect in the culture of some schools to diminish heterosexual expression.

Even Head Teachers struggle with the complexity of this, as the following explanation from a formal complaint process illustrates, in which a Principal conflates heterosexuality with ‘heteronormativity’ and labels heterosexual society as discriminatory, merely by virtue of being a majority.

“From my understanding, 'Heteronormativity' refers to the idea that we live in a society which assumes people are heterosexual. The Oxford Dictionary defines the term as “The assumption that normal and natural expressions of sexuality in society are heterosexual in nature. A heteronormative society is structured morally, socially, and legally to position other forms of sexuality as deviant and to discriminate against non-heterosexuals”. From my enquiries, the facilitator stated that we live in a “largely heteronormative society” which can be argued to be correct, due to the fact that more people claim to be, and identify themselves as heterosexual, and for this reason by definition we arguably do live in a heteronormative society.”

Meanwhile, authors and influential RSE specialists, Alice Hoyle and Ester McGeeney are explicit in their book Great Relationships and Sex Education (under the heading of “Heteronorms”) that teachers should, “engage in social activism” as follows:

“Chapter summary

Section 1: Heteronorms. Activities to identify gender and sexual norms and engage in social activism to challenge or change unequal and/or oppressive norms. Includes activities that cross over with media studies, careers guidance, creative writing, history, geography, drama, music, film and art.

Section 2: Key terms and definitions. Four activities that help clarify key terms and definitions in relation to gender, sex and sexual orientation.

Section 3: Diversity, power and privilege. Activities that explore key concepts such as power, privilege and heteronormativity and those that recognise and celebrate gender and sexual diversity and difference.”⁸⁶

Whilst RSE provider Split Banana explains that,

“For too long, RSHE has been fearmongering, heteronormative and irrelevant – we are changing that.”⁸⁷

In primary schools, The Proud Trust presents an LGBT+ History Month activity⁸⁸ that demotes heterosexuality by omission; it provides a table containing bright and colourful flags for many LGBT identities but none in the two boxes marked ‘Straight’ or ‘Cis’. For young children, symbols of in-groups and out-groups are hugely influential and therefore the potential manipulative power of such a diagram is significant.

However, Olly Pike offers children a way past this exclusionary situation, by preparing a flag⁸⁹ for ‘Straight Allies’ of LGBT+ people, which features in his LGBT+ Flag Quiz. This offers a way for all children to be drawn into the ideological

framework.

And in an essay titled The Problem With Heteronormativity, Nadia Deen, a Workshop Facilitator for the School of Sexuality Education presents the theory that “heterosexuality is not “normal” or even inherent to humans”:

“The Problem with Heteronormativity

The term “Compulsory Heterosexuality” was coined by prominent Feminist poet and writer Adrienne Rich in her popular 1980 essay “Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence.” In the essay, she argues that heterosexuality is not “normal” or even inherent to humans and that women actually do better by having relationships with other women. She further suggests that men have benefited most from male/female relationships and have therefore created a society where, to maintain access to women, the male/female sexual relationship is normal and natural and anything outside of this is abnormal and unnatural.”⁹⁰

Meanwhile, an academic, Dr. Tanya Horeck of Anglia Ruskin University, who prepared Government funded RSE lesson plans for schools during lockdown, writes favourably of her chosen source material (a Netflix show called ‘Sex Education’):

“Although the show revolves around the awkward and privileged Otis, who is white, straight, and male, I contend that it does so with a view to denaturalizing heterosexuality...”

...Sex Education disseminates knowledge about queerness (Parsemain 2019) through consistently destabilizing a notion of heteronormative sex in two important ways.”⁹¹

In essence, there is evidence that

heterosexuality or 'cis gender' identity are being diminished, whilst the concept of a spectrum of 'queerness' is advanced as the central way of considering identity, to which all people can subscribe in some way.

This trend to demote or denigrate heterosexuality, extends into education about sexual intercourse. What was previously called 'sex' between a man and a woman, is now described as 'penis-in-vagina' sex, so as to distinguish it from anal, oral or masturbatory sex, which it is suggested should each be given equal status and priority in RSE – as was advocated by Schools OUT UK in their advice for the 2019 RSE guidance. The following resource by Split Banana⁹² illustrates:

"Moving away from PIV sex

When most people hear 'sex', they think of penis-in-vagina (PIV) sex.

There are 2 main reasons for this:

- 1. Sex education of the past has focused on pregnancy-prevention, as as [sic] result of PIV sex.*
- 2. We live in a heteronormative society which tells us that heterosexual, monogamous couples are the 'default' and 'normal' type of relationships.*

Building on these 2 reasons, we've been told that penetrative sex is the only 'legitimate' type of sex and that 'virginity' is directly linked to PIV sex.

But actually sex isn't just intercourse, it's outercourse too! Sexual touching, oral, kissing, massaging - anything on the outside of the body counts as sex too. Anal sex and oral sex on the penis are also types of intercourse

sex. Further, there are lots of different types of relationships, whether that's to do with sexuality (pansexual, bisexual, homosexual etc) or formation (polygamous, open etc). All types of sex and relationships are valid, as long as their [sic] consensual."

Notably anal sex is not similarly described as 'penis-in-anus' sex, which raises the question of why only heterosexual intercourse is described as if it is a perfunctory or mechanical act?

Whilst a resource by BISH, titled Why Penis in Vagina Sex Can be Meh (which is somewhat crudely illustrated with a pointing finger emoji poking towards the hole made by the 'okay' gesture emoji), adds to the sense of demotion of heterosexual sex when it says,

"...penis in vagina sex can be a bit meh, or rubbish, for many couples.

When people think about sex they often think it means penis in vagina sex. Society says that this is what counts as proper sex. Some people really really like this – which is great for them. However many people (with penises and vaginas) do it even when they don't enjoy it.

*This video explains why people often don't enjoy that kind of sex. Spoiler alert – it's all about the glans."*⁹³

In conjunction with this controversial approach, parents have reported children being taught that in the past sex education wrongly focused upon biological, heterosexual sex as the means of procreation, which discriminated against those who do not procreate that way. It has been asserted that the correct understanding is that sex is primarily for pleasure and only sometimes for procreation, and that procreation can be

brought about without sex, including by IVF and surrogacy, especially for same sex couples.

This controversial teaching is not explicitly supported by the 2019 RSE guidance but is being taught in schools, without mentioning the legal, clinical and ethical considerations of this area. However, evidence of this teaching cannot be referenced in this report, since lesson plans concerning this subject have been withheld by third party providers.

Anal Sex

This topic is now being introduced to children during RSE, although it is unclear whether the DfE intended for schools to do so or not, and if they did, how it was meant to be presented and at what age.

As shown above, several examples show that it has been introduced in a way that is not just factual, but is couched in value judgements against 'heteronormativity' or ostensibly to create a sense of equivalence between homosexual and heterosexual sexual practices for egalitarian reasons.

This is illustrated by the following lesson plan, presented in November 2022 by an award-winning independent school. The lesson was prepared by a PSHE Lead for children in Year 8 (aged twelve to thirteen) and it asks them the question "What is Sex?" in both "heteronormative couples" and "non-heteronormative couples", before asking what they "know/think/feel" about these sex acts.

"What is sex?

What is sex in heteronormative couples?

What is sex in non-heteronormative couples?

What is masturbation?

Do it now:

Can you guess these words?

_ _ S_U _ A _ _ _

_R _ _ S_

H _ _ _ ON _ _ _ _ _

_ _ _ _ S

_ _ G_N _

What do you know/think/feel about sex?

You will see 4 boxes around the room.

You will each have 4 pieces of paper

1. Move around the room to each station

2. Using one piece of paper per station...

3. With a black pen, write down things you know about this type of sex

4. With a blue pen, write down things you think or feel or questions you have about this type of sex"

The four sex types specified for discussion were as follows:

"PENIS IN VAGINA SEX

ORAL SEX

MASTURBATION

ANAL SEX"

The children were then asked:

"In pairs – Mind map the ways that couples can show intimacy

Now use two different colours to circle:

Ways that heteronormative couple can

enjoy intimacy

Ways that same sex couples can enjoy intimacy

What do you notice?

Progress Check

What is Sex? – Exit Pass

1) Write down 5 things that you have learnt about sex in today's lesson

2) Write down 5 questions that you still have about sex education

This lesson was based upon a template in the book *Great Relationships and Sex Education*, by Alice Hoyle and Ester McGeeney. The authors (who present the work of Gayle Rubin, including the controversial 'Charmed Circle' from her essay titled *Thinking Sex: Notes for a Radical Theory of the Politics of Sexuality*⁹⁴), explain their reasoning for the lesson template as follows:

"There are two key learning points from this brainstorm.

1. To challenge the assumption that when someone refers to 'having sex' they mean penis-in-vagina sex.

Explore this common assumption using the following questions:

Which of these sexual activities count as 'having sex'? (circle responses)

Why do we categorise some sexual activities as 'real' sex and not others? Why does it matter? What assumptions lie behind these categories?

Key assumptions include: that sex always takes place between a person with a penis and a person with a vagina; sex is

always potentially reproductive; the most pleasurable way of having sex is penis-in-vagina sex (even though we know that for many women in particular this is not the case).

Note: You can also explore which activities count as 'virginity loss' as a way of exploring virginity myths.

2. To clarify that there is no such thing as 'gay sex' (despite many people's fascination with this question!)

A common question that come up in RSE sessions is – what is gay sex? Or, how do two women/two men have sex? Use the following questions to explore this and make the point that this isn't a helpful way of looking at things:

Which types of sex can ONLY be enjoyed by straight people? (circle responses)

Which types of sex can ONLY be enjoyed by gay people? (circle in different colour)

You will find that almost all of the sexual activities could be done by any couple or individual regardless of their sexual orientation or identity. There are some sexual activities that may require particular anatomy, e.g. penis-in-vagina sex, although if this is reframed as 'penetrative sex' then anyone can engage in this activity if they have a sex toy or a penis. Further, we need to be careful about making assumptions about someone's anatomy since a 'straight' couple could refer to a relationship between a cis woman and a trans man – neither of whom may have a penis.

The key learning here is that it doesn't make sense to talk about 'gay sex' or 'straight sex' as there are many different ways that two bodies can come together to have sex. It may involve mutual

*masturbation, oral sex, penetrative sex (vaginal or anal), using sex toys and having orgasms together. These activities can be enjoyed (or not) by people of any sex, gender or sexuality."*⁹⁵

This lesson, and the thinking upon which it rests, raises serious ethical questions. In the first place, regardless of one's views on creating equivalence between heterosexual and homosexual sex as an egalitarian principle, this lesson simultaneously creates equivalence for heterosexual couples between anal and vaginal sex, which has the potential to mislead children about whether anal sex is a universally enacted, desirable or safe sexual practice.

