

Note about Using our Example Letters

We provide example letters below for your use. Please note that Parliamentarians who receive one hundred or even one thousand identical letters will count them all as one letter. It is therefore important to make your letter look different if you want it to count. Please make your letters look different from the example letters, preferably by putting them in your own words, or by re-writing the introduction or conclusion. We have also provided bullet points that can be made into letters on our website at the following page: http://www.ccfon.org/docs/CSFBill_BulletPoints.pdf

For instructions on how to address Peers, and the distinctions between forms of address on envelopes and salutations in the letters themselves, please see:

http://www.parliament.uk/about/how/members/lords_contact/address.cfm.

Example Letters about Sex Education

Parents should be able to withdraw their Children from Sex Education up to 19 Years of Age

Dear [insert “Lady”/“Lord”/“Lord Bishop” etc. as appropriate followed by name],

Children, Schools and Families Bill

It is worrying that the Government seems to have decided to ignore the results of its Consultation on Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education last year and has decided to make sex and relationships education a statutory part of the National Curriculum in England. According to the Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency report, 79% of those who responded to the Consultation thought that parents, carers and guardians should retain their right to withdraw their children from the sex and relationships education part of PSHE education, yet the Children, Schools and Families Bill contains provisions that will prevent parents in England from withdrawing their children after their 15th birthday. I think that the parental opt-out to the age of 19 should be restored to England as it was to Wales.

I am very concerned about these proposals, because I think that parents should be able to withdraw their children from sex education. Parents have an internationally-recognised right to have their children educated in accordance with their convictions. Article 2, Protocol 1 of the European Convention on Human Rights says:

...In the exercise of any functions which it assumes in relation to education and to teaching, the State shall respect the right of parents to ensure such education and teaching in conformity with their own religious and philosophical convictions.

Please also note that Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights 1966, places on national Governments the responsibility to respect “the liberty of parents and, when applicable, legal guardians to ensure the religious and moral education of their children in conformity with their own convictions”. Is the British Government trying to deny parents their human rights?

It makes little sense from the school’s point of view to tie the withdrawal threshold to the age of the child rather than to the child’s school year, because some children attain the age

in question near the beginning of the school year and some nearer the end. It seems illogical that some children will have to receive SRE lessons from the beginning of year 10, whilst others will be withdrawn by their parents and will not receive any SRE until the end of year 10 or the beginning of year 11. Surely the Bill should state that parents have the right to withdraw their children from SRE lessons until they reach the end of year 11?

Please use your vote to support amendments that:

- remove the clauses that make PSHE a statutory part of the curriculum
- remove the three principles governing sex education (except for “teaching appropriate to the ages of the pupils concerned and their religious and cultural backgrounds”)
- remove the change to the parental opt-out so that it is not reduced to the age of 15, but restored to the age of 19 and
- restore in English schools the *status quo* regarding sex and relationships education guidance so that pupils are “protected from teaching and materials which are inappropriate having regard to the age and the religious and cultural background of the pupils concerned” instead of being taught about “strong and stable relationships” including civil partnerships.

Yours sincerely,

Sex Education should not be made Statutory

Dear [insert “Lady”/“Lord”/“Lord Bishop” etc. as appropriate followed by name],

Children, Schools and Families Bill

I am writing to ask you to oppose the clauses in the Children, Schools and Families Bill that make Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education a statutory subject, because PSHE includes sex education (SRE), which should not be compulsory.

It is worrying that the Government seems to have decided to ignore the results of its Consultation on Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education in 2009. According to the Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency report, 68% of respondents to the Consultation thought that PSHE should not be made a statutory subject. Again, 79% responded to the Consultation that parents, carers and guardians should retain their right to withdraw their children from the SRE part of PSHE, yet the Children, Schools and Families Bill contains provisions that will prevent parents in England from withdrawing their children after their 15th birthday. As recently as 24th March 2009, the Children’s Minister, Baroness Morgan, defended the parental right of withdrawal from collective worship on the basis that “parents bring up children in this country, not the government and not schools”. I think that the same reasoning should be applied to withdrawal from sex and relationships lessons.

Making sex education compulsory means in practice that children as young as 11 will be taught not only the facts of life and the context in which sex is to be used, but they will be taught all sorts of things they do not need to know, which will encourage them to find out yet more and to experiment. It stands to reason that the younger children are when they learn about sexual relationships, the more likely they are to experiment. Experimenting with sex is harmful, because it leads to the many teenage pregnancies that we see and also to sexually transmitted infections.

Whilst teachers are undoubtedly doing their best when teaching SRE, there are parents who want to teach their children about sex and relationships themselves and they should be able to withdraw their children from SRE in order to do so. The Government also seems to expect teachers to promote different kinds of sexual relationships and lifestyles as if they were the same. Additionally, schools should not be required to teach children how to access abortion services.

