



IRISH EDUCATION ALLIANCE

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Statement on the Exposure of Children to Inappropriate Gender Ideology

March 2023

As a body of teachers and childhood professionals we believe that the safety and welfare of children is of paramount importance. Our responsibility is to protect children and safeguard them from harm. We are increasingly concerned about the exposure of children to inappropriate sexualised material and the promotion of extreme transgender ideology, in schools and in society. This can cause confusion, psychological trauma and lead to irreversible lifechanging decisions, potentially causing serious harm to vulnerable children and adolescents.

There are many minorities in this world including ethnic, religious, cultural and ideological groups who suffer unfair discrimination. If we teach children to be kind and accepting of differences, they will grow up to be inclusive. We are opposed to the ideology and the agenda of a particular minority being imposed on society and taught to children as fact, with potentially harmful consequences. Sowing seeds of doubt in young developing minds, which are not yet mature enough to process such information, may raise confused children who are not comfortable in their own skin.

RSE/SPHE Curriculum and Transgender Ideology in Schools

IEA members, including SPHE teachers and co-ordinators, have serious concerns that the recently published draft Junior Cycle SPHE/RSE curriculum¹ revealed a concerning focus on teaching gender ideology and an emphasis on sexual activity and sex for pleasure with consent being the only moral consideration.

Gender Identity is defined in the draft curriculum as *'a person's felt internal and individual experience of gender, for example, cisgender, transgender, non-binary, which may or may not correspond with the sex assigned to them at birth'*. The curriculum is teaching children to refer to people who 'identify' as their biological sex as 'cisgender', as though girls and boys should no longer exist. It is full of ideas and terminology associated with the transgender movement which we believe will confuse teenagers with the potential to cause psychological damage. Teachers are aware that children and teenagers often struggle with changes that happen to them during puberty. They may feel uncomfortable with their bodies and suffer from lack of self-confidence. Through the proposed curriculum they will be taught that, rather than learning to be comfortable with who they are and biological sex they were born with, they should question whether they should choose to identify as a different gender.

The IEA is also extremely concerned that the draft curriculum includes a proposal to *"investigate the influence of digital media (in particular, the influence of pornography) on young people's understanding, expectations and social norms in relation to sexual expression"*. Under the Children First Act 2015², emotional abuse includes exposing a child to sexually inappropriate material. It is incomprehensible that

¹ <https://ncca.ie/en/resources/draft-junior-cycle-social-personal-and-health-education-sphe-short-course-curriculum-specification/>

² <https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2015/act/36/enacted/en/html>

any educational facility would consider showing children aged 12 to 18 pornographic material. While critical evaluation skills are of course important in young people, the use of pornography in schools would lead to the further normalisation of this material and legitimise its use by underage teenagers, causing the further sexualization of young adolescents. It is deemed inappropriate for children under 18 to see a film containing explicit sexual content. Why then would we seek to normalize their use of pornography?

The NCCA consultation on the proposed Junior Cycle Curriculum received many submissions from concerned parents and teachers. The IEA submission to the NCCA can be viewed on our website. The recent news that children will no longer be taught to *“appreciate that sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression are core parts of human identity and that each is experienced along a spectrum”*³ is a welcome but minor concession by the NCCA and leaves a great deal of extremely concerning content, including transgender ideology and terminology in the curriculum. Teachers value the input of parents and know that outcomes are enhanced when teachers and parents work collaboratively. The IEA are shocked to see the wholesale disregard by the NCCA and the Department of Education of parents’ concerns which were highlighted by the consultation process. Ignoring parents’ genuine concerns and steamrolling this agenda into the Curriculum will pit teachers against parents which is a recipe for disastrous outcomes for children. This curriculum is currently being finalised by the NCCA, ready to be rolled out in September 2023.

A consultation also took place on a “Background paper and brief for the redevelopment of Senior Cycle SPHE”⁴ from which a draft curriculum will be drawn up and rolled out in September 2024. The IEA have similar concerns over this curriculum and our submission can also be found on our website. The NCCA are planning to have a new primary RSE/curriculum ready to roll out in September 2025.