This places girls and young women especially in a position of vulnerability, since anal sex has been shown to be significantly more risky for the female anatomy than for males, as articles in the *Guardian* and *British Medical Journal*⁹⁶ explain.

"Women in the UK are suffering injuries and other health problems as a result of the growing popularity of anal sex among straight couples, two NHS surgeons have warned.

*The consequences include incontinence and sexually transmitted infections (STIs) as well as pain and bleeding because they have experienced bodily trauma while engaging in the practice, the doctors write in an article in the British Medical Journal."*⁹⁷

Despite supposedly being experts in RSE, sexuality and online harms, the two authors of the lesson plan above, normalise and arguably promote anal sex to pupils without expressing any caution about the risks of the practice, nor the potential for it to be used as an

abusive act, particularly in emulation of online pornography. This means that girls and boys might begin heterosexual sexual activity with the idea that they are expected to perform either, with equal interest.

The lesson above is by no means the only questionable resource in the book, since it also introduces pupils of fifteen to "kink", "BDSM", "group sex", "sex in the school toilet" and the idea that some people enjoy painful or "quick, rough and anonymous" sex.

The relevant lesson, titled *Good Sex, Bad Sex, Depends* is "based on an activity created by Malin Strenstrom and adapted for the Good Sex Project". It is described as a "discussion-based activity that aims to create a safe space for critical discussion about sexual values and norms in relation to good sex and bad sex."

It concludes with the following advice to RSE teachers:

*"It can be a good idea to leave Feelings until last. Here you can emphasise that love and affection are often important parts of good sex, but not always. For others good sex is quick, rough and anonymous. You can also explore the fact that some people enjoy feeling pain during sex, which is often referred to as kink or BDSM. As with all sexual practices what matters is that sex is consensual and that partners are able to listen and respect each other's wishes and desires."*⁹⁸

As referred to earlier, far from being a fringe resource, one of the authors of this book was a founding trustee⁹⁹ of the Sex Education Forum and a lifetime member of the PSHE Association, and the other is an academic who developed the influential *Good Sex Project*¹⁰⁰,

sponsored by Brook.

The book was first published in 2020 by the mainstream publisher Routledge Education and is starting to influence schools, now that the 2019 RSE guidance is taking effect, after becoming compulsory in September 2021. It has been described as the “go-to book” for RSE by the leading advisor to the Welsh Government, Emma Renold, Professor of Childhood Studies at Cardiff University, who it was noted earlier advanced the idea that the notion of childhood innocence is false.

Given this book is a compendium of over two hundred interactive RSE tasks, some of a similarly ethically contentious and politicised nature to those detailed above this could be seen as a safeguarding risk, which might encourage schools to breach statutory guidance – especially regarding age-appropriateness. Moreover, its instruction to teachers to discuss such controversial topics, could place them at risk of complaints about serious malpractice.

A further example of the way the topic of anal sex is addressed is provided by RSE website Cliterally the Best¹⁰¹, which, whilst precautionary about injury to some degree, nevertheless refers to participants as “penis owners” or “vulva owners” and thus fails to properly identify the different issues for men and women, nor does it mention that people have different ethical opinions regarding this type of sex. The site’s content merges adult sex advice with RSE for schools and teacher training, and provides the following information about anal sex:

Anal Sex Top Tips

If you want to try anal sex for the first

time, here are my top tips to get the most out of it!

Communicate First.

Of course, relaxing is easier said than one. Try and talk about it before it happens so it's not such a shock. Read up about it and see if it's something your partner is down for.

Make sure you are both down for it and if you are receiving, make sure you want to try rather than feeling pressured or because your partner wants it.

Breathe, Breathe, Breathe.

The key to enjoying anything that goes in your butt is to be relaxed. Your anus tightens when you are nervous, even in a non-sexual setting, and if it's tight there's no hope. If you do still try it's going to hurt.

Start Small

Don't go straight into the full-on penis-in-butt sex. That will be a little bit of a shock. Play with your partner or by yourself with toys or fingers first.

Get your body used to something going in, instead of just things going out. Most importantly, take your time.

If it hurts at any point, stop.

Further advice is given on “lube”, “pegging”, “mess” and “control” and includes a direction to sex toy sales.

It therefore seems clear that more consideration needs to be given to the ethics of introducing this subject to children, including whether or when it is age appropriate to learn about anal sex and how it might affect children emotionally to consider this practice at

school age (especially as some parents report it being introduced at primary school). It also seems necessary to address what it might mean to children and families with religious or moral convictions about this topic.

Likewise, the ethical question of whether underage children should be informed about ‘kink’, BDSM, group sex and also ‘Chemsex’ (taking drugs when participating in sexual interactions) is similarly unaddressed by the DfE guidance, and yet due to the rapidly growing body of unregulated RSE materials on the market, this is now taking place in schools.

Indeed, the topic of ‘Chemsex’ is now listed on many school RSE policies and incorporated into more general RSE lessons, with specific concern for LGBT inclusivity. For example an RSE slide published¹⁰² by a school online titled “Year 11 – RSE – Sexual and Intimate Relationships” begins,

“RSE covers a variety of topics and focuses on developing understanding of different aspects of relationships. This includes with yourself, friendships, romantic and sexual relationships.

The lesson then presents a table that includes only the following ‘Key Terms’ in this order:

Chemsex: Sexual activity engaged in while under the influence of stimulant drugs such as methamphetamine, GHB or mephedrone

GHB/GBL: Developed in the 1960’s as an anaesthetic

Fertility: The capability of becoming pregnant

Sex Positivity

‘Sex positivity’ is a set of ideals describing how people should approach their sexual and romantic relations, as well as the manner in which they should be taught, discussed and understood in society.

This way of thinking, largely forged in one tranche of academic gender studies in the 1980’s and in association with Queer Theory, has various interpretations, but it is built upon a key tenet of sexual liberalism. It is also linked to political ideas about power and hierarchy and tends to promote the view that all forms of sexual relations should be socially acceptable and there should be no partiality in approval about them, so long as the two key factors of pleasure and consent are prioritised.

As previously highlighted, School of Sexuality Education (SoSE) writes that ‘sex positivity’ “means stepping away from heteronormative and monogamy-based assumptions” and “being non-judgemental and accepting about sexual practices that are considered to deviate from the norm. It also means recognising that some people may not want to engage in sex or may want specific limits on this.” They also suggest,

“This acceptance of the full spectrum of sexuality applies to all ages too. For children, questions about sex and sexuality come from a place of curiosity. School of Sexuality Education facilitator Charlie advocates for the notion of ‘positive curiosity’. This means never judging but asking questions to understand other people’s perspectives and experiences and being open to learning from them. Too often, the curiosity we have around sex and our

own sexual desires is framed as negative or taboo, cloaking the topic in feelings of shame. Interpreting this curiosity through sex positivity reimagines it and dismantles the oppressive framework of taboo and judgement, instead creating space for communication and open exploration."

The RSE company Split Banana, suggests the following controversial interpretation¹⁰³ of sex positivity,

"To us, sex-positivity means providing a sex education free of shame and discrimination.

The links between shame and sex have deep roots in colonisation, the violent enforcement of 'ideals' of sexual expression, and the demonisation of anything that isn't heteronormative, white or Christian.

This violence is also evident in a lot of white feminism, whereby 'sex-positivity' is centred around an idea of 'sexual liberation' which excludes a lot more people than it includes. Particularly people who are disabled or who are not white, straight or cis.

In practise, this means that we highlight the oppression caused by the relationship between sex and shame. We teach young people to respect others' consensual sexual expression and decisions, even if they look different from our own. And that they are none of our business.

We highlight the multitudes of different ways that people engage in sexual activity, and the different reasons for doing so.

We support what brings people joy – whether that's being in a polyamorous relationship, abstaining until marriage or living your life as someone who doesn't

fancy having sex at all."

This position is understood by some to offer a successfully liberal value system that is ostensibly tolerant of all sexual practices (including abstinence), however (no matter how liberal this approach is to sexual practice), 'sex positivity' does not seem to tolerate other ethical systems of thought that favour restrictions, boundaries, see a purpose in shame, or which have moral codes that might exclude certain practices or oppose 'sex positivism' itself. In short, 'sex positivity' is liberal towards a diversity of practice, but not necessarily towards a diversity of thought, especially any opinions that favour being reserved.

On the contrary, exponents of 'sex positivity' specifically advocate very open discussion about sex, sexuality and pleasure, with the intention of destroying taboos, and it is this aspect – along with its focus on consent – that has led some people to consider it a useful tool in education, because it is said to help open the discourse necessary to educate children with important information about potentially embarrassing topics.

It is also suggested that open discourse is especially necessary today, given the easy access children have to pornography online, requiring children to be educated about the adverse effects it can have. The following statement by Split Banana illustrates this "get there first"¹⁰⁴ principle.

"What's age appropriate?

When it comes to sex education, lots of people - rightly - have concerns about age-appropriateness. Sex and relationships are sensitive topics and every parent and carers' top priority is to safeguard their child.

And RSHE is a big part of that - every child deserves to be equipped with the tools and knowledge to keep themselves safe and happy. We should be speaking honestly about sex and relationships at an earlier age, especially seeing as the average age in the UK for involuntarily viewing explicit imagery is 11. Let's get there first, with better information."

Whilst there might be a well-meaning rationale to this idea – and figures recently published in a report¹⁰⁵ by the Children's Commissioner certainly do show a high number of children (including at young ages) are being exposed to pornography – careful consideration is still required about what it means to prematurely interrupt an innocence that most pupils under eleven might be benefitting from. The presence of online harms does not automatically indicate that the right course of action is for teachers to prime all children, at ever younger ages, with controlled exposure to sexual knowledge, including the difficult subject of pornography.

Likewise, invoking the concept of 'age-appropriate' RSE does not mean that every RSE subject can therefore be framed in a beneficial way for every age; in some cases, the only 'age appropriate' approach might be to not introduce the subject at all. For example, in an attempt to prepare children for what they might see in pornography, a school in the Southwest of England introduced pupils in Year 9 to a definition of bestiality, which some parents complained took the concept of precautionary informing much too far.

When considering "The Way Forward" in the conclusion of her report, the Children's Commissioner seems to recognise that it is better to prevent

the exposure in the first place, when she explains that her policy recommendations,

"focus primarily on regulation, i.e. measures to limit and, so far as possible, prevent children from accessing pornography. With the passage of the landmark Online Safety Bill through Parliament, now is an invaluable opportunity to safeguard children from online pornography, particularly early and accidental exposure."

However, the Children's Commissioner also suggests that,

"Although measures in the Online Safety Bill will dramatically reduce the frequency of early, unintended exposure to pornography, age verification will not prevent all young people from accessing explicit content online. Therefore, education will also play a key role in violence prevention and critical media literacy.

Pornography and sexual violence are confronting topics for many young people. These issues must be approached in an age-appropriate way, from the later years of primary school and throughout secondary school and college years, with an overarching objective to prevent harm and equip pupils to have healthy, safe and consenting relationships.