Please use your vote to support amendments that:

- remove the clauses that make PSHE a statutory part of the curriculum
- remove the three principles governing sex education (except for “teaching appropriate to the ages of the pupils concerned and their religious and cultural backgrounds”)
- remove the change to the parental opt-out so that it is not reduced to the age of 15, but restored to the age of 19 and
- restore in English schools the *status quo* regarding sex and relationships education guidance so that pupils are “protected from teaching and materials which are inappropriate having regard to the age and the religious and cultural background of

the pupils concerned” instead of being taught about “strong and stable relationships” including civil partnerships.

Yours sincerely,

Sex Education should not be used to Promote Homosexuality

Dear [insert “Lady”/“Lord”/“Lord Bishop” etc. as appropriate followed by name],

Children, Schools and Families Bill

I am writing to you to express my concern that the principles outlined in clause 11 of the Children, Schools and Families Bill for the teaching of sex and relationships education are an infringement of parents’ internationally-recognised right to have their children educated in accordance with their convictions.

This proposed legislation is the first Bill that has used the words “promote equality” in the context of sex and relationships education. It will result in the promotion of homosexual practice in our schools, contrary to the religious beliefs of many parents. The words “promote equality” ought to be removed from the principles for teaching SRE, because the Government is not entitled to require teachers to promote alternative lifestyles as equal. “Acceptance of diversity” should be changed to “respect for diversity”, because trying to force people to accept homosexual practice would require them to change their beliefs.

The GTCE’s code of conduct and practice was revised to take account of its negative impact on Christian teachers. The DfEE’s “Sex and Relationship Education Guidance” (0116/2000) states that sex and relationships education “...is not about the promotion of sexual orientation or sexual activity—this would be inappropriate teaching.” I think that that approach is sensible and should be maintained. It is very important that the part of clause 11 of this Bill that inserts proposed section 85B (7)(a) and (b) should be removed so as to avoid “inappropriate teaching”.

PSHE should not be made a statutory part of the curriculum in England. Parents in England should have the right to withdraw their children right up to the age of 19 as they can in Wales. They should not have to undergo any sex education if their parents wish to teach them about that topic themselves.

We are left with a situation where sex education in accordance with the Government’s pluralist, anti-life view will be compulsory in most schools and where those parents who wish to remove their children from sex education and educate them at home will have many more hurdles to overcome in order to do so. The Bill’s provisions are an unwelcome attempt to encourage many children to adopt the Government’s view of human sexuality, which is at odds with the Biblical one.

Please oppose the clauses in this Bill that seek to make sex education compulsory and that impose the futile and costly home education licensing system on parents.

Yours sincerely,

Example Letters about Home Education

The Home Education Registration Scheme is Draconian

Dear [insert “Lady”/“Lord”/“Lord Bishop” etc. as appropriate followed by name],

Children, Schools and Families Bill

I am writing to you to express my concern that the licensing scheme for home education in the Children, Schools and Families Bill is draconian and could lead to great difficulty for many parents.

The Department for Children, Schools and Families published a Consultation on home education last year. The Government’s response to the Consultation was finally published the day before the Second Reading debate on the Bill on Monday, 11th January 2010. It reveals that of the responses received, 230 were in favour of the home education proposals, 4,497 were opposed to them and 106 were unsure. It would appear that the Government has decided to press ahead regardless of the unpopularity of the scheme. Members of the public are bound to wonder whether the responses to the Consultation were taken into account in the formulation of policy on home education, or whether the DCSF’s Response to the *Review of Elective Home Education in England* of 9th October was conclusive.

Costs for registering and monitoring are estimated at £21m for the first year with additional, ongoing annual costs for the current cohort of £9.7m. I think that they are not cost-effective and should be scrapped. A similar scheme in New Zealand was stopped after just two years, because it was found to be a waste of money.

The registration scheme is really a licensing scheme in disguise and if parents unwittingly give information that is not quite accurate, or if it goes out of date, or if they move from the area of one local authority to another, or if the child says something negative about their home education, the registration can be refused or revoked. If an appeal against refusal or revocation is unsuccessful, parents may then face a School Attendance Order, with the prospect that they may be prosecuted if they dare to disobey. The freedom to educate one’s children at home without obtaining the permission of the State will effectively been taken away. I think that the home education provisions are a violation of parents’ rights as set down in Article 2, Protocol 1 of the European Convention on Human Rights.

Please vote for any amendments that remove the home education provisions from the Children, Schools or Families Bill. I think that it is far too early to be setting in stone such draconian provisions when they do not have popular support. The proposed clauses seem to have been based on rushed findings without any proper review and it seems that conclusions were drawn even before the DCSF Consultation had closed. The proposals are costly and will bring little if any benefit. At the very least, registering one’s child should be made voluntary, or non-registration should not be backed by the threat of fines.