In a recent interview for the Irish Independent⁵ children’s Minister Roderic O’Gorman stated that ‘transgender issues’ should be part of the primary and secondary school curriculum and that children, including primary age children, should be educated about ‘what it means to be transgender’. The IEA supports the letter sent to Ministers Roderick O’Gorman and Norma Foley by the Catholic Primary Schools Management Association (CPSMA) objecting to the introduction of transgender ideology into primary schools⁶ and the subsequent press release by the Irish Muslim Council.⁷ In response to the CPSMA letter Leo Varadkar and Micheál Martin have both declared themselves to be in favour of the inclusion of information on transgenderism in primary schools, showing complete disregard for the concerns detailed in the letter. In a move away from the expected impartiality of the president’s office, President Higgins then added his voice to the debate stating that he thinks schools should teach ‘basic information regarding sexuality in the fullest sense’.

In fact, primary school children are already being subjected to very confusing transgender ideology from a very young age which we believe to be utterly inappropriate and extremely confusing.

The Irish National Teachers’ Organisation (INTO), LGBT teacher’s group provides teaching resources on the website⁸. These include a video ‘Facilitating a Social Transition’⁹ ¹⁰ a cartoon intended to demonstrate to teachers how to support young children to transition (change their gender) in a primary school setting. In the video a child called Lucy changes her name to Liam and the teacher explains to the class that ‘the person we have been calling Lucy is really a boy’. He affirms the children’s suggestions that ‘a girl can become a boy’ and ‘a boy can become a girl’. He goes on to say that he followed up by introducing the class to the term ‘non-binary’. The IEA feel strongly that this video is promoting the teaching of extreme

³ <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/spectrum-idea-is-dropped-from-irelands-gender-learning-plan-for-schools-zcdmwhcf3>

⁴ <https://ncca.ie/en/senior-cycle/curriculum-developments/senior-cycle-social-personal-and-health-education-sphe/>

⁵ <https://www.independent.ie/irish-news/transgender-issues-should-be-part-of-primary-curriculum-says-childrens-minister-roderic-ogorman-42256827.html>

⁶ <https://m.independent.ie/irish-news/education/catholic-primary-schools-reject-roderic-ogorman-view-that-their-pupils-should-be-taught-what-is-it-to-be-transgender-42370997.html>

⁷ <https://gript.ie/irish-muslim-council-says-gender-ideology-not-appropriate-for-primary-school-kids/>

⁸ <https://www.into.ie/help-advice/equality/lgbt-teachers-rights/lgbt-education-resources/>

⁹ <https://www.into.ie/help-advice/equality/lgbt-teachers-rights/good-teaching-learning-practice-videos/>

¹⁰ <https://youtu.be/7EX738IPaYw>

ideology to very young children as fact, at the risk of causing them confusion and harm and it should be taken down immediately. It is utterly inappropriate for a primary school teacher to be enabling the gender transition of such a young child as the one depicted in the video. The INTO website contains many other resources supporting the teaching of gender ideology to primary age children, including a pdf of 'Gender Diversity Teaching Resources' produced by the transgender organisation TENI.

It has come to the attention of the IEA that a letter was sent to INTO district co-ordinators on the 2nd March on promoting the 'INTO Pride Flag Campaign' in primary schools through flag raising ceremonies. It is unacceptable for the INTO, **a teacher's union**, to be running such a campaign on behalf of the LGBTQ+ movement. It is also totally inappropriate for primary school children to be celebrating 'Pride' and for primary schools to be promoting it. It is a political movement with controversial ideologies which primary children will not understand and many parents and teachers may disagree with.

Busy Bodies¹¹, a booklet produced by the HSE in conjunction with Healthy Ireland for 5th and 6th class students and their parents states that '*We all have a gender identity. Gender Identity is how we think of ourselves as a boy, a girl, neither or both.*' This is another example of transgender ideology being presented to children as fact and before any consultation on its inclusion in the primary curriculum has taken place.

Parental Rights to Opt Out

Under the Education Act 1998 students cannot be required '*to attend instruction which is contrary to the conscience of the parent*'.¹² The IEA are concerned that by combining RSE and SPHE, which is a compulsory subject, in both primary and secondary schools, that parents' rights to withdraw their children from RSE is being eroded. Accommodating children whose parents do not wish for them to partake in RSE classes will be a budgetary and resource challenge for schools. In addition, it will make children whose parents opt out feel excluded when they are removed from the classroom. Parents have contacted us, stating that already some schools are making it very difficult for them to opt children out of RSE, insisting for example that they collect their children for the duration of RSE lessons.