Approaches to teaching children about pornography should sit within a broader RSE strategy, ensuring that lesson plans are dynamic and relevant, fully informed by children's concerns and experiences, and involve meaningful communication with parents. It is vital that schools prioritise the development of high-quality materials and teaching skills to deliver meaningful education on these challenging topics."

Ostensibly, exponents of 'sex positive' RSE seem to share a similar ambition to use education to minimise online harms, however, on closer inspection it becomes clear that this is not simply because they think exposure cannot realistically be fully halted, but because many are ideologically of the opinion that there is nothing inherently wrong with young people seeing pornography, that teaching abstinence is inappropriate, that childhood innocence is a social construct and therefore the priority should be to make sure pornography is 'ethically' produced, with concern for the rights and income of sex workers, and consumed without encouraging misogyny, violence or reinforcing unhelpful 'gender stereotypes'.

This is illustrated in the following advice by Split Banana, titled, A Simple Guide to Great Sex-ed: How to Talk About Porn¹⁰⁶.

"It's crucial to get away from the stereotype that only teenage boys watch porn. This stereotype can make it feel mandatory for boys, and make girls feel ashamed if they watch it.

People of all sorts of different genders, ages, sexualities, abilities, backgrounds, jobs titles etc watch porn. It's also a very important part of sexual experience for many who cannot, for various reasons, have sex with other people. It's not a bad thing in itself to watch it, and it's important to remove shame and stigma in order to have good conversations around it.

It's also good to emphasise the importance of paying for porn. This underlines that this is a job, that people should always be paid for their labour and that sex workers should be respected. There is also a lot of great feminist porn

out there, which moves away from the male gaze and has an ethical supply chain.

What next?

We've explored the idea that porn isn't bad in itself, but can be damaging when ingested uncritically. Through having conversations like the above, you can help a young person build up their critical eye. This will protect them from absorbing the problematic narratives that porn can convey, and enable them to have healthy, happy sex in the future.

And remember, young people often turn to porn when they are not receiving comprehensive sex education - specifically one that includes pleasure - so the more sex-ed conversations you have, the more they will understand how porn does not reflect reality."

What this means in practice is that far from attempting to reduce exposure, Split Banana provide direct links on their website to sites that promote the 'ethical' pornography industry, or signpost to other RSE providers that take a more radical approach in their resources. For example, they direct children to a film called Porn: Fact or Fiction?¹⁰⁷ by Amaze, which, whilst offering a precautionary message about the misleading aspects of pornography, nevertheless uses cartoon imagery that some children might not want to see, such as an animation of a blonde woman called Julie Melons pulling her shirt open to expose impossibly large, naked breasts. The film also explains that "being curious about sex and looking at pictures or films of naked bodies or people engaging in sexual behaviours is perfectly normal", which casts a value judgment that some families might not agree with.

Split Banana also direct pupils to detailed testimony on Justin Hancock's RSE website, BISH, in which a pornography actor answers the question "How do the guys in porn last so long?"¹⁰⁸ Whilst this attempts to demystify pornography, it clearly also normalises sex work as a career path, which again will be concerning to many parents.

"How *do* the guys in porn last so long? I asked one. Here's what he said.

Hi Bish,

I am 17, from London, a guy.

I wanted to ask: how do the guys in porn last so long? I am young, and I can last only about 5-10 minutes max when masturbating to porn, but the guy in the video will go on for an hour?? Magic? A drug? Or could it be the fearsome video editing software?

Cheers,

ABB

Hey ABB

Thanks for your question. I thought I'd ask my porn star pal. Here's his answer.

Interesting question. It's one that I used to have too. I think the main answer is that the mental space you inhabit while masturbating to porn is almost the opposite of that you inhabit when you're performing in porn, so your sexual response is naturally different.

I will tend to reach orgasm pretty quickly in that situation...

...When you are performing in mainstream porn it's a completely different mode of

sexual engagement. The film, your pay-check and to a degree the progress of your career relies on your body behaving the way everyone expects it to: that is to say that you get and maintain a hard-on and get to orgasm when it's called for. That's a whole bunch of pressure to start with, but there are a few more things that make a difference too.

You are performing, sometimes unnaturally, rather than pursuing anything along the lines of your peak erotic experience as you would when masturbating. You probably haven't met your co-performer before and you can't negotiate as effectively while you're having sex, so there is always some second guessing going on as to what they would respond well to. You are trying to maintain focus and stay totally engaged in the moment while not thinking about staying focussed and while keeping in mind what the director needs...

...there is obviously a statistical bias at work in looking at dudes working as (mainstream) porn performers. If on camera you can't keep fucking for a fairly long time, your porn career is probably not going to take off so it's unlikely that your correspondent will get to see those guys very often.

Lastly, I should be honest and say that one of the reasons I last a long time is as a side effect of some medication I take for depression. So yes, I suppose that that is a drug that helps, albeit tangentially. The flip side is that staying hard is more difficult and getting to orgasm, if the producers require a cumshot, is often a challenge.

That's a long answer to a short question, but I hope it helps.

Parker Marx"

Split Banana also direct RSE teachers to a website called The Porn Conversation¹⁰⁹ run by 'ethical' pornography producers, Pablo Dobner and Erika Lust, who claim to be sex educators. The site suggests that "porn is the new sex education" and they explain that,

"In school: There is a massive need for comprehensive sex education at schools, but many schools lack the funding and resources to start. When sex education is provided in schools it can be cis-heteronormative and excludes marginalised communities such as BIPOC, LGBTQ+ and disabled young people. We have created free tools for educators to provide comprehensive sex education lessons and activities for all."

Their RSE website has a live link to Erika Lust's Linked In page, which advertises her free-to-watch pornography channels, also with a live link. This leads to a sexually explicit front page that includes naked men and women in twos or threes engaging in sex acts. This means there are just three clicks between Split Banana's SEF endorsed website and easily accessible pornography, seemingly with 'trusted' recommendations by RSE 'teachers' at each step of the way, including those who have commercial interests in the sex industry. These recommendations are also accompanied by mainstream media branding, like Netflix and even the BBC, which are listed on ErikaLust.com.

In short, it seems that Split Banana are educating children towards a soft entry point to consuming pornography that they consider ethical, as a solution to online harms. This is a radical position that many parents will be fundamentally at odds with, but it is a typical approach

of 'sex positive' RSE providers.

It therefore seems likely that without intervention and parameters set by the DfE, this will be the kind of education that will be used by some schools when educating children about pornography, according to the Children's Commissioner's recommendation to improve children's "critical media literacy" – which closely matches Split Banana's instruction to "help a young person build up their critical eye".

In a further example, the RSE company Cliterally the Best, created by Evie Plumb, is even more overt in declaring its commercial interests and relationship to the sex industry. It features two sponsors (Womanizer and Lovehoney) that are commercial sex toy and fetish wear vendors, Plumb's own 'lube' product, links to ethical pornography channels such as Sssh.com and Pink Label TV (which is advertised with an image of one woman spanking another woman's bottom, simultaneously covering it in glittery paint). Evie Plumb also provides a 'Sex Positive Blog' that gives advice on subjects ranging from "How to Choke Someone in Bed Safely" to "Wax Play". Plumb writes,

"Over 60% of you have tried Choking in the bedroom at least once."

This sexual act can be super dangerous when done incorrectly and most of us don't know how to do it correctly – we simply squeeze and hope for the best.

I have put this guide together to make sure you're experimenting with 'Breath Play' in the safest way possible...

In order to properly choke your partner, you have to apply pressure to the carotid artery. The carotid artery runs down

the throat to the chest; the point that you want to strike is slightly below your partner's jawline, closer to the ear than the chin."

Why Do We Like Choking?

"During choking, your brain is being starved of vital oxygen which can induce a lucid yet semi-hallucinogenic state and may cause you to fade in and out of consciousness and may create a feeling of euphoria."

The high that people experience soon after is due to the release of oxygen flowing back and the body exhaling. With an exhale, there is a release of dopamine and serotonin that can lead to a nice sensation as the body tries to recover itself." - Dr. Giuseppe Aragona¹¹⁰

This demonstrates that some 'sex positive' activists advocate that the destruction of taboos in RSE should extend to practices that are considered risky, perverse or commercial, and once again, this is not a niche RSE provider, since Plumb¹¹¹ explains that she is a qualified RSE teacher in accordance with ACET UK, is an ambassador for popular teen sex advice provider Fumble, was nominated for Brook and SH24 NHS's sexual health awards and she signposts to various mainstream, in-school RSE providers that are happy to be associated with her offer.

Meanwhile, advocates of the academic genre of Queer Theory sometimes assert particularly transgressive interpretations of 'sex positivity', including that the breaking down of taboos should extend to all ages – not for precautionary safeguarding reasons, but because the child is a sexual being, capable of giving or denying consent to sexual pleasure, or they should at least be actively practicing

their sexual discourse in advance of sexual activity. This includes the idea that childhood innocence is an unhelpful social construct.

At its extremes, this way of thinking has accommodated the idea that being a Minor Attracted Person (MAP) is a designated sexual orientation that should be recognised amongst other statuses, including with its own LGBTQIA+ flag. Some have also asserted the right to have a 'trans-age' which is different to their biological age, whilst others have claimed to identify as animals or as belonging to a fetish genre. This means that the teaching of infinite spectrums of sexuality under the term '+' offers an entry point for perverse or even illegal sexual practice to be normalised and therefore presented to children in RSE.

Whilst it is not common to declare such positions openly (nor would all 'sex positive' RSE advocates agree with them), a Trustee of the influential UK trans charity Mermaids¹¹² recently stepped down after having been found to attend a conference for MAP's in the US, and it is obvious that social media is permitting a substantial expression of interest in this and other extreme sexual acts.

Further to this dismantling of previously observed social boundaries in both sexual practice and discourse about that practice, some advocates of 'sex positivity' also argue that virginity is an unhelpful social construct too. For example, erotic author and co-founder of the US Scarleteen sex advice website, Hanne Blank, writes,

"By any material reckoning, virginity does not exist".¹¹³

The SoSE forwarded her concept in the

following lesson plan hosted on their website, titled The Virginity Myth, in which they also ask teenagers:

"Prompt questions:

- 1. How would you define sex?*
- 2. What would a heteronormative definition of sex be?*
- 3. What do people mean when they say 'she lost her virginity'? Is anything lost in any sexual activity?*
- 4. Why is Lily so intent on having sexual intercourse with a penis?*
- 5. What is vaginismus?*

Activity 2

- 4. Watch this Ted Talk*

The talk ends with this: 'If you really want to know if a woman is a virgin or not, ask her. But how she answers that question is her choice'. This shows us that the idea of virginity is made up by society. It is not fixed in any biological facts. How someone thinks about virginity (if they do at all) is up to them. They define what is sex for them and whether using a term like 'virgin' is useful in their lives.