Yours sincerely,

The Home Education Monitoring Proposals are Invasive

Dear [insert “Lady”/“Lord”/“Lord Bishop” etc. as appropriate followed by name],

Children, Schools and Families Bill

I am concerned that the Government’s proposals in the Children, Schools and Families Bill could very easily cause parents who want the very best and most suitable education for their children to be fined if they do not comply with the administrative provisions of the proposed registration requirements. This is because parents who educate their children at home will quickly be issued with a School Attendance Order if their child is not on the home education register (which can happen very easily) and because parents who do not comply with a School Attendance Order are likely to be fined, just as parents of absentees are.

The Bill states that the local authority will have to visit home-educated children to ensure that their education is “suitable”. The Bill even says that the representative of the local authority should meet with the child alone unless the parent or child objects. Such objections can be seen as a lack of co-operation and the local authority is empowered to revoke a child’s registration in such circumstances, leading to a School Attendance Order. There should be a prohibition on interviewing a child alone, because it would be unfair on the parents, as all types of false allegations may arise through misunderstandings. I think it is also a breach of fundamental human rights to question a child alone. These provisions could also result in the Government monitoring what parents teach their children. They also appear to be an infringement of the parental rights set out in section 7 of the Education Act 1996, which affirms the duty and right of parents to secure the education of their children, not that of the State.

The provisions of the Bill that allow the local education authority to monitor home education seem to confuse the idea of safeguarding children with that of educating them. Members of Parliament have said that the provisions cast a slur on home-educating parents, which Michael Gove, MP challenged:

I believe I am right in saying that not a single home-educated child has had to be taken into care as a result of a child protection plan, yet there are those who have sedulously spread the myth that somehow children are at greater risk through being home educated.

Many parents choose to educate their children at home because of the additional flexibility that the arrangement affords them to devise a tailored education for each child. The Bill’s attempt to clarify what a “suitable” education means, and its refusal to allow parents to change their plans for their child’s education without their registration being in danger of revocation, threatens that flexibility. If parents are found to have given inaccurate information about the education they plan for their child in their application for registration, their application will not be accepted, even if the information was not “incorrect or inadequate” “when it was provided”. That is unnecessarily bureaucratic and does not serve the interests of the child at all, but only the convenience of the local authority.

It is noteworthy that many talented individuals were educated at home including the Nobel Laureate in Physics 2009, William S. Boyle.

The legislative hurdles the Bill proposes for home education represent unnecessary and excessive intervention by the State. The draconian system will make it very difficult for parents to continue to educate their children at home and effectively curtails parental rights. The Bill is called the “Children, Schools and Families Bill” and I think it is a very real State intrusion into the private lives of families. I think that the right of parents to bring up their children in accordance with their convictions should be respected.

Please vote for any amendments that remove the home education provisions from the Children, Schools or Families Bill, or that improve them.

Yours sincerely,

The Home Education Provisions Undermine Parents' Rights

Dear [insert "Lady"/"Lord"/"Lord Bishop" etc. as appropriate followed by name],

Children, Schools and Families Bill

I wish to register my concern that the home education provisions in the Children, Schools and Families Bill undermine parents' rights to ensure that their children are educated in accordance with their convictions.

Article 2, Protocol I of the European Convention on Human Rights says:

No person shall be denied the right to education. In the exercise of any functions which it assumes in relation to education and to teaching, the State shall respect the right of parents to ensure such education and teaching in conformity with their own religious and philosophical convictions.

Please also read Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights 1966, which places on national Governments the responsibility to respect "the liberty of parents and, when applicable, legal guardians to ensure the religious and moral education of their children in conformity with their own convictions".

Parents have an absolute right to withdraw their children from school and to educate them themselves if they so wish. To threaten parents with fines for failing to register their home-educated children is a violation of that right, because it makes the State responsible for the education of children instead of the parents.

The rights of parents to raise their children at home should be respected.

The Bill also insists that the (subjective) "wishes and feelings" of the children who are home-schooled should play an important role in the decision whether or not to continue with their education at home. This will create conflicts between parents and children, because the latter may not understand the very good reasons why they were withdrawn from school. Parents really do know what is best for their children, not the State, nor the children themselves.

Parents should retain the primary responsibility for making decisions about their children's education and that responsibility should not be taken away by the proposed State bureaucracy, backed by the threat of fines.

Please vote against the inclusion of the home education provisions in the Children, Schools and Families Bill.

