



Safe Schools Alliance UK



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Gavin Williamson MP, Secretary of State for Education [via email]

cc to:

Nick Gibb MP, Minister of State for Education

Baroness Berridge, Parliamentary Under-Secretary (Department for Education)

Vicky Ford MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary (Department for Education)

Kemi Badenoch MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary (Minister for Equalities)

26/06/20

Dear Gavin Williamson,

We have been contacted by parents concerned about materials promoted by the Department for Education that breach your own guidance on RSE and the Public Sector Equality Duties. If the DfE recommends or promotes resources they should be fully compliant with safeguarding procedures, the Equality Act 2010, the Public Sector Equality Duty, and the statutory guidance on Relationships Education, Relationship and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education.

The resources in question:

- Are at odds with the Public Sector Equality Duty to advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Are at odds with the Public Sector Equality Duty to foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Are at odds with the Education Act 1996 that requires a balanced presentation of opposing views.
- Contain inappropriate levels of detail about sexualities for 4-year olds
- Breach all standard safeguarding guidance by encouraging dangerous online behaviour and aiming to separate children from the guidance of their parents.
- Conflate sex and gender throughout.

Full details of the safeguarding issues are listed from page 2. These are examples of specific concerns raised by parents; however, there are many other similar resources also promoted or endorsed by DfE. We would like to know who reviewed these resources before they were promoted by the DfE, and what qualifications and experience they have in child development, education and safeguarding. Does DfE use any safer recruitment procedures with regards to the organisations it promotes that produce resources for children?

We call on the Department for Education to stop promoting resources that undermine child safeguarding; to remove links to these organisations; and to review how DfE promote organisations and resources so that child safeguarding is always prioritised.

We request a meeting with you at the earliest available opportunity to discuss these serious concerns.

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## Safeguarding issues in detail

### The Day online newsletter

The Department for Education [recommends 'The Day'](#) as a resource for home learning during school closures, at every level from age 5.

[A recent PSHE activity](#), (since taken down) posted on the site looked at JK Rowling's recent comments in favour of retaining women's rights to single sex spaces. This post described J.K Rowling as 'deeply unpleasant', 'harming minorities', and a 'bad person' who 'has done something terrible'. The article goes on to compare Rowling to the anti-Semitic composer Richard Wagner, and, with incredible insensitivity, the painter Pablo Picasso, who it says has been 'accused of a celebration of sexual violence'.

Despite 'The Day' claiming to look at current events 'without bias', no alternative viewpoint to this was given.

The parent who sent this to us was outraged that her school would send her son a piece of writing which suggested that women should be silenced, boycotted and erased for questioning sex self-identification, and which portrayed her exercising of free speech on a matter of public debate as hateful.

We are appalled that the DfE is promoting a resource which gives such an unbalanced view of issues affecting women and girls to teenagers.

How is the DfE fulfilling its Public Sector Equality Duty to 'advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic (in this case, sex) and persons who do not share it' by promoting this resource?

How is the DfE fulfilling its 'Duty to secure balanced treatment of political issues' under the Education Act 1996?

Given the high levels of sexual abuse and harassment reported by girls in school, why is DfE endorsing the view that women who wish to retain their rights to single-sex spaces are deeply unpleasant?

Given that single-sex spaces are allowed under the Equality Act 2010, why is DfE endorsing resources that describe women who seek to utilise this right as hateful?

## Just Like Us

We have also been contacted by parents concerned about your promotion of 'Just Like Us' [on the DfE Facebook page](#).

### **Just Like Us – LGBT+ Essentials with Olly Pike! video**

The 'LGBT+ Essentials with Olly Pike!' [video](#) is marketed as being for 4-11 year olds. It is a series of short videos followed by a question and answer session. The first video explains



what LGBT+ means, which includes briefly mentioning pansexual, asexual, queer and bi-gender.

- Does DfE consider listing all these sexualities to be an appropriate learning point for four-year olds?