The writer and activist Dr. Hanne Blank asserts, 'virginity does not exist'.

Jot down some answers to the following questions:

Does the idea of virginity mean anything useful to you?

What type of sexual touching could some people find pleasurable? Doodle your ideas into a poster like this one."

Similarly, Split Banana advise teenagers

of 16+ that:

"It's about time we cancelled virginity – let's prioritise pleasure instead"

"You don't lose your virginity, there's nothing to lose! Only experience and information to gain."¹¹⁴

There seems to be no expression of caution that promoting such an idea to school pupils, without qualification, could be exploited to persuade young people that becoming sexually active is of no significance, or should occur sooner rather than later. There is also no consideration given to the fact that some families will find this advice ethically contentious.

Another facet of 'sex positivity' includes the promotion or normalisation of multiple partner sex and/or relationships, such as polyamory. For example, here co-founder of Split Banana presents¹¹⁵ her personal interest in this lifestyle on the company's blog.

"The other milestone this week is that I had a conversation with my Mum where I told her about my new journey into non-monogamy. Instead of shame or embarrassment there was only sweet curiosity, support and an excitement to go watch the new Netflix series of 'How to Build a Sex Room'. It is this kind of experience that reminds me that it is possible to move away from conversations around sexuality which are based on fear and shame, and it is instead possible to hold a space filled with warmth, respect and lightness."

On the same theme, the teen RSE site Fumble¹¹⁶ introduces a BBC film called Diomysus, which features "people from the British polyamory community" and asks "how conscious is your bias?". This

is listed under a section of the Fumble website titled "Sexuality, gender identity, and all things LGBTQ+".

One of the contributors to SoSE, Almaz Ohene, is a writer who also produces pay-to-read erotic stories and sex advice for young women, including a text¹¹⁷ about "choosing ethical non-monogamy...", which begins:

"With expert information from Abby Gilfillian, Integrative Therapist and Psychosexual Counsellor, British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy

Joon and Kayleigh had been seeing each other regularly for a while. But somewhere along the way, communication and trust broke down and they found themselves with a pesky STI. They both got treatment (a dose of the antibiotic azithromycin, administered by the pharmacist) and were fine, but decided it was time to re-think the terms of their relationship, so that they could both stay healthy.

Enter, Abby Gilfillian, an Integrative Therapist and Psychosexual Counsellor certified by the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy.

"The term 'polyamory' was coined in 1990 by Neopagan leader Morning Glory Zell-Ravenheart, in her essay 'A Bouquet of Lovers'..."

Other stories¹¹⁸ by Ohene include 'Red Hot', 'Dirty Den' and 'The White Isle' (which is fronted by an illustration of a young black woman kneeling, facing the spread legs of a young white woman).

Other contributors to SoSE also have private practices as sex advisors, pornography promoters or vendors

of sex toys – and have sometimes connected this with their teaching work. For example, Dr. Emma Chan, the charity's Reproductive and Sexual Health Lead prepares a blog called SquishSquashSquelch, which was advertised with a live link on the SoSE's educational website¹¹⁹. There, she includes a video of herself singing a song called "Let's ALL Masturbate"¹²⁰, accompanied by ukulele, and states that "people with vulvas do masturbate – for example the vagina, clitoris or anus can be stimulated with fingers or a sex toy". This is accompanied by a link to an article¹²¹ that advises readers how to do so, with links to purchase 18+ erotica, 'kink literature', 'lube' and sex toys.

Meanwhile, a Workshop Facilitator for SoSE, Nadia Deen, who visits schools to teach RSE to pupils from 11+, also advertised her own sex advice website¹²² with live links on the SoSE's site (although the links have since been removed following parental complaints). From her own company she promotes a 'XXX' pornography channel called Royal Fetish Films, produced by 'King Noir'. In an article titled *Erotica and Pornography*¹²³ she quotes King Noir (beneath an animated gif of Barbie and Ken dolls engaged in felatio):

"“Erotica, honestly... the word itself makes me tired and bored” he says. “Usually the people who come and say that ‘This is erotica’, it's just some wordy-ass shit to cover up that they wanna fuck.”"

Whilst in the 'About' section of the website, Deen explains that she is a Workshop Facilitator for SoSE and is also,

"currently working on a line of sex toys, set to revolutionise your toy drawer forever."¹²⁴

Titles of other articles on the website include:

"What What In Da Butt, Anal Fun & Frolics"

*"F**cking Like Rabbits"*

"Juicing Your Way to a G-Spot Orgasm"

"Hands-up: Who Always has a Sex Toy With Them?"

An invitation to her mailing list reads, *"Let Us Cum in Your Inbox"*

This approach, of seamlessly merging teaching practice with a private, commercial interest in the adult sex industry, seems to have been readily accepted by some schools and even within the education authorities, as well as amongst bodies which represent the RSE sector.

To illustrate this, the PSHE Lead, Safeguarding Lead and Head Teacher of a secondary school that SoSE visited, were all made aware of the material referred to above and the direct links on the SoSE's website to this adult material. The Head Teacher backed the charity explaining they were associated with the DfE and meet the requirements of the RSE curriculum:

"I wanted to update you on the external company that we used this term. This company is used by 300 schools across the UK. Our Trust have used this company previously. I will not name all the other schools that use this external provider for obvious reasons but as the Principal, I recognise the need for us to invest in reliable external providers to deliver Sex and Relationships Education. The sheer numbers of schools using this provider indicates that there is a shared consensus

on the need to teach the RSE curriculum and a mutual approach taken by many of us in the profession.

The School of Sexual Education Website which contains materials which are designed for a range of different ages both within schools and beyond. The fact that their website includes adult materials does not make it inappropriate or unlawful. The expectation for our College in delivering the RSE curriculum is that where we have adopted or used an external organisation to enhance and support our teaching, we dictate and govern what we use.

The School of Sexuality have also worked with the DfE on their RSE training modules for schools and so they are very familiar with the statutory requirements, including that secondary RSE must be LGBTQ+ inclusive and this should be through an integrated approach. It is in tune with what we value."

Likewise, the Safeguarding Lead issued the following assessment about the links,

"In terms of safeguarding, I am not concerned."

Moreover, several representatives of the Education and Skills Funding Agency and the Regional Schools' Commissioner for London and the Southeast, Claire Burton, were also made aware of the images, direct links and the potential conflicts of interest, during the course of a wider school complaint case, but although receipt of the material was acknowledged, the case was closed with the matter unaddressed.

The CEO of the Multi Academy Trust in this case is also an Ofsted Inspector and although she did express concern about the apparent ease with which the

SoSE staffs' private commercial interests could be accessed from their educational website, she still refused to inform parents which member of SoSE staff had taught their child.

Lastly, the CEO of the Sex Education Forum (of which SoSE are an approved Partner) was informed about the content of these links and its proximity to children, including that it potentially compromised the charitable objectives of SoSE.

The CEO of the Sex Education Forum replied to this inquiry, reassuring that the SoSE only meant to advertise their adult sex industry interests and products to teachers and that "School of Sexuality Education adhere to SEF's principles":

"Thank you for sharing your concerns with me about one of our Partners, and for the fuller details provided in your email. As a result of your communication, we have been in touch with our Partner, the School of Sexuality Education. Our understanding was that their website was not intended for children and young people's use, but for educators / adults. They confirmed this is the case but they have, however, now made some adjustments to their website.

We are reassured that School of Sexuality Education adhere to SEF's principles and they will remain a Partner of the Sex Education Forum.

It is important that parental views about RSE are heard and taken into consideration by schools, and it would be appropriate for further discussion about the details of the session provided to be between yourself and the school. Schools are responsible for developing their own RSE policy and curriculum and will know about the context in which the session was provided."

Whilst it cannot be assumed that all teachers, civil servants and RSE providers would make the same decisions, the diversity and seniority of the positions involved, plus the reasoning of these respondents – who all accepted sexually explicit, adult materials in proximity to children to some degree, or targeted at teachers – indicates there is a very significant safeguarding blind-spot in the education sector.

Further understanding of the SoSE's 'sex positive' practice can be gained by learning that their work is informed and supported by a consortium of leading UK-based academics in the field of Gender and Media Studies called, Digital Sexual Cultures Feminist Research Engagement Consortium (DSCFREC), who have produced Government funded research and free online RSE lesson plans with a specific ambition to prevent online harms and reform RSE. On their Leicester University webpage they explain they work "closely with stakeholders, third-sector organizations, government and policy makers".

It was members of this consortium who authored the Play-Doh Vulvas and Felt Tip Dick Pics research paper, and they also prepared a series of lesson plans called 'Teachable Moments'¹²⁵ based upon an 18+ Netflix series called 'Sex Education', which was hosted on the SoSE website. The DSCFREC explain that they draw from this Netflix television show in order to apply a "sex positive" "queer pedagogy" in UK schools.

In her essay Better worlds: Queer Pedagogy and Utopia in Sex Education and Schitt's Creek, which discusses this approach, leading consortium member Dr. Tanya Horeck of Anglia Ruskin University explains:

"In its two seasons to date, Sex Education displays an array of LGBTQ+ experiences: it explores gay sexuality, lesbian sexuality, bisexuality, asexuality and pansexuality. Within this smorgasbord of sexualities, it looks at a panoply of sex acts and related practices including but not limited to, penis-vagina sex, fingering, anal sex, strap-on dildo sex, masturbation, and BDSM."

She proposes that this 18+ show's "pedagogy" can be helpful to children's mandatory RSE in the UK because it can go "considerably further than the RSE curriculum":

"It is instructive to consider how Sex Education's pedagogy relates to new ways of thinking about Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) for young people. For example, the UK, from where I am writing, has recently had an overhaul of sex education, and a new mandatory RSE was due to be introduced in schools in September 2020 (its official launch postponed by Covid-19). This revamped RSE is designed to take into account LGBTQ+ identities and relationships, acknowledge the digital context and lack of distinction between "online" and "offline" for young people, and stress "the importance of recognising and having a zero-tolerance policy towards sexism and sexual violence" ("Sexplain's Response" 2019). However, Sex Education is able to go considerably further than the RSE curriculum—which even in its new guise still tends to depict sex through the frame of monogamous relationships/ marriage and it deemphasizes notions of pleasure (ibid.). Often, the time spent by youth now viewing screens comes under attack, especially in terms of worries over young people's isolation (family members in different rooms watching different programmes on different screens and

*devices) and access to damaging material (porn etc.).[4] In this moment, queer TV can have a role in public pedagogy, using a "sex positive"[5] approach to sex education and emphasizing the pleasure, diversity and fluidity of consensual sexual experience."*¹²⁶

Evidently, the reason the series can go considerably further is because it is produced for adults, with sexually explicit scenes and dialogue, and yet the lessons based upon this series were freely accessible to all ages online, with suggested applications of 14+ or 16+. Some of the lessons specifically tasked teenagers to watch the adult show.

