

New Clause 5 – David Burrowes and Maria Miller (*Children and Social Work Bill*)

9 February 2017

- NC5 would create a new national curriculum subject of 'Relationships Education' applying to all state-funded schools. Bizarrely, it would be the only national curriculum requirement for academies. The Secretary of State would exercise direct control over Relationships Education, supplanting the local control by head teachers and governors which applies to sex education.
- This is an attempt to uncouple relationships from existing Sex and Relationships education in a bid to make it more palatable as a statutory subject. Yet sub-clause (2) blatantly strays into topics which are part of sex education. For example it requires teaching on "the meaning of consent" in relationships and recognising sexual harassment. How could this avoid teaching about sexual activity? So NC5 will effectively impose sex education on all primary schools for the first time.
- NC5 does not define the scope of "Relationships". It plainly also encompasses domestic relationships in the home, e.g. with siblings and parents (see sub-clause (6)(a)). Teachers could criticise parental discipline under sub-clause (2)(d). "Consent" in (2)(c) is not defined. It could include a discussion of a young girl's consent to medical treatment such as abortion, where parents take a contrary view.
- The explicit purpose of NC5 is not education, but "the welfare of children". This is primarily a matter for parents. The clause is so broad that it encroaches into territory which is the domain of parents and families. It raises matters of deeply held convictions. For good reason sex education has a right of withdrawal. No such right applies here. NC5 would lead to gross breaches of parental rights.
- NC5 violates parental rights because it means that explicit sexual topics will simply be taught under Relationships Education, and parents will be powerless to protect their children by withdrawing them from these lessons. By creating an overlapping new national curriculum subject, it effectively voids the current legal framework on sex education which has been carefully formulated over decades.
- NC5 ignores the statutory guidance on safeguarding, most recently issued in September 2016, which requires schools to take action on many of these matters.
- Entrusting the topic of online safety and pornography to schools and side-lining parents, will not safeguard children. It has been well reported that lessons on pornography teach children to grade "good" and "bad" pornographic material. The approach taken by groups such as the Sex Education Forum fails to stress that pornography is dangerous and addictive. Prominent advocates of sex education have actually promoted 'sexting' (see sub-clause (2)) provided it is in a 'consensual relationship'. NC5 risks making child sexualisation worse.
- The implementation of this amendment would be inspected by Ofsted whose inspections of British values have led to high profile clashes with church schools and Jewish schools. In the hands of many Ofsted inspectors NC5 would become a vehicle for undermining the ethos of such schools and promoting political correctness.
- Outside groups would exploit this clause to push for the controversial topics which most alarm parents, e.g. transgender issues. This is clearly permissible under NC5 as sub-clause (6)(a) requires "all types" of relationship.
- Relationships Education will be used to compel church schools to endorse same-sex marriage.
- Sub-clause (4) gives outside groups a say in how Relationships Education is provided on an equal footing to parents. Who are 'local safeguarding partners' and how would they be regulated?