



The Rt Hon Gillian Keegan MP
Secretary of State for Education

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31 March 2023

Dear Headteachers and School Leaders,

LETTER TO SCHOOLS: SHARING CURRICULUM RESOURCES WITH PARENTS

I hope you have had a successful Spring Term and are looking forward to the Easter holidays. In the light of recent concerns, I am writing to you to clarify schools' responsibilities to engage with parents when it comes to sharing curriculum materials, particularly on relationships, sex and health education. I also want to make clear what the law allows, following public discussions on the risk of unsuitable materials getting into schools.

The relationship between parents and schools is at the heart of successfully educating children. Parents play a crucial role in supporting their children's learning and pupils do better at school because of it. I know it is something schools work very hard to get right.

I am confident that most schools engage parents in a positive way. However, I have become aware of an increasing number of cases where parents have had concerns about the materials used to teach their children. Some have been prevented from viewing those curriculum materials because their children's schools believed they were unable to do so for commercial reasons.

The Department is clear that parents should be able to view all curriculum materials. This includes cases where an external agency advises schools that their materials cannot be shared due to restrictions in commercial law, or a school's contract with the provider prohibits sharing materials beyond the classroom. Parents are not able to veto curriculum content, but it is reasonable for them to ask to see material if it has not already been shared, especially in relation to sensitive topics.

In relation to the teaching of relationships, sex and health education (RSHE), there are specific requirements which mean that all schools must publish a relationships or a relationships and sex education policy, and consult parents on it. Further to this, the statutory guidance on RSHE is clear that when consulting parents, schools should provide examples of the resources that they plan to use, and ask to see the materials external providers will use in advance.

With these points in mind, the Department would expect schools to avoid entering into any agreement with an external agency that seeks to prevent them from ensuring parents are

properly aware of the materials that are being used to teach their children. Schools should not agree to contractual restrictions on showing parents the content used in RSHE teaching or agree to this being subject to a third party's right of refusal. There is a strong public interest in parents being able to see the full content of RSHE teaching. Schools must ensure that their statutory duty to have regard to the RSHE guidance is communicated to third party providers, together with the expectation that the default position must always be that the content is shared with parents.

We know that some schools will have already entered into contracts with providers that prevent them from sharing materials with parents. Even where this is the case, schools can show resources to parents in person on the school premises without infringing copyright in the resource, so this should not be an obstacle to sharing materials with parents who wish to see them. Having to come to the school is, however, likely to be inconvenient for parents and schools, so should not be a long term arrangement. We would expect schools to take urgent steps to either renegotiate these contracts or find an alternative provider at a suitable time, so that materials can be sent out or made available online to parents.

As you know, all schools are required to share information about the curriculum with parents. Local Authority maintained schools are required to publish the content of the curriculum each year on their websites, including how parents can obtain further information. Academies' funding agreements contain the same requirements, and the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 require independent schools to make a written policy on the curriculum available to parents.

Curriculum materials may be copyright works owned by those external agencies, and we appreciate that schools will be concerned to avoid infringing an external agency's intellectual property rights. This is why we hope it is helpful to clarify that we expect schools to adopt a transparent approach, and not work with providers whose copyright issues prevent this.

I hope that this letter will help to clarify how materials can be shared and support you to engage with parents constructively going forward. The Prime Minister announced recently that we have brought forward our review of the statutory RSHE guidance. We will look to reflect the content of this letter and provide any further practical help when we update it. I will also make this letter available for parents to download from gov.uk in due course.

Thank you for all your hard work this term. Wishing you a Happy Easter.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gillian Keegan', with a long, sweeping tail extending to the right.

**The Rt Hon Gillian Keegan MP
Secretary of State for Education**