Exposure of Children to Sexually Explicit Books in Schools and Libraries

It recently came to the attention of the IEA that books containing explicit sexual content have been made widely available to children aged 12 to 18 in schools and libraries. These books were part of the 'Rainbow Reads' booklist, recommended by transgender organisations and endorsed by the NCCA and Healthy Ireland. For example, the book 'This Book is Gay'¹³ contains graphic descriptions of sexual acts such as 'blow jobs', 'hand jobs' and 'fisting' which are utterly unsuitable for children. Following a campaign by the IEA and other organisations some libraries have now moved these books to the adult section. However, some libraries have failed to acknowledge the unsuitability of these books for children and in response to letters from concerned individuals have stated that parents are responsible for the books that their children take out. The NCCA have now taken the 'Rainbow Reads' list down from their website. Many teachers, librarians and parents are undoubtedly unaware of the content of these books. However, by exposing children to these sexually explicit books, schools and libraries are in breach of the Children First Act 2015. Children's Books Ireland have now renamed 'Rainbow Reads' 'The Pride Reading Guide'¹⁴. This book is Gay has been removed from the list, but it still includes the book 'What is the T?'¹⁵ by the same author, which also contains graphic descriptions of sexual acts. This book is recommended for 'young adults'.

¹¹ <https://www.hse.ie/eng/about/who/healthwellbeing/hse-education-programme/training-and-resources-for-primary-school-teachers/relationships-and-sexuality-education-resources-for-primary-school-teachers.html>

¹² <https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/1998/act/51/section/30/enacted/en/html#sec30>

¹³ Dawson, J. (2015) *This Book is Gay*, Sourcebooks.

¹⁴ <https://childrensbooksireland.ie/our-recommendations/pride-reading-guide-2022>

¹⁵ Dawson, J. (2021) *What's the T*, Wren and Rock.

Inappropriate Treatment of Gender Dysphoria

We are extremely concerned that children who present with gender confusion or gender dysphoria can be given inappropriate treatment that they are unable to understand the long-term consequences of. Children are often encouraged to 'transition', changing their names and their pronouns. Some may make irreversible changes to their bodies by taking puberty blockers, hormones and even having gender transition surgery. This 'gender affirmative' approach is being pushed for by transgender groups and activists in Ireland. However, clinicians are now suggesting that most children suffering from gender dysphoria are simply going through a transient phase and it has emerged that a high percentage also presenting with autistic spectrum disorder or other co-existing conditions. Social contagion is also thought to be a factor contributing to the large increase in children with presenting with gender dysphoria.

On an interview with Newstalk Breakfast in November 2022¹⁶ psychotherapist Stella O'Malley stated that she believed some clinicians are too quick to offer children medicalised solutions to gender dysphoria *'which could lead to infertility, sexual dysfunction and a huge amount of long-term impacts that the average 12 or 14-year-old just doesn't understand the impact of'*.

The controversy over the controversial Gender Identity Development Service (GIDS) at the Tavistock Clinic in England has illustrated how harmful 'gender affirming healthcare' for children and adolescents can be. A review chaired by Dr Hilary Cass on GIDS has led to the recommendation for its closure.¹⁷

Hannah Barnes' book 'Time to Think'¹⁸ documents shocking revelations from former clinicians at GIDS. Including the routine use of puberty blockers without adequate psychological assessment or the provision of adequate information to children and parents. She details many cases of young people who have since regretted the transitions they made and the treatments they received at the clinic¹⁹. Of the children referred to GIDS, a high percentage of children also presented with Autistic Spectrum Disorder, and many were 'same sex attracted', there was also a high number of teenage girls. Psychologists have suggested that social contagion is likely to be a factor, leading to the massive increase in the numbers of children referred to the clinic.

Recent guidance from the NHS in England²⁰, following the Cass report, moves away from 'gender affirmative health care' to a more holistic approach of psychological care which takes into account co-existing conditions. It warns against inappropriate social transitioning (such as changing names and pronouns) which is considered a form of psychological intervention and states that puberty blockers and hormone therapy should only ever be used in extreme circumstances and in a research setting.

TD Charlie Flannigan has called for an enquiry into the 240 cases of Irish children referred to the Tavistock clinic over 14 years. Shockingly the HSE is still referring children to the Tavistock Clinic despite the plethora of concerns raised by clinicians both here and in the UK²¹ and documented in the Cass report.

