

All page references are to the Ministry of Education's Relationship and Sexuality Education guide (2020) Years 1-8.

<https://health.tki.org.nz/Teaching-in-Health-and-Physical-Education-HPE/Policy-guide/Relationships-and-Sexuality-Education>

Dear NAME

Following our recent correspondence / discussion of the Relationship and Sexuality Education guide, I wish to explain my concerns about the teaching of gender theory to children:

Age appropriateness

The RSE guide begins teaching children about sexuality and gender from Year 1 when they are 5 years old. At Level 1, the guide states that children need to “understand the relationship between gender, identity and wellbeing.” [p30] Right from a child's first year of school, they are being introduced to the concept of ‘gender identity’ – an ideology which is not accepted by all nor necessary for a 5 year old to know anything about.

At Level 1, students are also taught to recognise and name body parts – which is appropriate. However, according to gender theory, children should be taught that some girls can have a penis and some boys can have a vulva. I am strongly opposed to such false ideas being taught to children as facts.

At Level 2, when they are just 8 years old, the guide states that children should be able to “identify gender stereotypes, understand the difference between gender and sex, and know that there are gender diverse and sexual identities in society.” [p31] They also need to understand that “personal identities differ (eg in terms of gender).” These themes – particularly that of transgenderism – are re-emphasised and expanded upon every single year from then on.

Children should not be taught gender beliefs as facts, nor that their bodies need to be changed to match sex stereotypes, nor about sexual identities at such a young age. While I am aware that children have earlier access to the internet these days, it does not mean that they need to be introduced to adult concepts at age 8.

Belief being taught as fact

Schools are encouraged to question gender stereotypes and assumptions about sexuality, including:

- gender norms
- gender binaries
- gender stereotypes
- sex norms, for example, the assumption that sex characteristics at birth are always male or female. [p19; p48-50]

Teaching children about gender stereotypes is valuable but teaching them, against all scientific evidence, that sex is not binary and not obvious at birth (and before) for more than 99% of babies is nothing short of indoctrination. The scientific evidence is very clear that there are two distinct biological sexes. Sex is not an assumption and is not “assigned at birth” – it is observed and recorded. I am extremely concerned that the school would promote an ideology that is not based on fact or evidence.

Teaching these falsehoods means children are learning to genuinely believe that it is possible to be born in the wrong body and that a person can actually – literally – change their sex. I would ask that the

school reviews what is being taught in this space – both in RSE and science – and ensure that students are correctly taught that:

- A person cannot be born in the wrong body
- There are two sexes - male and female. (Intersex is a very rare medical condition that is not relevant for young children.)
- A person cannot change their sex, although they can change their gendered behaviour.

Body Positivity vs Regressive Stereotypes

I don't mind if my daughter decides to present in a masculine way or if my son decides to present in a feminine way. I support the right of all people to live how they want, free from discrimination and bullying. However, gender ideology promotes and endorses regressive and harmful sex stereotypes by using them as the marker for a child's sex. A girl who likes to play sports and has no interest in stereotypically feminine things used to be described as a 'tomboy' but is now asked whether she is actually a boy. Likewise with boys – if he likes dancing and is sensitive, the ideology says he must really be a girl.

Schools should be promoting body positive messages, not the idea that non-conformity to gender stereotypes means that a child's personality or body is wrong. Children should not be led to believe that they need to change their body, bind their breasts, or wear a skirt to match a regressive sex stereotype. [p48]

Indoctrination

The RSE guide explicitly states that schools need to incorporate the values and concepts described (ie, gender ideology) throughout the school culture, its leadership practices, the school's physical environment, physical education, and the school's management systems. It also suggests ways that RSE concepts can be taught across the entire school curriculum, specifically in English, Science, Mathematics & Statistics, Social Sciences and Arts & Languages. [p17; pp 28-29]

By teaching these concepts throughout the entire curriculum and enmeshing them into every aspect of school life, you are negating my ability to remove my child from these topics. It does not matter if I remove my child from specific RSE classes, if they are still learning about gender ideology in every other class.

Teaching overt gender ideology across an entire education system every single year can only have the effect of indoctrinating children into that particular belief system. This repetition, combined with online influences, means that children are being groomed into transgenderism. When children who claim a gender identity are excessively acclaimed by adults, inevitably more children will seek that adult attention.

Safe-guarding of children

It is well-established that parents need to know when other adults intend to speak to their children about sex. It needs to be utterly transparent to ensure safe-guarding of the children and also to ensure that what is said aligns with the family's cultural or religious beliefs.

Gender ideology purports that bodies aren't important – identities are. The RSE guide recommends "Ideally, schools will have at least one gender-neutral toilet available for akonga, but trans, non-binary, and intersex akonga should not be required to use this rather than male or female toilets." [p20]

This creates a significant safe-guarding issue because it means girls are forced to accept males (who say they are really girls) in their changing rooms. Teaching girls that a man really can become a woman, trains them to suppress their instinctual caution and override their embarrassment and natural discomfort with having boys in their single sex spaces. It says that what girls want or feel doesn't matter and that they are not in charge of their own boundaries.