These resources, which the DSCFREC describe as "Digital Defense & Activism Lessons"¹²⁷, were one of the outputs of a body of research that received in excess of £300,000 from the Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS), via UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) and the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC).

The original project page explained the significance of this work, including that it was produced in conjunction with key partners with the intention of providing "comprehensive guidance for secondary schools on how to tackle the problem of online sexual harassment".

The partners were the School of Sexuality Education, the Association of School and College Leaders, the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Command (CEOP) and the Revenge Porn Helpline.

The resulting 'Teachable Moments' lessons were introduced as free resources, on the SoSE website, under the title of "Resources We Love", accompanied by an illustration of two

large, multicoloured drawings of erect penises. With a suggested age rating of 16+, they nevertheless presented the imagery of the 18+ Netflix programme.

The lessons gave pupils tasks such as:

"Activity 1:

From the conversation that Florence had with Otis and her friends, can you identify five things not to say to someone who is asexual? You could look up videos of asexual (Ace) YouTubers for further advice!

Why not try turning all of your points so far into a quickfire asexuality explainer video for Tiktok?"

"Activity 3

Talking about sex and what you want sexually has the potential to be awkward because we don't get much practice doing it. The more we practice something, the easier it gets.

With that in mind, write down:

1) a list of phrases that could be related to sex

E.g., I like it when you X / Would you like to try X?

2) a list of words that could relate to sex

E.g., stroke, wet, hard

Once you have at least 10 on each list, try reading them out loud looking in the mirror (or on a video call with a friend) at least 3 times."

On their webpage the DSCFREC suggested,

"teachable moments' addresses key

learning points from the new RSE guidance",

and that,

"This new initiative showcases the importance of a sex positive, non-judgemental and feminist pedagogical approach to sex and sexual relationships."

However, despite the DSCFREC being funded to seek solutions to online harms and claiming to meet the DfE's official RSE guidance, it seems that its academics could have sent children into harm's way instead, by instructing them to engage in sexual dialogue with each other on social media. This, of course, could be recorded and broadcast, putting the children at considerable, long-term risk of being exposed online speaking about sex acts.

Similarly, children were advised to prepare explainer videos about 'asexuality', which they could broadcast on Tiktok, and suggested pupils look up 'Ace' ('asexual') bloggers on YouTube. This area of the internet is known to have a risk of concealed predators posing as younger people, because 'asexuality' is a label that appeals to many children who are not ready to describe themselves as having a sexual orientation or identity yet. It is therefore alarming that this was described as the solution to online harm, or a valid form of RSE.

Notably, these lesson plans have now been removed from the SoSE's website. Likewise, the information page about this project on the University of Leicester's website has also been updated to remove reference to both 'Teachable Moments' and some of the DSCFREC academics. And reference to the involvement of the official project partners – including the Association of School and College

Leaders (ASCL), the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Command (CEOP) (part of the National Crime Agency) and The Revenge Porn Helpline – has been removed or diminished.

Nevertheless, it is startling that agencies specifically concerned with child online safety were involved with such inappropriate outputs and research methods, and it is troubling that their involvement has now been downplayed, when they were previously described as “working in close consultation” with DSCFREC. The ASCL even published a document of advice to schools as an outcome of the project, so the current lack of declaration seems unsuitable for either a child safeguarding project or public expenditure, and it should concern the DfE that these key bodies – as well as the funders at UKRI AHRC – did not see the inherent safeguarding risk involved in this work before it went into practice.

Meanwhile, the SoSE also produced teacher training sessions in conjunction with the CEO of the Sex Education Forum. A report of the training sessions explains that they included “an interactive session on how to challenge heteronormativity in schools”, “applied queer theory” and “interrogated the idea of ‘age-appropriateness’ in RSE”.

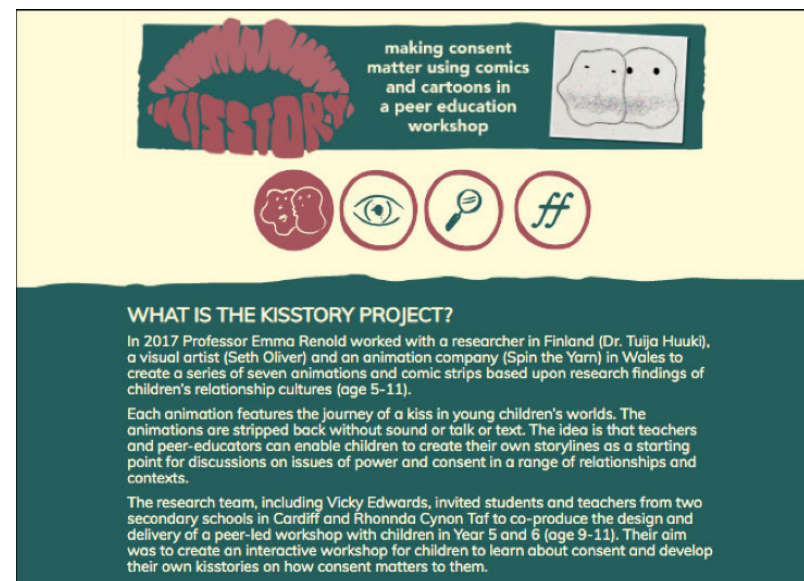
Professor Emma Renold, of Cardiff University, also collaborated with the SoSE teacher training. Words from her publication, *Girls, Boys and Junior Sexualities: Exploring Children’s Gender and Sexual Relations in the Primary School* perhaps best exemplify the ambitions of ‘sex positivity’ and associated ‘queer pedagogy’, especially from her chapter titled ‘Queering childhood, school sexualities’:

“One of the projects of this book is to encourage what could be described as a ‘queering’ of childhood. That is, paying attention to the multiple and contradictory ways in which sexuality is constitutive of both the subject ‘child’ and the social and cultural institution of ‘childhood’. ‘Queering childhood’ involves not just the queering of sex/gender and sexual binary oppositions such as male(masculinity)/female(femininity) and heterosexual/homosexual, but also the generational binaries ‘adult/child’ and ‘sexual/asexual’. More specifically then, queering childhood pushes us to identify and think Otherwise about (and thus trouble) the (hetero)gendered and (hetero)sexualised nature of identity categories such as ‘girl’, ‘boy’ and ‘child’ and foregrounds the heteronormativity of children’s childhoods more widely.”¹²⁸

Professor Emma Renold also produced a substantial resource for the Welsh Government in conjunction with UNESCO, called ‘AGENDA’¹²⁹. This work is causing significant concern amongst Welsh parents and was a contributing factor to a Judicial Review¹³⁰ that sought to establish parents’ right to withdraw from RSE, since in Wales all parts of RSE have recently become compulsory.



AGENDA is controversial given the resource introduces children to partisan political ideas, activism, Gender Theory and a project called ‘Kisstory’, aimed at children aged five to eleven.



Pages from AGENDA online RSE resource, produced in conjunction with the Welsh Government and UNESCO

In summary, 'sex positive' RSE seems to be characterised by the intention to deconstruct or transgress boundaries, some of which it is far from clear can safely be done without. And herein we see a dangerous blurring of lines between educating children to become wise to what is thought to be an inevitable early sexualisation in the internet age and educating them towards early sexualisation for ideological reasons, which in turn compromises safeguarding.

Likewise, the typically participatory and interactive aspects of 'sex positive' RSE also blur the lines between imparting suitable knowledge to children, and engaging them in actively sexualising dialogue, on matters that should be beyond their experience or ability to project. This creates circumstances that are inherently indistinguishable from sexual harassment, therefore potentially putting children at risk from abuse masquerading as teaching – whilst also putting well-meaning teachers who are just following instructions, at risk of accusations of abuse.

And yet, 'sex positivity' (with varying interpretations) is now a dominant vogue amongst some of the most influential RSE providers and is a position that is ratified by the leading voice for the RSE sector, the SEF, which (as previously detailed), refers to it in its most recent guidance document Relationships and Sex Education: The Evidence.

Intersectional Feminism and Toxic Masculinity

Many of the examples above indicate that 'intersectional feminist' activism plays a significant part in the creation of radical, 'sex positive' RSE. From opposing 'rape culture' to creating 'safe spaces', and prioritising female pleasure and desire, there is a presumption that feminist RSE is beyond political contention and always for the greater good, even though some of the arguments made to support these concepts are contentious.

The potential to promote partisan political ideas within this topic has in part been granted by clauses in the 2019 RSE guidance, which instruct schools to take "positive action" against "gender stereotypes". It has been further facilitated by unclear advice in the DfE's Impartiality Guidance, which implies that celebrating the history of feminism is automatically beyond political argument, by comparison to new feminist campaigns, which the guidance acknowledges might be political.

Scenario K

As part of celebrations marking the anniversary of women's suffrage in the UK, a secondary school asks a women's group to host a session with pupils to teach them about the history of the British feminist movement.

This group also has a live petition on their website calling for companies to implement a mandatory gender balance quota for their executive boards. The school should be clear that it would not be acceptable for the group to have pupils sign this petition during the session.

Excerpt from Political Impartiality in Schools by DfE¹³¹

These instructions, which fail to establish clear principles about avoiding bias, are sometimes used as a licence to load the history of feminism with various contestable ideas about social justice, including Gender Theory terminology, and these notions are typically promoted as fact or a moral certainty.

For example, a lesson plan titled What is Feminism? by Cre8tive Resources¹³² inaccurately suggests feminism began in 1928 and claims "today, feminism is more important than ever", whilst simultaneously introducing pupils to the terms 'cis gender', 'all genders' and 'Feminist ally'. It goes on to suggest that "Feminism is about all genders having equal rights and opportunities". It then advocates attending peaceful protests for feminism and writing letter to MP's without discussing why you might undertake this activism, nor ensuring the lesson remains politically impartial.

The Welsh Government sponsored resource AGENDA includes pages titled "Fuelling Feminist Fires"¹³³, which generally promote political activism and direct pupils to various websites with a strong political leaning, including UK Feminista and Feminist Teacher.

There are also signs of anti-male or anti-masculine bias in some of these materials, which advance the concept that 'toxic masculinity' should be perceived as a group failing of all men, rather than of individual behaviour, whilst also promoting contentious judgements about 'patriarchy' and 'privilege'.

These materials do not seem to provide a suitably politically impartial offering and might be particularly unhelpful for the wellbeing of boys – including by causing teachers to overlook that boys can be

treated unfairly too. With this in mind, it is worth considering that the RSE sector seems to be staffed by considerably more women than men and that the teaching profession in England is approximately 75% female.¹³⁴

A lesson by TES titled Positive and Toxic Masculinity: *What Does it Mean to be a Good Man?*¹³⁵ (which refers to Queer Theorist, Judith Butler), includes various controversial ideas asserted as fact, such as:

"Masculinity is a social construct, meaning that it isn't derived directly from nature."