The Gender Recognition Bill

The IEA would like to state our opposition to the Gender recognition bill, currently advancing through the Dáil, which would allow children aged 16 and 17 to legally change their gender without parental consent. This would allow them receive surgery in another country also without the consent of their parents. Parents are the primary educators and carers of their children and their right to protect their children must

¹⁶ <https://www.newstalk.com/news/politicians-fearful-of-discussing-child-gender-issues-stella-omalley-1402633>

¹⁷ <https://cass.independent-review.uk/publications/interim-report/>

¹⁸ Barnes, H. (2023). *Time to Think: The Inside Story of the Collapse of the Tavistock's Gender Service for Children*. Swiftpress.

¹⁹ https://archive.ph/2023.02.11-193215/https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/tavistock-gender-clinic-puberty-blockers-nhs-investigation-fh7pngj0v?utm_medium=Social

²⁰ <https://www.engage.england.nhs.uk/specialised-commissioning/gender-dysphoria-services/>

²¹ Irish Daily Mail (February 16 2023) 'Scrap Plan' to Let Teenagers Change Gender

not be taken away. Expert clinicians have warned that this legislation would put children at risk of harm and would cause damaging divisions in families. In an interview with the daily mail Professor Donal O'Shea, a leading clinician at the National Gender Service, stated that teenagers are too young to make life changing decisions which could lead to irreversible surgery. He highlighted the increasing number of patients who go on to regret gender transition surgery. Talking on Newstalk breakfast Professor O'Shea, suggested that activist groups such as TENI and Belong To are 'brainwashing' politicians and HSE management into making decisions that go against the advice of expert clinicians²².

The Undue Influence of Transgender NGOs on Policy

Transgender NGOs in Ireland such as TENI and Belong To, who receive large amounts of government funding, are lobbying the government for 'gender affirming healthcare', which includes hormone blockers and surgery, to be made readily available to adults, adolescents and children and are pushing for gender ideology to be taught in schools. The IEA would like to express our concern over the considerable influence that these activist groups have over government, the HSE and on teachers' bodies such as INTO, whom they have provided with resources for use in schools. Equally concerning is the influence these organisations and their associated youth groups have directly on children and adolescents²³. In relation to a meeting with Minister for Health Stephen Donnelly the TENI website states that "*We [also] welcome the Minister's commitment to working with TENI and the transgender community to ensure better and more accessible gender affirming healthcare in Ireland*"²⁴. It has recently emerged that Minister Roderick O'Gorman was responsible for the transfer of €1.1 million allocated for Magdalena Laundry victims and Traveller groups to LGBTQ+ projects²⁵.

Subjecting our children to dangerous transgender ideology and explicit sexual material in schools, youth groups and throughout society is likely to confuse, cause psychological damage to developing minds and increase the number of children presenting as transgender due to social contagion. Children with gender dysphoria should be treated with sensitivity but the dangers of irreversible 'gender affirmative health' care must be recognised.

It has become the habit of transgender groups and activists to label anyone who dares to question the LGBTQ+ agenda being rolled out for our children, as homophobic, transphobic or 'far-right'. This is a bullying tactic which we believe is being used to make it very difficult for parents, professionals and organisations who have genuine concerns for children's welfare to speak out. However, we would encourage anybody who has any concerns over what children are being exposed to and the potential for serious harm to do just that. Parents and teachers need to educate themselves on what children are being taught in schools and subjected to by wider society and the potential consequences of it.

Please visit our website <https://irisheducationalliance.com> for information on the IEA and our recent campaigns. The IEA have also produced a video of teachers and parents speaking out about the teaching of gender ideology in schools which can be accessed here <https://youtu.be/thcj0HyDNo8>

²² <https://www.newstalk.com/news/activists-brain-washing-hse-management-on-gender-recognition-bill-1438035>

²³ <https://westawake.substack.com/p/a-24-year-old-woman-speaks-out-about?sd=pf>

²⁴ <https://teni.ie/teni-met-with-minister-for-health-stephen-donnelly-td/>

²⁵ <https://www.independent.ie/irish-news/politics/roderic-ogorman-raids-funds-to-push-11m-to-lgbtq-projects-42370318.html>