Gender ideology supporters also specifically encourage gender-questioning children to speak to Rainbow organisations, peers, or an 'online family' rather than their parents. The RSE guide appears to endorse this concept, not once stating that schools should seek parental permission before using a student's preferred name or pronouns. [p19] Where students need access to 'support services' and these cannot be accessed onsite, the guide specifies that students should be supported in seeking access to professionals outside of the school with no mention made of seeking parental consent. [p22]

Girls' and boys' facilities

Gender questioning children need privacy and dignity just the same as other students. To that end, I support the school ensuring that there are some unisex facilities for these students to utilise. However, schools should continue to offer single sex facilities as well. Having only enclosed unisex toilets creates a risk of children being stuck, in trouble, bullied, or assaulted in one of these toilets with far less chance of someone being able to intervene. Boys and girls alike deserve a single-sex shared space where they can get changed and chat together.

The RSE guide recommends "Trans girls should be able to use the female toilets if they prefer." [p21] This glib statement gives absolutely no consideration to the comfort or dignity of girls who do not want to share intimate spaces with male-bodied people and who have the right to set such boundaries.

Preferred Pronouns

Asking students and teachers to use 'preferred pronouns' [p19] may appear to be kind and inclusive but in reality is forcing other people to adhere to a belief system they may not agree with.

Preferred pronouns reinforce the incorrect idea that people can change their sex. When the school encourages their use, it thwarts the rights of parents to opt their children out of gender identity discussions. Preferred pronouns can cause tension and conflict through the fear, or in the event, of someone making a mistake. They cement the social transition of a child, making it harder for them to later change their mind. Some children may feel forced to choose different pronouns to avoid scrutiny from bullies.

The RSE guide prompts teachers to use a student's preferred pronouns, but a guide should be restricted to describing content, not encouraging teachers to socially transition someone else's child.

Social Transition

The RSE guide encourages schools to socially transition children without necessarily seeking parental consent. [p19]. Socially transitioning a child is not an isolated act without consequence – it is the first step in a very serious, complex and life-changing process in which parents must be fully informed. It is not the school's place to make any medical or psychological assessments about my child, least of all without my consent. I would like to remind you of the Care of Children Act and your obligations to fully inform a parent of any procedure or treatment.

Other influences

Of huge concern is that schools appear to be implementing gender ideology without having done any research into the other drivers and influences that are out there with regards to transgenderism. Whilst you might view the RSE guide as a standalone topic that only happens at school, it must be considered as part of a wider picture.

Many of the third party activist groups that are heavily referenced in the RSE guide have links on their pages that lead children to ever more extreme versions of gender ideology. On TikTok, YouTube, Facebook and in their gaming, children are being constantly bombarded with ads and invitations to watch transgender influencers who universally glamourise the concept and convince children it is possible and even easy and desirable to change sex.

Does the school have a full and sound understanding of gender identity beliefs?

– Has the school watched the online influencers and made a decision that it is appropriate to guide children towards them? Because by teaching this ideology, that is where you are directing them whether intentionally or not.

– Has the school read the criticism of gender theory from experts such as Stella O'Malley, Helen Joyce, Dr Kathleen Stock, Abigail Shrier and many others?

– Has the school explored the stories of detransitioners whose lives have been irreversibly damaged as a result of this ideology?

I encourage you to research widely on gender identity beliefs and not just accept rhetoric from lobby groups who have their own agendas.

Social Contagion

It is well established that some psychiatric conditions can and do become contagious, particularly among adolescent girls. This is something psychologists and schools alike have known for years and is the reason why schools do not teach children about suicide or eating disorders like anorexia and bulimia. If topics such as suicide, depression, cutting, and eating disorders are spoken about at a school assembly – never mind taught constantly throughout every guide subject – you would be unsurprised when many more students developed those disorders.

In the same way, many schools are now constantly promoting, in every facet of school life, the disorder of body dissociation as an ideal, chosen identity. Gender ideology communicates to children that some identities are more or less fashionable or desirable. Children who adopt a gender identity are constantly praised, put on a pedestal and celebrated; whilst 'heteronormative' people are painted as privileged, boring, and undesirable. Placing so much significance on gender identity creates a social contagion and a consequent sharp increase in students developing gender dysphoria.

Activism

In the RSE guide there is an emphasis on children "taking collective action." On almost every topic, it is never enough to simply educate the students about the subject matter, they are also constantly expected to take on the role of activist. I would find this approach concerning on any subject matter – teachers should be educating children so that they can read, write, and think critically, not to become activists. If students later become passionate about a topic they have researched, they can certainly pursue that further when they are adults.

That the RSE guide directs teachers to a number of activist organisations for further resources, is also extremely concerning. I do not think disseminating the propaganda of third party lobby groups is a responsible, safe, or appropriate way in which to educate children.

Conclusion

I understand that, overwhelmingly, schools and teachers want to do the right thing and support children who may be questioning their sexuality or gender. However, recently, an overemphasis on transgenderism has become apparent, which appears to be promoting transitioning as a 'cool' social trend. The excess emphasis on this topic, I believe, is not age appropriate, is unnecessary, and runs the risk of grooming children into an ideology. Furthermore, while many schools just want to do the right thing, there are also schools and teachers who are behaving in an overtly activist manner.

Request review RSE guide: *I request that the school conducts a review of the appropriateness of the new RSE guide, taking into consideration the points I have raised in this letter.*

Recommend alternatives: *I have also attached an alternative [RSE guide and a Body Positive Policy \[Links needed\]](#) for the school to evaluate. I ask that you consult with parents and the school board on both of these and consider whether these resources might be an appropriate alternative for the school.*