"For a start, masculinity is a social construct, meaning that there is no firm biological or empirical basis for the idea."

"For example, it is mostly women who give birth..."

It also presents the following, perplexing proposition:

"Evan is an 18 year old man. He has a girlfriend, plays rugby, practices MMA and loves the cartoon 'My Little Pony'. He's had a tattoo of Rainbow Dash on his ankle. He also loves wearing eyeliner and nail varnish."

Challenge: How blokey would you say Evan is? What do we mean when we talk about 'masculinity'?

More Challenging: How masculine is Evan? Why is this a hard question to answer? How well does Evan fit your idea of a typical male?

Mega challenge: Explain why the term 'masculinity' is problematic. Explain what we might mean when we talk about 'toxic masculinity'."

Meanwhile the RSE organisation Beyond Equality issued a statement “on the need for men to end the violence against women. Boys won’t be boys, they’ll be what we teach them to be”¹³⁶, before making the case that it is not reasonable to suggest that it is “not all men” for whom this is relevant, because “87% of violent crimes are committed by men, 97% of women have been harassed in the street, yet the claim that 100% of the men we know and have around us would never ‘do such a thing’ means that these numbers do not add up.”

They therefore suggest this means, “The dichotomy of “good” and “bad” men is what prevents so many men from being able or willing to reflect on their own behaviour. Therefore, next to holding others to account for what they have done there has to be self interrogation from all men.” Whilst this is an opinion some people might hold, the statement does not present a balance of opposing opinion.

Lastly Cre8tive Resources produces a lesson plan on Toxic Masculinity which presents various contentious statements as fact, such as the idea that “Locker room ‘banter’” or being “hypercompetitive” and “a winner!” are factors that constitute Toxic Masculinity, before going on to ask, does Donald Trump “exhibit behaviours of toxic masculinity?”

Notably, the lesson plan is advertised with the phrases “Be Ofsted and DfE PSHE 2020 ready” and “mapped against latest DfE Guidance”¹³⁷, implying (as many providers do) that their materials are endorsed by the Government and the independent regulator.

Masturbation

There is nothing in the DfE’s 2019 RSE guidance document that explicitly tells schools they ought to teach children about masturbation, nor how and when. However various RSE providers declare they teach about this in schools specifically because they understand it to be a statutory requirement.

For example, Coram Education explain they introduce this subject from Year 4 (age nine) saying,

“At SCARF we believe that masturbation would come under the statutory requirements to teach Changing Adolescent Body under Health Education, where children should know:

Key facts about puberty and the changing adolescent body, particularly from age 9 through to age 11, including physical and emotional changes.”¹³⁸

Meanwhile, an example task from an independent secondary school, designed for Year 8 (ages twelve to thirteen), demonstrates that children are not only informed about masturbation but sometimes asked to engage in discussions about it in a mixed group setting, which arguably compromises pupils’ privacy and dignity with sexualising and exposing dialogue. The lesson instructs:

“Masturbation Discussion:

Everyone will get a discussion card.

We’re going to take it in turns to add it to the board on the Agree/Disagree continuum and discuss it.”

This activity was recommended by the Great Relationships and Sex Education

book, in a chapter called “Key messages about masturbation to explore in RSE”¹³⁹, which lists various resources that schools can use for this subject, including a document called Masturbation – A Hands On Guide by the Swedish organisation RFSU, which includes the following passage amongst very extensive advice on how to masturbate:

“Some people enjoy greasing themselves up with lubricant, oil, skin cream, or anything smooth, silky or sticky. You can taste and sniff your vaginal secretions, pre-ejaculate or sperm. Again, your home can be a source of inspiration. Take the contents of the fridge, for instance. Whipped cream, jam and yoghurt can enhance the pleasure of masturbation. Carrots and cucumber of various sizes can be used as dildos or anal plugs. Experiment with hot and cold sensations by using warm vanilla sauce and ice cream, by dripping warm candle wax onto your skin, or by rubbing yourself with an ice cube.”

The resource concludes:

“RFSU has produced a range of sex toys called Trust in lust. Along with RFSU lubricants, these are available online at rsfu.com.”¹⁴⁰

Meanwhile, BISH provides training for RSE teachers and describes that it is “vital that we talk about masturbation in RSE”¹⁴¹. The post goes on to explain the origin of ‘Masturbation Month’, whilst the BISH website includes over fifteen pages of advice on the topic.

Some RSE providers advocate teaching masturbation from a very young age. Notably, SoSE provided the educational consultancy for the cancelled Family Sex Show, which included a song sung in the style of a baroque opera. It begins

with a soprano voice repeating “the clitoris” five times followed by an alto voice singing “it’s wet and warm, wet and warm, so wet and warm” before the soprano repeatedly sings “why can’t I find it?” In a second verse a bass voice then adds “I have a penis in my pants! I sometimes have a fiddle with my penis and my balls.” The song concludes with all three voices singing “Touch it, touch it, oh, I want to touch it... Oh, go on then and touch it” etc. The theatre production was advertised as being for 5+ and had an educational component.¹⁴²

This raises many questions; namely whether it is or isn’t the job of schools and RSE providers to address this topic – and if it is, what information should schools provide and when? Crucially, at what point does the provision of information become intrusive, sexualising or indoctrinating?

If children are taught to expect open dialogue with adults on this and other ‘sex positive’ topics, how can they be expected to identify when adults are addressing them about this subject for the wrong reasons? Similarly, safeguarding practice has previously relied upon observing when children express overtly sexualised dialogue as a potential sign of abuse, but this normalisation of such dialogue removes this early warning. Likewise, no thought seems to have been given to how upsetting it might be for a child who has suffered abuse to be confronted with these topics.

It is also worth considering whether the authority of an adult teacher should ever be applied to instructing children to declare what they know about masturbation or sex acts, since children might not think they are in a position

to decline their teachers' classroom instructions. Likewise, thought should be given to the argument that to discuss the matter is exposing in a way that compromises a child's dignity and lays them open to ridicule or bullying by other children when the teacher is not present to mediate.

There is inherent safeguarding risk in employing taboo-breaking speech about masturbation, yet there seems to be no meaningful appreciation in the RSE sector of the balance between too little and too much information or participation, and the 2019 RSE guidance document provides almost no instruction on this matter, nor safe parameters, leaving the subject open to potentially extreme, even abusive interpretation.

Drag Queen Story Time

The presentation of readings by Drag Queens in schools and libraries is a phenomenon that began in the US and has been introduced to the UK. The reasoning for this practice is commonly described as a way in which to help children understand and accept diversity, as well as to minimise anti-HBT bullying, by normalising transgender or queer 'gender expression'. For example Pop'n'Ollie present a reading¹⁴³ of Jamie – A Transgender Cinderella Story by Cheddar Gorgeous on the Pop'n'Ollie Instagram site.

However, increasingly, it is being understood that elements of adult sexual display, fetish, arousal or social transgression are typically involved in this area of adult entertainment and clearly this raises concern that it should have no place in schools, nor for children.

Whilst this report does not present a view on this matter, nor attempt to

prepare an evidence-based conclusion about these concerns, it merely highlights that the practice is occurring without regulation and without a settled degree of social acceptance, which has on one occasion caused social conflict at a library that required the attendance of police¹⁴⁴. And on another occasion a Drag Queen called Flow Job included images¹⁴⁵ of his visit to read in a school on his Instagram account, thereby placing images of children alongside highly sexualised photographs of himself posing in underwear, leading to a public apology by the local Council.

Meanwhile Educate & Celebrate chose to remove their patron, trans performer Jordan Gray, after he stripped naked to play a piano with his penis in a performance at the London Palladium. The organisation declared he had never visited schools with them, which has been contested.

As with all contentious LGBT-associated activity in schools, the vague clauses in the RSE Guidance that instruct RSE to be LGBT inclusive, integrated across the curriculum and arranged according to the school's choice, means such activities can be engaged in whilst citing the DfE RSE guidance as justification. This makes it difficult for parents to assert successful complaints on the matter, or even for schools to decline the advice of RSE consultants that recommend such interventions.

Intersectionality, Decolonisation and Critical Race Theory

Intersectionality refers to a theory created by US lawyer and activist Kimberlé Crenshaw, and it is part of Critical Race Theory. This is a highly politicised theory about power, privilege,

hierarchy and oppression that is often discussed in other parts of the curriculum but also in RSE, because it refers to the proposed combination of multiple disadvantages said to be caused by the coincidence of minority sexuality, gender identity, race and other factors. The definition from a secondary academy school outlines this idea:

"Structural Intersectionality refers to how the social systems in which we live or the social categories to which we belong intersect, to oppress us or at times influence our experiences in life."

This politically contentious theory has been referred to in the Sex Education Forum's most recently published document:

"It is important to note that many students will experience multiple forms of discrimination described above at once - the concept of 'intersectionality' (Crenshaw, 1989). The inequalities described above do of course require system change beyond improved RSE. However, the evidence does reinforce the importance of training for RSE educators, for example in anti-racism, unconscious bias, understanding gender and sexuality, personalised learning and trauma informed practice, to ensure teaching is as inclusive as possible."

However, the SEF expresses these opinions partly in reference to the following research, which pertains to the USA and not the UK, saying,

"Research has documented how young people of colour face racist assumptions in RSE, for example educators implying that Latina girls have a tendency to be sexually promiscuous [sic] (Garcia, 2009), owing to 'a long racist history of seeing girls of colour, particularly African American girls,

*but also Latina girls, as [...] hypersexual' (Lamb et al., 2017)."*¹⁴⁶

There is substantial academic material relating to 'intersectionality' and Critical Race Theory originating in the US, which is employed in conjunction with Queer Theory, and it is sometimes causing RSE in the UK to be shaped by ethnicity, with specific mapping onto US race relations. British RSE providers have also directed teachers to US sources, such as the website 'Afrosexology', which is described as, "a movement redefining kinkiness for Black people"¹⁴⁷ and refers to sex education in terms of 'Black Liberation'.

Meanwhile, the UK not-for-profit, community interest company, called Decolonise Contraception¹⁴⁸ also calls for the "decolonisation of sex education" and has been funded by Public Health England to develop The Sex Agenda Project¹⁴⁹. The group prepare conference events that are sometimes exclusive according to ethnicity, whilst its Education Lead, Gayathiri Kamalakanthan (who also works with SoSE), supports a call to "disrupt oppressive land dynamics relating to BPOC communities in Britain within a Reparative Justice framework"¹⁵⁰.

Summary

The examples of contentious teaching given above are not by any means exhaustive and highlight only a small proportion of the volume of material readily available and specifically prepared for RSE in schools. Indeed, many of the resources on offer are inaccessible to both parents and researchers because they are behind a paywall, and therefore cannot be scrutinised.

