



Written by [Rebecca Terrell](#) on November 12, 2009

UK Mandates Sex Education

Children in Britain will be forced to attend at least one year of sex-education classes before their 16th birthday, according to new rules enacted in the United Kingdom. The BBC reports that parents cannot opt out children 15 or older, even if their children attend parochial or religious schools.

The sex-education classes, coined as “personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education,” will include topics such as homosexuality and contraceptives. The article quotes Ed Balls, Secretary of the Department of Children, Schools and Families (DCSF), as saying, “I have concluded that parents right to withdraw their children from sex and relationship education should continue until their children reach the age of 15.”



DCSF released a [statement](#) about the decision last week. Therein, Balls explained that since the age of consent is 16 (one year higher than the age limit he is establishing), parents should not have complete control over whether their children attend such classes, implying that by opting out, parents withhold vital information from their children. Ignoring the obvious leap of logic in his argument, Balls pointed out that a very small minority of parents use the opt-out alternative currently available. He said that when his department polled parents on whether they supported the opt out, nearly 70 percent agreed that parents’ rights should be limited. The new rules ignore the wishes of the remaining 30 percent, yet Balls said the age limit of 15, which he considers high, was intended to build “a strong consensus” among parents.

The new plan, which goes into effect in September of 2011, requires all schools to subject children at age five to classes about puberty and “safe” relationships. Over the next few years, topics expand to include intercourse, tolerance of “alternative” lifestyles, divorce, STDs, and substance misuse. Under the plan, parents will be able to opt their children out of all but one year between the ages of five and sixteen. Current rules allow schools to drop sex education altogether and allow parents to opt out entirely for moral or religious reasons.

New rules will allow religious schools to tailor classes to reflect their individual “ethos.” The [Daily Telegraph](#) reported that Balls said, “You can teach the promotion of marriage. You can teach that you shouldn’t have sex outside of marriage. What you can’t do is deny young people information about contraception outside of marriage.” Daily Telegraph columnist [Gerald Warner](#) dubs the plan “child abuse” and called this supposed caveat for parochial school a “cynical method of enforcing anti-Christian values on faith schools.”

DCSF claims that sex education is necessary to combat problems like rising rates of teen pregnancy, STDs and substance abuse. Paul Tully, General Secretary of the Society for the Protection of Unborn



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Children, contested these claims in a [press release](#), stating, “these [classes] have been characterized by obscene and lurid presentations. These are the classroom equivalent of ‘advertorials,’ promoting sex and birth-control products. They send the message to children: ‘do whatever you like — just be sure to avoid or abort any pregnancy.’”

Even before the new plan was adopted, pro-abortion columnist [Yasmin Alibhai-Brown](#) asked, “How many more teen pregnancies will it take before this Government realizes what a catastrophic failure its sex education policies have been?” She pointed out that a recent sex education program targeting teen girls with intensive training and free condoms cost the British government £5 million. The result? The rate of pregnancy among girls in the program skyrocketed over the rate among teens not enrolled.



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