

# RESPONSE TO THE CONSULTATION ON CHANGES TO RELATIONSHIP AND SEXUALITY EDUCATION (RSE)

## INTRODUCTION

The education of our children is the most important thing for any family, and especially Christian family homes. Parents are commanded to “...bring [their children] up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.” Eph. 6:4. Christians are expected to be highly involved in raising their own children. Two areas are mentioned. First, Paul includes discipline. Discipline involves learning self-control, and the ability to restrain from personal desires, in order to do what is right. Second, Paul adds the “admonition of the Lord.” We should be involved in teaching our children about God’s ways through both education and by example.

The continued push for the sexualisation of children in schools, all over the world, through the teaching of RSE, is very disturbing and needs to be stopped by direct parental action. We are glad that in schools in Northern Ireland, the Boards of Governors have the ultimate authority in what is taught to children and wish to encourage parents to [apply for BoG positions](#) to continue that Christian influence in schools. We would also encourage parents to send their children to Christian schools, if available to them, but as these changes to RSE will ultimately affect the morality of the entire province, regardless of religion, it is therefore very important to respond to this consultation, regardless. We would encourage everyone to respond to this consultation, the closing date for submissions is 24th November 2023.

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Before coming to the questions in the consultation the Free Presbyterian Church would like to make the following points.

1. The CEDAW report from which the imposition of abortion and now teaching abortion as a right stems, is a highly controversial and biased source. While the government may have accepted the report, we question why a left-wing agenda being promoted by this organisation should be accepted as a one size fits all template for Northern Ireland and presumably for the world. Are they to be allowed to override the morals of local populations? Are we in a situation where an elite are able to dictate the morals of the world and override the religious convictions of local populations?
2. If the content of the new RSE curriculum as is suggested in the booklet spreads across not only RSE classes but Drama History and Biology etc. the right of parents to withdraw their children will be meaningless.
3. Is there a provision for a teacher who has a moral objection to teaching abortion as a right being able to express their objection on religious

grounds? It does not seem that this is the case and so there seems to be the possibility of a teacher being forced to speak in a way that violates their conscience. This would be forced speech.

4. The shortness of the time between when the consultation closes and when the Department is to respond, especially as it is over the Christmas period would lead us to question whether this consultation is serious in the first place.
5. We are concerned about the statement “CCEA has engaged with a range of stakeholders who generally have expressed interest in or have a remit to support schools and young people in relation to RSE.” We are told that these stakeholders include “external providers” On what basis were these external providers selected? Do they include organisations like the family planning association or Stonewall? Why have evangelical churches such as the Free Presbyterian, Baptist, Reformed Presbyterian, Evangelical Presbyterian, Elim Pentecostal or other evangelical Churches not been included among the stakeholders?

## **SUGGESTED RESPONSES**

### **QUESTION 1**

The content of teaching and learning resources for Learning for Life and Work developed by CCEA should be factual and contain age-appropriate, comprehensive and scientifically accurate education on sexual and reproductive health and rights, covering prevention of early pregnancy and access to abortion and these resources should not advocate, or oppose, a particular view on the moral and ethical considerations of abortion or contraception.

### **DISAGREE**

To teach abortion without moral or ethical consideration is an impossibility. If you teach that abortion is available as a right and do not say that such an abortion is the ending of a human life you have already made a moral and ethical judgement. You cannot teach abortion in a moral vacuum. If abortion is presented without ethical and moral consideration then it effectively endorses the pro-abortion view. The Word of God is very clear that a child in the womb is a person and thus the deliberate ending of that life is wrong (Psalm 139:13-16, Exodus 20:13.)

Also, the mention of abortion as a right throughout the consultation is something that we cannot accept and the fact that it is so described seems to indicate that while the legislation says that “resources should not advocate, or oppose, a particular view on the moral and ethical considerations of abortion or contraception.” that a positive view of abortion has already been adopted.

Such teaching also runs counter to the ethos of many schools. If the ethos of the school is one that sees abortion as the ending of an innocent life it must nonetheless teach access to abortion! This would make statements by the Department that there is to be respect to the ethos of the school meaningless.

Furthermore, what is classed as “scientifically accurate information”? Will this include information on what an abortion actually entails or that you cannot change your DNA makeup? If not, why not? What is the Department doing to ensure this is the case?

## **QUESTION 2**

Parents/carers should be informed about the specific nature and content of the age-appropriate, comprehensive and scientifically accurate education on sexual and reproductive health and rights, covering prevention of early pregnancy and access to abortion.

### **AGREE**

Parents and guardians are the primary carers of their children and are those who are responsible before God for the education of their children therefore parents/guardians should always be informed of what their children are being taught. We would go further and advocate that parents be told well ahead of time so that they can have time to speak to teachers and act appropriately. Not only should they be told well ahead of time but they should be informed as to what resources are being used for the classes. If outside organisations are being invited in, parents should be informed as to who those outside organisations are. They should also have a right to withdraw their children from classes dealing with LGBTQ+ issues.

## **QUESTION 3**

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child 3 includes at Articles 1-3 and 12 the rights of the child to ‘express their views, feelings and wishes in all matters affecting them, and to have their views considered and taken seriously’ and at Article 5 ‘the rights and responsibilities of parents and carers to provide guidance and direction to their child as they grow up so that they fully enjoy their rights. This must be done in a way that recognises the child’s increasing capacity to make their own choices.’ The Department’s guidance, when developed, should consider in such instances how schools balance the rights of both children and parents/carers in implementing the regulations.

### **DISAGREE**

We are suspicious that this conceals a move to undermine the rights of parents to safeguard their children. The quotation from the Convention on the Rights of the child is selective.

Article 14: 1 says...

“1. States, Parties shall respect the right of the child to freedom of thought, conscience and religion.”

Given that abortion cannot be discussed in a moral and ethical vacuum and that to do so is to become a promoter of abortion, is the state now to become a promoter of the doctrines of the new secular woke religion and if so where does that leave the right of the child to freedom of conscience and religion?

And Article 14:3 states...

“3. Freedom to manifest one’s religion or beliefs may be subject only to such limitations as are prescribed by law and are necessary to protect public safety, order, health or morals, or the fundamental rights and freedoms of others.”

Are teachers who believe that abortion is the killing of the innocent to be forbidden to manifest their religion and so have their freedom curtailed?

Article 18:1 states,

“...Parents or, as the case may be, legal guardians, have the primary responsibility for the upbringing and development of the child. The best interests of the child will be their basic concern.”

So the convention recognises the paramount right of parents in the upbringing and development of their children. The fact that selective quotation has been made suggests that there is an agenda that has already been decided.

We also understand that this Convention on the Rights of the child is not the law of the land, but the law that is in force is Article 44 of the Education and Library (NI) Order 1986 which states that children should be educated in accordance with the wishes of their parents.

## **QUESTION 4**

Pupils and parents/carers should have access to an overview of their school’s RSE policy and planned RSE programme.

### **AGREE**

We would go further than just giving pupils and parents/guardians an overview and believe that they must have a right to view the policy and classroom resources in detail if they so wish. Parents should know what their children are going to be taught as well as what their children are going to be shown. There should be no concealing of what is being taught from parents. Openness and transparency are of critical importance here. This right must equally be extended to all subject material in classes where the matters in question are taught outside of the specified RSE classes.