

[Date]

Dear [Norma Foley, NCCA, Senator, TD, School Principal, etc]

We would like to urgently bring your attention to a video released by the Natural Women's Council of an interview with a former SPHE teacher and coordinator.

<https://www.naturalwomenscouncil.ie/petition>

In the interview the teacher highlights some of the shocking content from a yearlong DCU training course for SPHE teachers, which she completed in February 2024. This teacher was clearly traumatised by some of the content of this course, which is to be taught in classrooms of 12 to 15 year old children. She also draws attention to contentious aspects of the new Junior Cycle SPHE curriculum and inappropriate content in the text books and resources used. This teacher is of the opinion that some of the content she refers to, breaches child safeguarding standards set out by the Children First act 2015.

Anyone watching this video, which also includes shocking examples of resources used on the DCU course, can only be horrified by what is being taught and what is proposed to be taught to our children.

Our particular concerns are the following:

1. The exposure of our children to utterly inappropriate, extreme and graphic sexual content.
2. The normalisation of the use of pornography by children under the age of consent and the concept of 'ethical porn'.
3. The promotion of sex for pleasure alone rather than as part of a committed relationship.
4. An overemphasis on LGBTQ+ and transgender issues and the teaching of ideologies and their associated terminology, that are not based on fact.
5. The inappropriate influence of activist groups and NGOs on curriculum content, teacher training, teaching resources and materials and teaching practices.
6. The lack of transparency and consultation with parents which leaves them in the dark about what their children are learning in school and who is teaching it to them.
7. The use of classroom contracts or 'charters' which prevent children from discussing what goes on in classrooms with their parents.
8. The potential for third parties to be brought into schools to teach material which teachers are uncomfortable with.
9. The whole school, cross curricular approach to teaching SPHE and RSE material, which takes time and resources from important core subjects and means parents are unable to opt their children out of lessons containing content they are uncomfortable with.

Action must immediately be taken to:

1. Halt the teaching of the new Junior Cycle SPHE curriculum pending an urgent review.
2. Halt the DCU SPHE teacher training course, pending a full investigation into the content.
3. Stop the influence of activist NGOs in schools, in curriculum development and in teacher training and ensure a balanced representation of opinion on future curriculum committees.
4. Remove the teaching of transgender and other ideologies, which have no basis in fact, from schools.
5. Withdraw text books, library books and internet resources for school children, which contain explicit sexual material or references to pornography and transgender ideology.

We would like to draw your attention to:

1. The recently published Cass Report. An independent review, by Dr Hilary Cass and a team of experts, commissioned in the UK, on the treatment of gender dysphoric children. In relation to gender confused children, Dr Cass recommends against the unquestioned affirmative approach, promoted by activist NGOs, influential in curriculum development and prevalent in educational resources and materials in Irish schools.
2. New guidance which has been published by the UK government to protect children from the kind of content that is outlined in our stated concerns above. A UK government press release from May 2024 states that:

‘Following multiple reports of disturbing materials being used in Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE) lessons, the Department for Education has published updated guidance that will ensure content is factual, appropriate and that children have the capacity to fully understand everything they are being taught.

Parents will have the right to see the resources that are being used to teach their children about relationships, health and sex in all circumstances and new age limits will be introduced so that children are not introduced to content they may not have the maturity to understand.

Sex education will not be taught before Year 5, and at that point from a purely scientific standpoint.

The contested theory of gender identity will not be taught.’

3. Article 42 of the Irish Constitution which states that:

‘The State acknowledges that the primary and natural educator of the child is the Family and guarantees to respect the inalienable right and duty of parents to provide, according to their means, for the religious and moral, intellectual, physical and social education of their children’.

4. Article 42A of the Irish constitution which states that:

‘The State recognises and affirms the natural and imprescriptible rights of all children and shall, as far as practicable, by its laws, protect and vindicate those rights.’

5. Section 9 (d) of the Education Act 1998, whereby a school is obliged to:

‘promote the moral, spiritual, social and personal development of students and provide health education for them, in consultation with their parents, having regard to the characteristic spirit of the school’

6. The Children First Act 2015 and the Children First National Guidance for the protection and Welfare of Children, which includes the following examples of sexual abuse:

‘Showing sexually explicit material to children, which is often a feature of the ‘grooming’ process by perpetrators of abuse.’

‘Exposing a child to inappropriate or abusive material through information and communication technology.’

The guidance also states that:

‘Emotional abuse is the systematic emotional or psychological ill-treatment of a child as part of the overall relationship between a caregiver and a child.’

In Conclusion

We firmly believe that the primary responsibility for educating children, especially on sensitive topics, rests with parents and families. Schools should provide supportive, educational environments without imposing particular ideologies or agendas on impressionable students. It is of paramount importance that children be protected from content which is not age appropriate or that may be harmful, distressing or psychologically damaging and that an atmosphere of transparency exists whereby parents feel included and consulted in their children’s education. Our children's education must be free from unnecessary extremes, ideologically driven content, and inappropriate materials, while maintaining a focus on academic excellence and the holistic development of every student.

We ask that you take immediate action to address our concerns and work with parents and teachers to create a curriculum and school environment that respects the rights, values, and beliefs of parents and children in our community and protects children from harmful and inappropriate content.

Yours Sincerely

[Name]

[Contact details]

References

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