With the exception of a brief reference to “gender identity”, along with an instruction that schools should “teach their pupils about LGBT” and oppose “gender stereotypes”, none of the theories or practices detailed above are explicitly referred to in the DfE’s 2019 RSE guidance document and yet they are being delivered in schools in great detail, often by unregulated third parties, some of which have commercial or political interests beyond their charitable or educational objectives.

Although it is evident that some people do believe the theories highlighted above are a suitable description of human beings and society, or constitute good advice about how to conduct relationships, others do not. And yet these ideas are being repeatedly presented to children as fact, as well as being asserted to be morally correct, or necessary for bringing about ‘equality’ or ‘equity’.

It seems the only meaningful parameter or limitation in the guidance document is that the teaching should be “age appropriate”, but this, of course, is a highly subjective concept that cannot be easily tested or enforced by parents, teachers or governors through formal complaints, and which some RSE academics have been undermining.

In effect, the DfE has not so much created a guidance document of what to teach, but a permission slip for teaching almost anything that is loosely associated with gender, sexuality or sexual practice – often with an assumption of the earlier, the better. This means that at present, RSE provision in the UK does not seem to be reliably liberal, impartial or even safe.

Lastly, whilst it is important to record the controversial material that is available in

abundance, it should also be noted what is conspicuously omitted from most of the RSE market, specifically there is an almost complete absence of resources that discuss love, romance, maintaining long term relationships, motherhood, fatherhood, the emotional aspects of having a baby and raising a child and the fact that this is a most profound and fundamental act that sustains humanity.

THE PREVALENCE OF CONTENTIOUS TEACHING

It is beyond the scope of this report to establish precisely what proportion of British children have been trained to believe in Gender Theory or to be ‘sex positive’, but it can address the amount of work undertaken by some of the providers and trade bodies that promote these theories as fact, according to their own declarations.

The Sex Education Forum (the “voice” for RSE) lists on its website approximately forty-seven Partners¹⁵¹ that specifically advertise that they give RSE services for schools and colleges. Of this number, twenty-seven openly advocate a commitment to Gender Theory and transgender ideology on their websites. The remaining twenty do not publicly declare their position, since their materials are behind a paywall, however, none openly express either a ‘gender-critical’ view, a religious view or that they teach various views.

Meanwhile the DfE-approved ratifying body for RSE, the PSHE Association, which also promotes Gender Theory as fact, has a membership of over fifty thousand PSHE professionals¹⁵². Together with the SEF, this represents a very considerable bias at the heart of the RSE sector.

The Key, the “leading provider” of advice about regulatory compliance, for schools and trusts, advocates affirmation of trans identity, including name and pronoun changes without parental knowledge, to its thirteen thousand¹⁵³ members.

Notably, some Local Education Authorities stipulate that all schools in their County or Borough should teach Gender Theory as fact, for example the Brighton and Hove Trans Inclusion Toolkit, prepared by Allsorts. Whilst others have a relationship with a specific provider such as Diversity Mel¹⁵⁴, who has visited over fifty schools and taught six thousand pupils in Dorset. This creates a lack of diversity of opinion in certain areas of the country and some research suggests there is correlation between the location of provision in schools and the prevalence of gender dysphoria. This surely requires further investigation.

Educate & Celebrate report in their book that they gained DfE and GEO funding in 2015 to “create 60 further Best Practice Award schools in England”. By 2017 they had “120 Best Practice Award schools, with another 50 schools in the UK and Channel Islands beginning their journey to LGBT+ inclusion”¹⁵⁵. They are still training schools today and they claim to have guided thousands of educational institutions and businesses to successfully embed ‘gender identity’ into their organisations. This includes seventy schools in County Durham, and they report having received funding to reach Boroughs across London¹⁵⁶ and Birmingham.

Well-established RSE provider, Big Talk Education¹⁵⁷, explains that they visit one hundred and sixty schools per year across England, whilst the influential

School of Sexuality Education explained on their website that they have visited over three hundred schools and reached in excess of sixty-seven thousand young people (although this information has recently been removed from their website).

Mermaids explain that from 2017-19 the DfE funded¹⁵⁸ the charity to train forty schools nationwide as part of a partnership with multiple organisations, through the LGBT Consortium. They also report training fifty-nine schools in 2021-22.

And Just Like Us, which has also been promoted by the DfE, as well as received sponsorship from corporations such as Meta, Unilever, J. P. Morgan and Kentucky Fried Chicken, reports¹⁵⁹ their School Diversity Week resources platform is “now in use by more than 5,000 schools across the UK”. They also claim that there are “one in two secondary schools across the UK now taking part in at least one of Just Like Us’ programmes”.

Olly Pike, who introduces Gender Theory to primary schools, has sold over twenty-five thousand¹⁶⁰ books and has twenty thousand subscribers to his cartoon YouTube channel, which he advertises when he visits schools.

Gendered Intelligence, one of the longest standing and influential trans supporting charities, provide staff training, consultancy, workshops and assemblies, and explain they “work with around 500 young trans people in the course of a year”¹⁶¹. Their website states that they have undertaken “over 1,300 training sessions, delivered to over 25,000 people”¹⁶² and that “around 30% of our training takes place in educational settings”¹⁶³.

Meanwhile, Jigsaw PSHE, which also teaches Gender Theory as fact, has huge international reach, with over three million children using their resources¹⁶⁴. Whilst the education provider Twinkl also provides extensive LGBT resources that teach Gender Theory as fact and has a similarly large market with over four million¹⁶⁵ customers worldwide, as they explain in their Introduction to Partnership Guide.

The Proud Trust, which runs the influential Rainbow Flag Award and provides training, resources and workshops, says it is “actively working with over 500 schools”¹⁶⁶, whilst Split Banana notes that over eight thousand¹⁶⁷ young people have received RSHE from their company and they have trained over six hundred and fifty educators.

UNICEF reports that nearly five thousand¹⁶⁸ schools across the UK are currently involved with their Rights Respecting School Award scheme (RRSA), which has been running since 2006, in collaboration with Stonewall Champions Scheme, reaching over one million, six hundred thousand children. The RRSA scheme adheres to UNESCO’s commitment to teaching Gender Theory as fact.

There are also dozens, possibly hundreds more unregulated RSE providers and teacher trainers, which promote various iterations of Gender Theory, ‘sex positivity’ and trans inclusion policies as fact, to schools across the country. A proper audit of what they teach and the collective effect they have had on a generation of children, therefore seems necessary.

DISCUSSION: QUESTIONS OF IMPARTIALITY

Hopefully, it is politically uncontroversial to suggest that Britain is settled upon the ideals of liberty, tolerance and equally fair treatment for all before the law, which requires special care to ensure this is the case for people in the minority or who are disadvantaged in some way. However, less politically settled is the matter of how we advise our children to conduct their social, romantic, sexual and family lives, and who should have the job of providing that advice.

Of course, how we describe and conceive of sex, sexuality, gender roles or stereotypes – as well as how we should conduct intimate relationships, navigate sexual consent and health, form family structures, procreate and raise children – are amongst the most profoundly held opinions, feelings and beliefs.

And how we express or practise these factors of life, are considered fundamental aspects of our liberty and yet we often disagree on the way one should define or go about these things – not least because of the harms we might cause each other as we do so, and because the matters involved are complex. Of course, some aspects of these interactions are so crucial to society and so affecting upon individuals that we have codified them into law.

The issues are especially contentious when it comes to educating children, not least because the topics pertain partly to adult practices to which they are naïve, and there is no universally perfect time to make them aware of key information. It is also highly debatable just how much information should be provided in total. Meanwhile, children are uniquely

vulnerable to indoctrination – for both political and sexual interests.

This leads to a potential conflict between parents’ natural desire to educate or protect their children themselves, and the state’s interest to inform its future adult citizens and protect vulnerable children. Creating the correct balance between these forces is quite simply of constitutional importance and necessary for liberty and safeguarding.

This is why the 2000 SRE guidance confirmed that sex and relationships education “is not about the promotion of sexual orientation or sexual activity”, and it is also why the Education Act 1996 contains two essential clauses, sections 406 and 407, which, respectively, prohibit the promotion of partisan political views and stipulate that where a political issue is introduced, pupils are offered a balanced presentation of opposing views.

The DfE Impartiality Guidance 2022, has clarified that such political issues are not only party political matters or those that pertain to changing law, but can be ethical issues about which there is continued debate amongst the population. Naturally, in the case of RSE the personal becomes political, and vice versa, very easily – especially when different groups find that their interests conflict, or their ethical perspectives do not align, or their practices and needs are so different they cannot be meaningfully discussed in the same context.

This makes the preparation of a universally acceptable, compulsory RSE curriculum that deals in social values, an almost impossible task, and it also creates the opportunity for some actors – or indeed tempts the government itself – to take too strong a hold on the

programme, exerting a singular vision upon all children, potentially at odds with their families’ wishes and beliefs.

When the centralised grasp on RSE is too strong, the opportunity for parents to take the steps that are sensitive to their individual child’s needs, as well as their own consciences, is obstructed or pre-empted. Furthermore, history has shown us that excessively centralised policy on social values can destroy the diversity of thought, free speech and cultural practices required for a healthy democracy, creating an intolerant new generation with only one acceptable view.

Any policy or guidance in this area must therefore be of the most philosophically and legally sound principles, with very clear parameters – attributes which the current 2019 RSE guidance document does not possess.

Specifically, the instructions to simply “teach their pupils about LGBT” and take “positive action” to “create a culture where gender stereotypes... are not tolerated”, and that “schools are free to determine how they do this”, are so open ended that conflicting and extreme interpretations are inevitable. Likewise, the government’s instruction to teach about the legal status of the term “gender identity”, when it has no status in law and is currently confused with Gender Reassignment, is similarly troubling. Moreover, that such matters are taking a disproportionately dominant place in the curriculum to the exclusion of other interests seem perplexing.

It is also essential that guidance on such a crucial subject area meets the needs of the democracy it serves and is created by the people’s own representatives in Government, not supplied from

an international body that is beyond democratic mandate. And yet Britain is a committed signatory to an RSE policy decided by UNESCO, which includes the obligation to teach Gender Theory as fact. Likewise, Government should ensure that matters of such profundity are not inadvertently being swayed by the influence of other nations or international commercial interests.

As a result of these poor instructions, this report has shown that the current RSE being delivered in British schools, is suffering from precisely these political and safeguarding problems. It has become dominated by a particular ideological vision that is not universally accepted, nor sufficiently factual and uncontroversial to comply with the prohibition of Political Indoctrination in the Education Act 1996. Nor does it properly mind the protections for sex and fundamental or religious beliefs under the Equality Act 2010, and it is increasingly ignoring the DfE's instruction that RSE must not sexualise children.

The evidence suggests this has occurred because a politicised RSE industry, influenced by academia and assisted by government, has prepared an ideological monopoly on the delivery of RSE. The interpretable aspects of the DfE's RSE guidance, along with the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), are being used to construct authoritative, politically active RSE provision, which is not a fair reflection of the social mores of the nation – in fact it is specifically intended to change society, via the schooling of children.

