

Tower Hamlets Parents Association (THPA) Policy Paper on Relationship Education (RE) for Primary Schools

Introduction

This paper sets out the view of parents that Tower Hamlets Parents Association (THPA) has engaged. THPA works with and has links to parents across 69 maintained primary schools in Tower Hamlets.

It is the demand of parents that:

1. The discussion around teaching of Relationship Education (RE) and Relationship and Sex Education (RSE) must involve parents as the primary stakeholders in their children's education.
2. The discussion around homosexual relationships and same-sex marriage has become a politically charged affair. Parents call for reason and respect, in the interest of our children and the health and wellbeing of society.
3. There is an urgent need to distinguish between facts and values. It is a fact that some people have homosexual relationships. However parents have the primary responsibility for educating their children on morality, ethics and values. Transgressing factual discussion would amount to promotion, something which goes against the requirements.
4. Passionately believing in a moral standpoint is one thing - enforcing that viewpoint on others is another. Children must not be institutionally forced to adopt a viewpoint, without parental consent and involvement.
5. It goes without saying that we affirm the rights of those who disagree with our opinions to do so without fear of insult, bullying or any type of oppression. However, we also expect the same in return.
6. Through respectful dialogue, exchange and most importantly meaningful consultation with parents, Tower Hamlets Council and Schools can accommodate the concerns of parents in this regard.

Relevant legislation, and Government guidance around RE/RSE

Below are segments of relevant guidance that relate to parents concerns taken from the Government Guidance¹ regarding the teaching of RE/RSE, PHSE and Science in Primary Schools:

- a. *“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.”*
 - i. There is no statutory requirement on the teaching of LGBT at primary school in the RE government guidance. This area has been left open in order to take into consideration the values and faith of parents and children. The guidance is on respecting differences only.

- b. *“Key facts about puberty and the changing adolescent body, particularly from age 9 through to age 11, including physical and emotional changes. “*
 - i. There is no statutory requirement stating the age to teach puberty. It is natural to teach puberty to children in the later years of KS2 just before the onset of puberty.

- c. *“Sex education is not compulsory in primary schools.”*

- d. *“The national curriculum for science also includes subject content in related areas, such as the main external body parts, the human body as it grows from birth to old age (including puberty) and reproduction in some plants and animals. “*
 - i. List of external body parts is clearly outlined in the Science Curriculum and does not include sexual organs. There is no statutory requirement on the teaching of the names of the sexual body parts in the RE government guidance.

The Equalities Act takes into consideration the religious background of pupils. As outlined in the Government Guidance¹:

“In all schools, when teaching these subjects, the religious background of all pupils must be taken into account when planning teaching, so that the topics that are included in the core content in this guidance are appropriately handled. Schools must ensure they comply with the relevant provisions of the Equality Act 2010, under which religion or belief are amongst the protected characteristics.”

Tower Hamlets Community Cohesion Plan² states:

“The Council wants the Borough to continue to be a place where people feel they belong and where people feel they get on well together and have an equal voice. Our Tower Hamlets.”

Muslims beliefs regarding the teaching of homosexuality and transgenderism

Muslims are the largest minority faith in Tower Hamlets. Schools have, on average a majority percentage of students coming from the Muslim faith. The majority of the parents that THPA represent are Muslims, therefore it is important to outline the key issues and contradictions Muslims face in relation to aspects of RE/RSE.

1. It is the orthodox view across all schools of thought in Islamic law that homosexuality and same sex marriages are a sin therefore not legally recognised. This view is also the traditional view of the major world religions including Judaism and Christianity. The LGBT lifestyle is not recognised in Islam, as it violates fundamental limits set by God. It is considered a grave sin, since it is a deviation from God's divine decree and His design in creation.
2. Teaching RE/RSE topics in an age appropriate and faith sensitive manner, is widely accepted. Muslim parents can therefore play a key role in supporting schools to better understand and deliver a curriculum that is sensitive and does not undermine key morals and family values.
3. Islam protects children from indecency *of all kinds* and strongly opposes homosexuality and transgenderism since Islam views it as immoral behaviour that contradicts scripture and divine revelation.
4. Islam stipulates that God created man and woman and these are the only two genders that exist. It is logically inconsistent that a child can be allowed to choose to ascribe as a different sex, but require parental approval in almost all other aspects of their life including diet, clothes, friends, money, among other things.³ Muslims maintain that this area of their upbringing be decided and guided by parents only.
5. Islam has rules governing all forms of sexual behaviour. Therefore, an Islamic education includes the teaching that children (and adults) are not to engage in *any* sexual activity before marriage. Violating this limit is a major sin. Muslims are advised against bringing up this issue with prepubescent minors. This education is provided only at the onset of puberty.

Concerns of THPA parents:

After lengthy engagement with parents across the borough, it is duly accepted that the following areas of RE/RSE are of alarming concern for parents. Without these issues being addressed through dialogue and most importantly meaningful consultation with parents, they will remain longstanding barriers preventing any successful implementation of an RE/RSE policy in the borough and schools.