Yours sincerely,

Example Letter covering Both Issues

The Bill Undermines Parents' Rights

Dear [insert "Lady"/"Lord"/"Lord Bishop" etc. as appropriate followed by name],

Children, Schools and Families Bill

I write to ask you to prevent the Government from interfering with parental rights over the education they choose for their children and to stop the Government intruding upon family life through the Children, Schools and Families Bill. Both the God-given, legal parental duty and freedom to educate one's own children at school or otherwise and parents' right to withdraw their children from sex education will be seriously eroded by this Bill. Please vote in support of the following points:

Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education (PSHE) including Sex and Relationships Education

- Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education (PSHE), (which includes sex and relationships education) should not be made a compulsory part of the English National Curriculum. Over two thirds of respondents to the Government's Consultation said that PSHE should not be made statutory. Please vote to remove current clauses 10 to 12 of the Bill, which make PSHE a statutory part of the English Curriculum.
- Please remove the three principles under which the PSHE curriculum in England will be taught (except for "teaching appropriate to the ages of the pupils concerned and their religious and cultural backgrounds"). The combined effect of the principles will be to encourage the curriculum to be taught in a pluralistic way that will expose children to convictions about the subject with which their parents do not necessarily agree. The result will be to undermine the Christian context within which PSHE is taught in Christian schools and the ethos of faith schools, despite the Government's toothless amendment to clause 11.
- One of these principles determines that teachers must teach sex and relationships education (SRE) in a way that "endeavours to promote equality" and "encourages acceptance of diversity". That would result in the promotion of homosexual practice in SRE. These principles, which encourage religious pluralism and the promotion of homosexual practice, will be forced on parents, children and Christian teachers of PSHE through the compulsory PSHE curriculum—contrary to many people's religious beliefs. The Guidance on SRE in England from 2000 (which is soon to be replaced) states that the promotion of a sexual orientation is "inappropriate teaching". I agree with that statement.
- The Bill removes the right of parental withdrawal from SRE for children in England of 15 years and over, even though 79 per cent of consultees said the right to withdraw should remain.
- The Bible teaches holy matrimony between a man and his wife. Therefore, teaching a child that all relationships are equal is contrary to orthodox Christian doctrine.
- Please oppose the teaching of the nature of civil partnerships in SRE in England and restore the *status quo* as regards parental withdrawal, so that children can be withdrawn up to the age of 19. Please vote to remove current clauses 13 and 14 of the Bill. The restriction of the right to withdraw children to those under the age of 15 is at odds with Article 2 of the First Protocol to the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms. It states that the "...*State shall respect the right of parents to*

ensure such education and teaching in conformity with their own religious and philosophical convictions.”

Home Education

- The Government’s raft of measures for the compulsory registration and monitoring of home education are an unnecessary interference with the right to respect for private and family life. Their reason for interfering is their confusion of child abuse with home education, which wrongly casts a shadow of suspicion over parents who educate their children at home.
- The Bill even proposes that a Government Official will be able to interview a child alone without a parent present. If the parent or child objects to that meeting (as the Bill allows), then the local authority may use that refusal as a reason to revoke the child’s registration on the home education register, removing the parent’s right to choose to educate their child at home. Apart from putting pressure on parents to allow such interviews to take place, there are many difficulties associated with questioning children and using their answers, not least their lack of understanding. Interviewing children alone is a dubious practice that should not be allowed, especially as officials from the local authority may not have had appropriate training in conducting such interviews.
- The provisions for licensing home education that are proposed in clauses 26, 27 and Schedule 1 of the Bill are part of a process which is gradually removing the freedom to educate children at home, much of which will be achieved by Regulations that will not undergo Parliamentary scrutiny.
- The Home Education measures proposed in this Bill are based on the findings of the rushed Badman Report and should be postponed. The Government has not even allowed time for the implementation or analysis of its “*Elective Home Education: Guidelines for local authorities, 2007*”.
- The Bill seems to assume that local authority officials know better than parents what is in the best interests of a child. Those officials will have to become experts in everything from special educational needs to the types of topics that could or should be taught to each age-group, to alternative education models to emotional and behavioural disorders. It is unlikely that sufficiently-trained officials can be recruited; yet whatever the officials’ level of understanding, their decisions are liable to change the course of children’s lives.
- Please vote to remove current clauses 26, 27 and Schedule 1, so that the home education provisions are removed from this Bill.

The combination of these provisions means that most children will be taught the Government’s view of sex and relationships: not only will parents be pressurised into sending their children to school because of the coercive nature of the home education licensing scheme, but they will find that their children are taught from a pluralistic, anti-life viewpoint in SRE lessons if they do not withdraw them. Even the right to withdraw one’s children from SRE ends on the child’s 15th birthday in England.

I would be grateful if you could support or table amendments to the Bill to prevent this State interference with parents’ and children’s rights to respect for their private and family lives, their rights to teaching in conformity with their own religious convictions and with parents’ rights to educate their children at home.

Yours sincerely,