This vision has sometimes been advanced with a degree of secrecy and evasiveness, hiding behind politically neutral ideas that are universally

acceptable, such as preventing anti-HBT bullying, or ensuring all children are treated fairly. But teaching a child never to be unkind towards another person's differences is not the same thing as telling that child they must recite that their inner identity is constructed according to the Gender Unicorn diagram.

This huge discrepancy between what the school policies and RSE guidance says, and what happens in the classroom, is causing profound political tensions between schools and parents and amongst different groupings of the population in general, including discord between the L, G, B and T of the LGBT grouping, as well as between pro-trans ideologists and 'gender critical' or religious groups.

A similar set of conflicts has occurred in the US and is frequently described as part of a 'Culture War'. Given the upset seen outside schools in Birmingham in 2019 (with conflicting demonstrations by Muslim and LGBT groups) and that parents have sought Judicial Review of the Welsh Government's RSE, and that there are deep divisions in Scotland concerning 'gender identity', it seems desirable the UK does not follow the US any further down this road of bringing political argument upon children and schools. This alone ought to stimulate an interest in reviewing the new RSE and indeed the PSED in schools.

However, even more serious than provoking political discord, the dominant interpretation of RSE seems to be permitting the advancement of such troubling ideologies that it is compromising safeguarding, sexualising children, purposefully bypassing parental involvement and frustrating their complaints.

In the case of RSE, children are routinely being academically and psychologically separated from those who are most likely to be their best advocates and protectors – their parents. And there is an absence of enforcement by the education authorities and regulator, Ofsted, against malpractice. The outcome is a climate that can, at best, cause confusion amongst children, and at worst, lead them towards forms of self-harm or accommodate outright abuse – all under the guise of seeking equality and accepting diversity.

Given the current state of RSE, it seems sensible to suggest that the government reassess, from first principles, the wisdom of delivering such a comprehensive RSE curriculum – especially in conjunction with the demands the PSED places upon schools. It is the combination of the flawed 2019 RSE guidance and the PSED together (i.e. the unlimited teaching about sex education with the obligation to take "positive action" for fear of failing the Equality Act 2010) that seems to be amplifying the problems.

The PSED is effectively being understood as an instruction to politicise the classroom, and the DfE even tacitly confirms this is the right approach in their Impartiality Guidance 2022. Under a section heading 'The Law', the guidance advises schools that:

The law

Existing statutory requirements on political impartiality cover all schools, regardless of type or funding arrangement. This includes independent schools.

These legal duties mean schools:

- must prohibit the promotion of partisan political views
- should take steps to ensure the balanced presentation of opposing views on political issues when they are brought to the attention of pupils

For maintained schools, these legal duties are set out in [Section 406](#) and [Section 407](#) of the Education Act 1996. Most academies will also have a specific clause in their funding agreement which requires adherence to the same provisions.

For independent schools, the legal duties are set out in Part 2 of the [Schedule to the Education \(Independent School Standards\) Regulations 2014](#). These requirements also apply to academies.

Legal duties on political impartiality do not supersede schools' other statutory requirements. Schools should take a reasonable and proportionate approach to ensuring political impartiality, alongside their other responsibilities.

This includes legal requirements under the:

- Equality Act 2010 (including the Public Sector Equality Duty for state-funded schools)
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Prevent duty

Schools are also required to actively promote the fundamental British values of:

- democracy
- the rule of law
- individual liberty
- mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs

Schools designated with a religious character are free to teach according to the tenets of their faith. We do not consider principles or views in line with these tenets to be covered by statutory requirements on political impartiality.

This is a shocking declaration, since it makes clear that the Education Act's prohibition of Political Indoctrination is no longer supreme.

This has apparently been arranged to accommodate the duty to "promote" British Values under the Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural (SMSC) guidance and the "positive actions" required under the PSED and the obligation to meet the HRA. This gives the impression that these duties are liable to conflict with the Education Act sections 406 and 407, and therefore require some kind of compromise between the obligations.

But political indoctrination is always dangerous, and there should be no circumstances under which it is employed in schools – and duties under the Equality Act, PSED, SMSC and HRA, should never require such an approach, if they are suitable parts of English law.

Therefore, this instruction to make a "proportionate" approach to the prohibition on Political Indoctrination is a danger to children and even democracy, because a prohibition cannot be compromised without breaking its function, thus permitting the harm it is meant to exclude.

With that in mind, any elements of the RSE guidance, the Equality Act, PSED, SMSC and HRA that are assumed to require teaching that interferes with sections 406 and 407, should surely be urgently re-examined by the DfE, and the advice given above should be retracted from the Impartiality Guidance.

Parents have been promised that RSE "is not about the promotion of sexual orientation or sexual activity" and that their children will not be politically indoctrinated. These promises need to be upheld.

CONCLUSION

The evidence collated in this report indicates that experimental and unsafe RSE is occurring in both primary and secondary schools. It also shows that this unsuitable provision is being produced by many mainstream organisations (both national and international) with a powerful reach across the sector, and even with government support.

The DfE seems not to have acknowledged the profundity and difficulty of the questions it has raised by making RSE compulsory according to the vague 2019 guidance, which adheres to the unmandated and poorly scrutinised UNESCO CSE framework. This has pressed schools into the hands of an unregulated RSE third sector, as they try to resolve these intractable issues that even extend to legal uncertainty.

These providers are then creating and delivering whatever definitions and instructions they please, sometimes in ways that seem to place their own political or commercial interests – even their own personal desires – above the needs of the children they teach. Meanwhile, parents and teachers have been ignored, blocked or treated badly when they sound the alarm.

And as this document has shown, some of the results are indeed truly alarming; including the promotion or incautious introduction of trans identity, anal sex, pornography, sex toys, group sex, masturbation, drag shows, choking, explicit imagery, surrogacy, kink and BDSM – with poor judgements about what is age appropriate, legally accurate, ethically sound, developmentally safe or culturally acceptable to British families.

Sometimes, governance mistakes are

made on such a scale that it is difficult to perceive the true nature of the problem, including that it cannot be solved by the usually sensible tendency for government to act moderately and incrementally. When such an extreme situation occurs – especially one that causes safeguarding risk – it is imperative to identify it for what it is, and to realise that a moderate response is unlikely to be adequate. It is the recommendation of this report, that RSE presents precisely such a situation.

It therefore seems reasonable to propose that a moratorium on the novel aspects of the 2019 RSE guidance is arranged, leaving in place the necessary factual, biological, contraceptive, legal and health related RSE, pending an investigation and clarification about the contentious new value-based issues. This, together with the proposed comprehensive advice for children who describe themselves as trans (due in 2023), would mean schools can avoid the misinformation, risks and radicalism currently being sold to them by the RSE third sector until the many problematic elements of RSE are resolved.

Specific recommendations for reform of the RSE guidance are as follows:

- It should be declared that no other legal duties are expected to conflict with the prohibition on Political Indoctrination in s406 and s407 of the Education Act 1996. This should be entered into the RSE guidance, since many of its topics might require a heightened awareness of this restriction.
- Teaching should be excluded from the PSED, especially its obligation to take “positive action”, which politicises the classroom according to personal identity.

- Clear parameters should be set on the teaching of sexuality, including a stated prohibition on the promotion of any sexuality or the sexualisation of children, along with suggested lower age limits for controversial topics.

- Parents should have a right to withdraw their children from any part of RSE that is not dealing with biological or legal fact, in order to adhere to Article 2, Protocol 1 – the right for a parent to ensure their child is educated in conformity with their own religious and philosophical convictions.

The term “gender identity” should be removed from the RSE guidance.

- All resources used in schools should be published, citable and open to academic scrutiny, and thus admissible to school complaint proceedings, Ofsted inspection reports and can be discussed in the public realm under ‘fair usage’ without fear of legal opposition. They should also be available to parents in their entirety before they are taught.

- The DfE should become less reliant on theorists and activists, and improve their consultation with parents and citizens, reprioritising public service and diverse cultural expression in schools, above political concerns or creating so-called ‘social change’.

- There should be a review of safeguarding in schools to understand how it has been so dangerously subordinated to political concerns in the name of so-called ‘Equality’, ‘Diversity’ and ‘Inclusion’.

- RSE guidance should be entirely created by the UK Government, unbound by international commitments, and free from foreign or commercial influence.

Thereafter it seems necessary that the DfE address the following questions (amongst others) before reintroducing RSE:

- What does “teach pupils about LGBT” specifically mean?
 - Is the obligatory grouping of L, G, B and T in the curriculum suitable?
 - Are there conflicting RSE developmental requirements for children with different sexual orientations and how should that be managed?
 - Are schools expected or permitted to teach about ‘QIA+’ and associated Queer Theory, and if so, will opposing opinions be presented, and how will perverse or illegal orientations be excluded, given that the theory introduces an infinite ‘spectrum’ of sexualities and identities?
 - Should schools introduce the subject of controversial, extreme or illegal sexual practices, such as kink, BDSM, group sex or bestiality, be that in a precautionary or neutral way?
 - How do schools warn children about the harms of pornography, without introducing them to sexualising information or normalising its use or production?
 - Is ‘sex positive’ RSE too politically contentious and/or sexualising to form the basis of RSE provision?
 - Is ‘intersectional feminist’ RSE a partisan political view and does it properly cater for all children?
 - What are ‘gender stereotypes’ and why must they be “not tolerated”?
- Is ‘gender identity’ meant to be taught as fact, theory, fiction or not at all?

- Is the promotion of Gender Theory causing trans identification, leading to serious harms?

- Should campaigning charities or trade bodies such as Stonewall, the SEF and the PSHE Association have privileged positions to determine RSE, with DfE ratification – especially if they or their partners do not always publish their resources?

- How can teachers be expected to balance the interests of children with different protected characteristics under the Equality Act, especially sex, gender reassignment, sexual orientation and religious or fundamental belief, when teaching RSE?

- Are teachers, RSE specialists, academics and education authorities any better placed than the public to define the moral or ethical aspects of life addressed in RSE?

- Can we do without a concept of normality in sexual relations, and should the state, the schools or RSE providers have a role in determining either what is normal, normative or what should be respected?

- Does the state intend schools to take a positive, neutral or negative approach to the institution of marriage?

- Should love, procreation and/or the concept of motherhood and fatherhood have a special place in RSE and why are there currently next to no resources about this fundamental aspect of humanity?

- How will future RSE guidance observe and protect the primacy of the relationship between parents and children?

- Is ideology blinding or silencing the education sector to cases of harmful or abusive intent amongst exponents of the RSE sector and beyond?

- Are unregulated, commercial interests corrupting RSE provision?

- Has the Government unwisely attempted to solve online harms or assist social cohesion via an overly instrumental use of RSE that is impinging on liberty?

END

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