Proposal to the Local Authority and Schools for an inclusive and partnership approach with parents to implementing RE policy:

1. Teaching of LGBT topics in primary schools.

- a. Parents expect that educators respect their pupils, their families and the faith that defines them. That the teachings at school do not conflict with the faith and value teachings at home. Not doing so creates serious confusion and puts schools at odds with the parents of their community.
- b. The DfE guidance states 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 for them.”*¹ This can be addressed using examples of other family structures such as, step-parents, single parents, divorced/separated parents, other close family members (grandparents, aunts/uncles, and distant relatives), multiracial families, foster parents, etc. without the need to describe single sex families. This way, children can still learn *“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.”*
- c. Under the Public Sector Equality Duty⁴, schools are only required to discuss same sex families if/when there is a child from such a family in a particular class and even then, the duty only stretches to that class, not the entire school.
- d. There is no obligation for schools to “teach” the Equalities Act 2010.⁵
- e. Primary schools are not required to teach LGBT elements as stated by Nick Gibb, Minister for School Standards during the Parliamentary Question Period on 25 June 2019.⁶
- f. Schools are obliged to teach ‘*Fundamental British Values*’, a vague and undefined⁷ concept in itself. It is important to note that ‘*Fundamental British Values*’ are taken from the discredited⁸ and Islamophobic⁹ “Prevent” guidance, wherein no mention of protected characteristics is made.

2. Concepts that revolve around gender fluidity.

- a. It is logically inconsistent that a child can be allowed to choose to ascribe as a different sex, but require parental approval in almost all other aspects of their life including diet, clothes, friends, money, among other things.¹⁰
- b. Discussions on gender fluidity can cause gender dysphoria amongst the developing young minds, adding to the identity crisis that youth already suffer from¹¹. From a child protection point of view, discussions around gender fluidity should not be part of the education of a child.
- c. There have been many cases of young people regretting gender transition and seeking reversal with devastating consequences on their psychological and physical wellbeing, as a result of making ill-informed decisions during their childhood.¹¹
- d. Children of the same age will always differ in level of understanding. A timely point to explore gender identity and sexual orientation cannot be determined accurately.

3. The use of resources that are sensitive to the communities' faith and values.

- a. Resources that contain explicit images or videos of body parts are not appropriate for children¹², particularly the Christopher Winter Project.
- b. Resources that contain references to and promote LGBT are also inappropriate for children such as “Respect yourself”, “All about me”, “Educate and Celebrate”.
- c. All resources should go through consultation with religious leaders, community representatives and parents before being used in order to discuss their appropriateness.
- d. External guests or agencies should not be allowed to come in to deliver or support the delivery or the RE curriculum. Issues around external agencies has been one of the main flashpoints for parental disquiet.

4. Naming of sexual body parts.

- a. The naming of the sexual body parts is not part of the statutory guidance for RE.
- b. Learning about puberty is part of the government guidance. Therefore it is understandable to name the sexual body parts during the teaching of puberty in KS2.
- c. Puberty should start to be taught from Year 5, as we know that children (especially young girls) are going through puberty earlier in life.
- d. When teaching the names of the sexual body parts, cartoon images should be used and not real life images.
- e. When teaching this content, girls and boys should be separated into different classes with female and male teachers respectively, to ensure better learning outcomes.
- f. *'My Body belongs to me'* is an excellent resource that addresses safeguarding issues without naming the sexual body parts. This resource can be used for children in KS1.^{13, 14}
- g. *'NSPCC Pants (Pantosaurus)'* is another resource which addresses safeguarding issues without naming the sexual body parts. This resource can be used for children in KS1.¹⁵
- h. *'My Body belongs to me: from my head to my toes'* teaches safe touching and body boundaries without naming the body parts. This resource can be used for children in KS1 and KS2.¹⁶

5. Teaching of Sex Education in Primary Schools.

- a. Sex education is not compulsory in primary schools¹ according to DfE guidance.
- b. Sex education for primary school children is not age appropriate, as the legal age of any sexual activity is at the age of 16.¹⁷
- c. Therefore there is no reason for children to learn about Sex Education in Primary level according to the UK law which prohibits sexual activity for children.
- d. However if a school then decides to teach Sex Education then the right to withdrawal must be made clear. RE and Sex Education must be clearly demarcated and not amalgamated together nor covered additionally as a top up of the established national curriculum framework within Science. If it is taught then this should be done in Year 6 and not earlier.

References:

¹[Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education \(RSE\) and Health Education guidance](#)

²[LBTH Community Cohesion Plan](#)

³[Gender Ideology Harms Children](#)

⁴[Public Sector Equality Duty](#)

⁵[Equality Act advice for Schools](#)

⁶[Parental Involvement in Teaching: Equality Act](#)

⁷[Undefined 'British Values'](#)

⁸[NUS calls for prevent to be scrapped](#)

⁹[Mosques to boycott prevent](#)

¹⁰[Parent reports of adolescents gender dysphoria](#)

¹¹['Hundreds' Of Young People Regret Gender Transition, Seek Reversal](#)

¹²[Sex education must not be statutory](#)

¹³[My Body Belongs to Me](#)

¹⁴[My Body Belongs To Me Video](#)

¹⁵[Talk PANTS & Join Pantosaurus - The Underwear Rule](#)

¹⁶[My Body Belongs To Me: From My Head, To My Toes](#)

¹⁷[Age of Consent](#)