

Parents United -Press Release - 22-09-2021

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Children being put at risk by Redbridge council

Over 1000 Redbridge parents have signed a petition declaring they have no confidence in the Council leadership and from some schools in Redbridge to protect their children from inappropriate Sex Education resources. This comes after a mass protest by parents in response to an inappropriately dressed character promoting the Redbridge Summer Reading Challenge.

The Council leadership was outraged by the incident at Redbridge libraries yet they have remained silent on inappropriate materials in both primary and secondary schools in Redbridge.

Schools in Redbridge have taught/planning to teach:

- **“How do people in same-sex relationships have sex?”**. (Year 8: 12-13 year olds)
- About oral sex (Year 8: 12–13-year-olds)
- Masturbation as a ‘normal practice’ for primary aged children (Year 6: 10-11 year olds)
- About sexual body parts under the cover of child protection including physical pictures (Year 1: 5-6 year olds)
- Resource providers that include a video with an erect penis (Jigsaw Program) eg- About sexual intercourse (from Year 3: 7–8-year-olds).

Parents have been demanding meaningful consultation for nearly 2 years which is a statutory requirement. This is why parents are upset and angry as some teaching has already taken place without adequate consultation. Parents have reported to Parents United (“PU”) that some children have come home in tears. Parents feel that schools have abused their position to the detriment of their children.

Ilford Recorder article dated 7 September 2021

The Recorder did not approach PU for a direct comment. We therefore respond directly here.

Redbridge Council claims that this consultation took place at **every school** in Redbridge and that Redbridge council hosted consultations **in all schools in the Borough** on how it would be taught is **untrue** according to reports from our parent members. Many schools refused to consult parents citing council consultations of various groups.

The duty to consult parents has always been with the schools, not the Council. The Council had until recently, been leading the ‘consultation’ process before handing this over to schools, giving parents just three weeks before the summer holidays to engage with schools, severely restricting the parents from holding discussions or being consulted at all by schools. Council’s consultation of parents only involved a feedback link. The only attempt at virtual meeting failed and had to be called off after the second day following parent complaints against Council’s Colin Stewart and Danielle Vorley muting parents and moderating the chat box.

A spokesperson from PU said *“In many cases, consultation has consisted of one meeting that has been a presentation with no opportunity to ask questions or hear parents’ views. The communication has been poor. Some schools gave parents seven days by which to consider the proposal and respond. The ‘consultation’ period ranged from 3 weeks in some schools to just 12 days in others. In some schools, ‘consultations’ were entirely non-existent. At best we have seen tick-box exercises by*

most schools in Redbridge. The Council's attempt to do the job of schools has cost parents their right to be consulted on how RSHE will be taught to their children.

We have been urging Council leaders to ensure the statutory duty to consult parents is met by the schools, yet we are facing a wall of silence. Only a handful of Redbridge schools like Fullwood and Loxford have listened to parents and have found a happy middle ground. They will cover all the statutory parts of the syllabus, yet will deliver it in a sensible manner, having involved parents in the process. They should be commended, and other schools should look to them for guidance."

Cllr Martin Sach, in his statement to Ilford Recorder stated that Jas Atwal has listened to the views and concerns of all local community groups and residents throughout these consultations and that *'In this instance, the leader has overseen all communications with Parents United and, when appropriate, has responded to the group directly or via relevant Council officers.'* However, this is not correct.

Our complaint against Jas Atwal, the Leader of the Council, has been due to his failure to reply to parents who wrote to him, as well as our own email correspondence regarding the failure to carry out the statutory consultation process adequately. All parents received one standard reply by email in 2020 which did not address the issues they had raised. Since then, there has been no further communication from Cllr Jas Atwal, as they claim.

Clearly the Chief Whip has made an error and this only illustrates his poor judgement when dealing with an investigation into our complaint. The fact that he has issued a statement to the paper without first providing PU with an outcome of our complaint is unprofessional and inappropriate, especially when we have not been given the opportunity to respond.

The incident at a High School where a lesson relating to 'how same-sex couples have sex' reported in the article had been used as an example in our complaint on the basis that it had been taught without carrying out a meaningful consultation with parents at the school. It was not an objection to the lesson itself as we are fully aware that a consultation will need to take on board all views from parents in the school and that lessons must be age appropriate. PU only seeks a meaningful consultation and that age and faith of children are taken into account, as required by law.

The Council should ensure that parents of faith including PU who want to engage in the legal consultation are protected from Council employees or politicians who have labeled parents as anti-LGBT to stifle any discussion. There should be no bullying of parents that want to engage in the consultation.

Parents United

NOTES TO EDITOR

- Parents United (PU) is a Muslim parent action group, connecting parents of all faiths in Redbridge. Joining together to work for faith sensitive and age appropriate RSE. We represent over 350 parents in Redbridge.
- PU can arrange interviews with parents for publication.

CONTACTS

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