

Knights of Saint Columba

Accrington Council 188

Bulletin No.2- K21

Source Christian Institute

Ofsted is unfairly downgrading primary schools for not teaching LGBT issues, despite it being optional, Peers have noted.

Speaking in a House of Lords meeting, Lord Polak highlighted that Ofsted's guidance goes beyond the Department for Education (DfE) requirements, and asked the Government Minister to confirm that the organisation is exceeding its remit.

Baroness Berridge, the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for the School System, was responding to a number of questions about the implementation of the personal, social, health and economic education curriculum from September 2020.

Self-generated

Lord Polak praised the DfE's "sensitive and helpful" guidance which he said makes clear that from September, "schools, in consultation with parents, will determine what is age-appropriate, thus teaching about LGBT matters is not mandatory for primary schools".

"Now current Ofsted guidance and the practice of inspectors does not reflect this. Numerous primary schools have been downgraded in at least one category for not teaching LGBT".

He asked the Minister to confirm "that Ofsted will inspect in line with DfE policy, and not their own self-generated policies, and that primary schools will not be penalised if they do not teach LGBT according to the wishes of parents".

Religious background

Baroness Berridge confirmed that the DfE guidance "is clear that secondary schools should include LGBT content, but primary schools are strongly encouraged and enabled when teaching about different kinds of relationships".

She said this is "clearly a move from mandatory to permissive language", adding that schools are required to take into account other protected characteristics, "including, of course, the religious background of other students in the school" in line with legislation.

The Minister also confirmed that from September, Ofsted would be using the DfE guidance.

The Christian Institute's Education Officer John Denning commented: "It's not Ofsted's job to make law or write guidance: that is for Parliament and the Secretary of State for Education. It will be important that Ofsted's inspections from this coming September don't push schools to go beyond what the law requires."

Cornerstone

Ofsted is currently awaiting the result of a High Court challenge after it downgraded an evangelical Christian fostering and adoption service because of its religious ethos.

Cornerstone requires its foster carers to be evangelical Christians, and to uphold the view that marriage is the union of a man and a woman.

Ofsted claimed this was discriminatory and downgraded the agency from 'Good' to 'Requires Improvement'.

The King David High School

Last year, Ofsted admitted it was wrong to downgrade an Outstanding school to 'Inadequate' over its single-sex education policy.

The King David High School in Manchester operates a mainstream school, but also offers more focussed modern Orthodox Jewish teaching in separate streams – Yavneh Girls and Yavneh Boys.

In its report, Ofsted accused King David's of breaching the Equality Act by 'unlawfully segregating pupils on the grounds of faith and belief and sex', but it backed down after the school threatened legal action.

Bernard Holden MBE JP

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