

Revealed: Leaked briefing document suggests Tower Hamlets Council misled headteachers on guidelines for teaching LGBT to 4 year olds. 500 parents attend public meeting to raise alarm

16th March, London



London - The Tower Hamlets Parents Association (THPA)^[1] has obtained a briefing document^[2] given by Tower Hamlets Council to headteachers across the Borough^[3], that evades statutory guidelines in relation to Relationship and Sex Education.

The leaked document instructs Headteachers to 'inform' parents of the new policy, crucially evading statutory guidance that requires schools to 'consult' with parents before forming policy.

Representatives of the THPA presented this information to a public meeting attended by more than 500 parents on Sunday evening. Parents braved fears around COVID-19 and attended to learn what they could do to ensure their voices were heard in producing RSE policy in the Borough. More than 5,000 joined online. Speakers included members of East London Mosque, Muslim Education Committee, Darul Ummah Mosque, Ashaadibi Centre, Council of Mosques and Dawatul Islam.

Amongst other things, the document exerts undue pressure and makes false statements, through its instructions to Headteachers, which include:

1. To teach four year olds about homosexual relationships “*within teaching about different kinds of families*”. The document misleadingly claims that “*failure to teach this puts schools at risk of not meeting their statutory duty under the Equalities Act*”. This is patently false.

2. To “*teach names of sexual body parts: penis, vagina, breasts, nipples, testicles, vulva, bottom, anus*” to four year old children. The document misleadingly states that “*failure to teach this puts children’s safeguarding at risk*”.

Also, a petition to the Local Authority has attracted more than 1,100 signatures within a day.^[4]

Noor Azzam, a representatives of THPA, said:

"Kate Smith and Cllr Danny Hassell are the driving forces behind the Local Authority's RSE policy. They initiated a 'consultation' process, which after sometime suddenly changed to 'information' meetings only. After the headteachers briefing given by the Local Authority it became crystal clear that the community's background is not being taken into consideration. This was on the back of several attempts to engage with the Local Authority in a positive way where there was mutual respect and dialogue. This "nanny state" approach taken by Tower Hamlets Council will only cause a massive rift between schools and parents as well as the community at large that the school serves. Parents are the primary educators of their children, and schools and the local authority should respect that."

A headteacher of a primary school, who spoke to THPA on condition of anonymity said:

"In the headteachers briefing meeting, we were told clearly that this is Council policy and all schools are expected to follow it. We were told that large groups of parents had been consulted and institutions like the East London Mosque had given their approval. I was shocked to later see the public statement^[5] from ELM distancing themselves from these false claims."

CONTACT

Noor Azzam
Representative, THPA
info@thparents.org

NOTES FOR EDITORS

[1] Tower Hamlets Parents Association represents over 1800 parents from 60 schools across Tower Hamlets. The Association was formed by local parents in January 2020 when parents discovered their views were being disregarded and that consultation meetings by the Council were just tick box exercises to rubber stamp an RSE policy that had already been created. THPA was launched as a response to promote meaningful and genuine dialogue between the Local Authority and parents.

[2] The document appears to be notes from a Headteachers briefing meeting. THPA can make this document available to journalists. Contact us directly at info@thparents.org

[3] Tower Hamlets Borough has 70 primary schools and 17 secondary schools. Its ethnic minorities make up 55% of the population. Across primary schools upto 85% of children are from ethnic minorities, with 63% proportion being Bangladeshi Muslim.
https://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/ignl/community_and_living/borough_statistics/Borough_profile.aspx

[4] The petition can be found here <https://rsepetition.com/>

[5] The statement issued by East London Mosque and London Muslim Centre can be found here: <https://www.eastlondonmosque.org.uk/news/elm-urges-respect-for-parents-concerns-about-rse>. ELM was forced to issue the statement after it had "facilitated dialogue between parents in Tower Hamlets and other stakeholders" but these meetings had been used by the Local Authority to give the impression that ELM had endorsed the Council's RSE policy, when it had not.