

NSS welcomes Caroline Lucas' bill on compulsory PSHE and sex education

Posted: Wed, 15th Jul 2015

Caroline Lucas MP has urged the Government to make personal, social and health education (PSHE) compulsory in all schools, including free schools and academies.

The teaching of PSHE does not currently have a statutory footing, meaning there are significant discrepancies in how the subject is taught nationally. The MP has introduced a new bill which would require all state-funded schools to provide sex and relationships education (SRE).

The Green Party MP commented on the plans, "Under current legislation free schools and academies are exempt from a requirement to teach the subject. It's this stark inequality – which sees some young people receiving the very best PSHE lessons while others are left exposed to harm – which my bill seeks to address."

Lucas explained, "Ministers like to use the defence that 'SRE is already statutory'. But this is misleading. The current legal situation is confusing and young people are missing out on the enormous potential of PSHE. Only state secondary schools have to provide limited sex education. Academies and free schools do not have to teach SRE. The current law falls far short of ensuring all our children get the PSHE teaching they need and deserve."

The chair of the Education Committee said the Government had offered a "feeble" response to the plans, after education secretary Nicky Morgan gave a non-committal answer, saying only that she would "look at" options "to ensure PSHE is taught well everywhere."

The National Secular Society has repeatedly raised concerns about the teaching of sex and relationships education (SRE) in free schools and academies with a faith ethos.

The Society recently reported the case of one academy where SRE was taught in line with the ["Maker's Instructions"](#).

The King's Academy in Middlesbrough teaches "chastity outside of marriage" in SRE classes and their formal policy statement on sex education starts by stating that "human beings are created to a Divine design".

In another case, the NSS reported on the Catholic Diocese of Portsmouth's recently [issued guidance](#) to schools which stresses that "purity" and the "virtue of chastity" should be at the core of sex education.

Caroline Lucas' new bill is also aimed at tackling the sexual abuse of children by making sure they have knowledge and education about the meaning of consent. The MP has raised concerns that poor SRE in some schools leaves students unaware of their rights.

An NSS spokesperson commented: "We welcome this bill and hope it gains traction in the new parliament. It is long overdue that a child's right to objective, comprehensive and age-appropriate sex and relationships education was put on a statutory basis."

"Faith schools, free schools and academies should all be required to teach this subject. They should not be exempt for religious reasons. In this case the child's rights must come first."

The legislation was introduced as a Ten Minute Rule Bill on Wednesday 15 July 2015 but was opposed by Philip Davies MP, who said the widespread support for reform was nothing more than a "tyranny of the majority".

He said that parents should have the right to withdraw their children from sex education to "protect" their "values".

"We've been trying sex education ... for decades," he complained, before adding there was "no evidence" that sex education made "any difference whatsoever". He warned repeatedly about "sex education fanatics", to apparent laughter in the House of Commons. "I'm glad everyone finds it so funny," he said later in the debate.

He went on to praise Italy for having "very low levels" of sex education. He said that the UK should not be "faffing around" with more sex education.

"Let's abandon sex education", the Conservative MP added. He went on to make an unclear connection between teachers who had been convicted of having sex with their students, and SRE being taught in schools. He even suggested that sex education had caused one pupil to rape another.

Davies has [previously called](#) for all sex education to be scrapped.

The bill successfully passed its first parliamentary hurdle with 183 MPs voting in favour and 44 voting against. It will now proceed to a second reading on Friday 22 January 2016.

- [Share on What's App](#)
- [Share on Facebook](#)
- [Share on Twitter](#)
- [Share on Email](#)
- [Subscribe to RSS Feed](#)

Tags: [Faith schools](#)

Related Campaigns

•

[No more faith schools](#)

We need inclusive schools free from religious discrimination, privilege or control.

[Read More](#)

Related Articles

NSS announces major conference on protecting liberal values

Kenan Malik, Joan Smith and more speaking at NSS Secularism 2024 conference in London. [Read More »](#)

Allowing more religious selection in schools would be a big mistake

Abandoning the 50% admission cap would exacerbate the discrimination, disadvantage and division inherent with faith schools, argues Stephen Evans. [Read More »](#)

NSS joins open letter against faith school discrimination

Education experts, politicians, religious leaders and public figures unite to call on Education Secretary to keep the faith school admissions cap. [Read More »](#)

Faith school found inadequate for ten years fails inspection again

Jewish school where teachers slapped children criticised for poor secular education in latest inspection. [Read More »](#)

NSS urges PM to retain cap on faith-based admissions

Supporters of inclusive schools encouraged to tell MPs to protect the 50% cap. [Read More »](#)