

SEX AND RELATIONSHIP EDUCATION

Parents are very concerned about where to draw the line when it comes to sex and relationship education. Those who contact me are worried about the education which their children are receiving at school.

It is an emotive subject. Opinions are strong and passionately held. I have an enormous sympathy with the desire to protect the young from inappropriate material and believe that most teachers and Governors have the interests of their pupils at heart. The question is where to draw the line. What is the right age to begin sex and relationship education? What is the right material to be showing our young people?

Past research has indicated that earlier is better than later. I entirely appreciate the need for children to understand the dangers that are the reality of a young person's life. Equally, I see that teachers and Governors may find the available material confusing.

This difficult area requires careful and immediate reform. I propose that the British Board of Film Classification take on classification of SRE material as part of its remit. The decisions made by the Board are subject to clear and firm guidelines with a recognised structure of examiners. When we take our children to see a film or buy them a computer game, we know broadly what material to expect and respect the system which has made the rating.

I propose that material for sex and relationship education be subject to similar classification by the Film Classification Board – cheap, effective and easily understood by parents and governors.

By dealing with a challenging issue in a logical way, we can do our best to protect the interests of our young people. We can get back to the aim of sex and relationship education – to teach our children to look after themselves and form healthy relationships in a safe environment in the future when they are emotionally ready to do so.