In the question and answer session, Olly Pike gives a number of answers that are inappropriate for the stated age range of 4-11-year olds.

When discussing the Rainbow Flag, Pike comments that if you are an LGBT+ person, when you see the LGBT+ flag you know you will be welcome and will feel safe.

- Does DfE consider it appropriate to imply to 4-11-year olds that places that do not display the rainbow are unsafe?
- Does DfE consider it appropriate to tell 4-11-year olds that anyone displaying the rainbow flag is 'safe'? What does this mean in the context of safe and unsafe adults?

When asked who a child can talk to if they have questions about being LGBT+, Pike says children aged 5-9 should ask their parents. He goes on to say that for older children (again, bearing in mind this is aimed at 4-11 year olds) who are questioning if they might be LGBT+, it's really important to consider whether talking to someone is going to be safe. He suggests that children don't talk to immediate family or friends, but someone they trust like a teacher – perhaps an LGBT+ teacher – about what being LGBT+ means. He also suggests getting information online from his own videos, as well as charities websites including Mermaids.

- Why is the DfE encouraging children not to talk to their parents and suggesting that talking to parents might not be safe, in the absence of any indication of risk?
- Why is the DfE encouraging children to look up information online without talking to their parents, in the absence of any indication of parental risk?

Pike replies to a question about role models by saying that one of his favourite LGBT+ representatives is Munroe Bergdorf. Bergdorf is a 'trans activist' who was dropped as an NSPCC Ambassador after concerns were raised over Bergdorf's practice of encouraging teenagers to make direct contact via social media.

- Does DfE believe that Munroe Bergdorf is a suitable role model for young children?

Pike also replies to a question by saying that if anyone doesn't know what RuPaul's Drag Race is, he has a video about it on his site. RuPaul's Drag Race is shown after the watershed and contains adult content that is clearly unsuitable for primary school aged children.

- Does DfE believe it is appropriate to discuss programmes containing adult content with young children?



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## Just Like Us – Sabah Choudrey “Gender Diversity masterclass” video

The “Gender Diversity” [video](#) is marketed as a masterclass for 14-16 year olds. The belief in gender identity is presented as fact, with no consideration of alternative viewpoints. The ‘gender unicorn’ is presented as factual and not as a belief system around gender identity.

- How is the DfE fulfilling its “Duty to secure balanced treatment of political issues” under the Education Act 1996?

Sex is described as being ‘assigned at birth’, suggesting an arbitrary assignment of male and female instead of the straightforward observation of sex that happens in reality.

- Why is DfE promoting the idea that sex, an observable fact, is ‘assigned at birth’?

The video explains that gender expression is based on how people dress and behave, from feminine through androgynous to masculine. The implication is that people should be categorised according to their dress and behaviour.

Gender stereotypes are defined as ‘simple ideas about groups of people which we think are true but are not true for everyone in this group.’ Trans people are explained as not adhering to gender stereotypes and thus being trans.

- How does this tie in with DfE statutory guidance on RSE that schools ‘must be alive to everyday sexism, misogyny, homophobia and gender stereotypes’ and ‘provide an environment which challenges perceived limits on pupils based on their gender’?

Femininity is described as a powerful thing that people are scared of, so society stereotypes and discourages people who we think are more powerful than us, such as women, transwomen and feminine people.

- This conflates sex (being female) with gender presentation (femininity), which reinforces sex stereotypes and does nothing to prevent sexism and misogyny in schools.
- Common examples of sexual harassment targeted at women are given as examples only of harassment of LGBTQ people.

When asked how to answer people who insist there are only two genders due to biology, Choudrey says that it doesn’t matter if there are two, three or 50 genders, and not to get stuck on science. Choudrey then says that questions like that come from wanting to police what people look like.

- Does the DfE endorse the view that science – the basis of much of our understanding of the world and our education system – should be ignored, and that those who refer to scientific fact are doing so in order to police what people look like?

We look forward to hearing from you,

Tanya Carter and Tracy Shaw  
[Safe Schools Alliance UK](#)