

DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION

WRITTEN REPLY

THURSDAY 3 MARCH 2011

MONDAY 14 MARCH 2011

ANDREA LEADSOM (SOUTH NORTHAMPTONSHIRE): To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will bring forward proposals to require (a) schools to inform parents of the content of sex education lessons and (b) parents to opt in to such lessons.

(43732)

ANDREA LEADSOM (SOUTH NORTHAMPTONSHIRE): To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will bring forward proposals to require primary schools to inform school governors of the teaching materials used in sex education lessons.

(43733)

ANDREA LEADSOM (SOUTH NORTHAMPTONSHIRE): To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what requirements his Department places on primary schools in respect of the teaching of sex education; and if he will bring forward proposals to require the suppliers of teaching materials for sex education lessons to be licensed.

(43734)

NICK GIBB:

(Holding replies sent 3 March)

School Governing Bodies have a statutory responsibility to ensure that schools have a policy for teaching about sex education which, as a minimum, should provide information about how sex education will be provided, any sensitive issues that will be covered and who will provide it. The policy must be made available to parents on request and must include information about parents' right to withdraw their children from sex and relationships (SRE) provided outside the national curriculum.

We believe it is important that all children have access to high quality SRE so they can make wise and informed choices. Those parents who do not believe that their children are ready to receive SRE at school, or who want to provide it themselves are able to withdraw their children from SRE lessons.

Members of school governing bodies are already responsible for deciding what information the school should make available to them. It is therefore not necessary to require schools to inform school governors of the teaching material used in sex education. In practice this will already happen as part of the governing body's statutory responsibility to have a sex education policy.

When providing sex education all schools must have regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State published in 2000. This is designed to secure that pupils receiving sex education learn about the nature of marriage and its importance for family life and the upbringing of children. Furthermore, it is designed to protect pupils from teaching and materials which are inappropriate having regard to the age and religious and cultural background of the pupils concerned.

The guidance provides information about how schools can set in place arrangements to protect pupils from inappropriate teaching and materials. The guidance can be viewed at:

<http://www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationdetail/page1/DfES%200116%202000>.

We believe it is important that teachers have good quality teaching material to support them in providing sex education, but that they should have the flexibility to use their own professional judgement in deciding such matters, taking account of the guidance, the needs of pupils and the ethos of the school. We have no plans, therefore, to require the suppliers of teaching materials for sex education to be licensed.