

Education *on* Monday

Parents back calls for lessons on same sex relationships in school

RUBY KITCHEN
EDUCATION CORRESPONDENT
Email: ruby.kitchen@iptmedia.co.uk
Twitter: @ReporterRuby

PARENTS SHOULD not have the right to refuse lessons on same-sex relationships, according to the results of a new poll, but there are concerns about the age that children are involved.

Researchers at Leeds Beckett University, polling 366 parents and teachers in the wake of protests in parts of the country, asked questions over opinions on the access and delivery of lessons.

There is overwhelming backing for schools to teach children about LGBT identities, the poll has found, with 94 per cent of re-

spondents agreeing it was important.

But a lower proportion, at 73 per cent, agreed that lessons in same-sex marriage should be delivered from the age of four, and just 50 per cent agreed that children of this age should learn about transgender identities.

Professor Jonathan Glazzard and Samuel Stones, from the university's Carnegie School of Education, jointly carried out the research.

"It is possible that respondents feel that young children need to be protected from learning about LGBT identities and relationships, either because they feel that the content will cover sex or

because they believe that young children are easily influenced," they said.

"This raises some interesting issues. Firstly, some children at the age of four have same-sex parents. They are aware of same-sex relationships and they may have brothers, sisters, aunts and uncles in their family who identify as LGBT.

"If these identities are not visible in the school curriculum they can start to feel that their lives are not reflected in the school.

"Secondly, it is interesting to note that there is divided opinion on the teaching of same-sex marriage, despite the fact that in the early years children learn

about heterosexual relationships through topics on 'family' and role-plays of mock straight weddings.

"Why is it acceptable to teach children about heterosexual relationships and not about LGBT relationships and identities?"

There has been much debate on the subject nationwide, with teaching union delegates last

week backing a motion for lessons to be made compulsory in UK primary schools.

Earlier this month, the Education Secretary said that children should learn about diversity in the classroom, and not in the school playground or from the internet.

Damian Hinds, speaking in relation to a parent protests over the issue in Birmingham, said learning about the diversity of society was an important lesson for children to grow up with.

The results of the new poll are reflective of this, with 88 per cent of respondents feeling parents should not have a right to withdraw children from lessons.

The majority, 94 per cent, felt that schools had a responsibility to promote inclusion.

"The curriculum simply seeks to educate children that people and relationships are different but differences should be respected and celebrated," researchers Mr Stones and Prof Glazzard concluded.

"Young children need to be aware of LGBT people and relationships because the school curriculum should prepare children for life in a socially inclusive society.

"The LGBT curriculum does not teach children about sex. It teaches children about identities and relationships."

Sixth-form head hails 'golden' benefits of gap year

A GAP year can be a "golden opportunity" at a critical time in young people's lives, a sixth form leader has said, calling for students to consider all options.

Terry Fell, head of sixth form at Ripon Grammar School, says it can be tempting to "follow the crowd" at an overwhelming time in those final months in school. But, speaking on the benefits of a pause in education for those considering a traditional route into university, he said there are many benefits to a gap year.

"More and more of our students are choosing to pause for breath after completing their A-Levels, and to build into their plans a period away from formal education or training," he said.

"As a school we, like most universities, see immense potential value in a gap year so long as it is used productively, and to enhance the student's experience and skillset."

Ripon Grammar School, the county's only state boarding school, was named the North's top state school by *The Sunday Times* for the sixth year running.

Mr Fell, arguing that gap years can give students a chance to evaluate their career options away from the pressures of school, adds that it can provide opportunity for work experience before they commit.

Travel can broaden horizons and build confidence, he adds, while volunteer work can be immensely rewarding as well as instilling life-long skills.

"It is very noticeable that young people joining university courses or employment after a gap year tend to be significantly more mature and at ease with themselves than peers fresh from school," he said. "The gap year allows you to reflect on what you want from life, and to establish a sense of purpose that is a great quality when undertaking study at the highest level, or to take the first steps upon a career."

"The year after school is perhaps the one time in your adult life when you tend not to have considerations of family, career, health to tie you down.

"This is the golden opportunity to undertake experiences and adventures that you may never have chance to do again."

Briefing

Funding awarded for school pool

YORK: A junior school in Acomb has been selected as the first to benefit from a funding scheme targeting youth projects.

Carr Junior school has received £1,000 from the Persimmon Homes Building Futures initiative towards its schools swimming pool repair project. The school is looking to raise £11,000 to replace the lining of the pool. Headteacher Caroline Ryder said: "The pool is a huge asset to our school, community swimming groups as well as several other schools in the area."

Time savings as school run ends

ENVIRONMENT: Daily commutes in parts of Yorkshire are cut by six minutes during the school holidays when traffic from the school run eases.

Admiral Car Insurance, analysing government data, found that 71 per cent of people believe too many parents drive to school, although two-thirds of parents argued they had no option. In the school holidays, it concluded, the average commute in Leeds fell by six minutes to 23, and by eight minutes to 31 in Sheffield.

Industry award for student hopefuls

BARNSELY: A trio of media students have been nominated for an industry award for their work on online radio station *The Vibe*.

Barnsley College students Matty Huggill, Kyle Walker and Karl Wellbelove are shortlisted for a Young Audio and Radio Industry Award for their weekly show *Everything Football*, which they run in addition to their studies. The awards ceremony will be held at the BBC Radio Theatre on May 17.



PAST TIMES: Deputy Head of Chapel Allerton Primary School Mrs Becca Pinder with, from left, Leo Dimpleby, Elizabeth Bailey and Amar Mohammed, all seven.

PICTURE: GARY LONGBOTTOM

Lessons delivered in Victorian education

A LESSON in Victorian education has been delivered to primary pupils as they stepped back in time to when their school was first built.

Chapel Allerton Primary School, in Leeds, was established in 1876, shortly after a decree was passed that every child should attend education, and still has its original school hall.

To explore its history and heritage, staff and students

have held a Victorian day, with pupils invited to dress up for the occasion.

Children were invited to line up and pay their pennies for entry on the day, before traditional lessons were delivered on slate boards.

The school, having asked its community for information on the school's history, was also sent a book outlining head teachers' recollections from the era, as

well as the hymns that would have been sung in assembly.

"We ended up learning one, and singing it on the day," said deputy head teacher Becca Pinder.

"This would be the first time it had been heard in the hall for 150 years."

All the children were invited to choose their own Victorian names for the day, and there were traditional activities

including life-drawing of peacock feathers and making peg dolls.

"They spent the day in the way in which every Victorian child would have done," said Mrs Pinder. "We did a lot of times table practice, and they all loved the dunce's hat. We even inspected their hands to ensure they'd all washed.

"It was really successful. The children were so engaged – it was incredibly relevant to them.

They were all thinking about the children, of a long time ago, but in the same place as them."

Elements of the modern day curriculum were also incorporated into lessons, such as times tables, handwriting, and learning about the oceans and continents.

"The lesson content wasn't too dissimilar," adds Mrs Pinder. "It was maybe just delivered in a very different way."



TERRY FELL: Head of sixth-form at Ripon Grammar School has praised benefits of gap year.

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Tributes to headmaster who led school through time of changes

TRIBUTES HAVE been paid to a former headmaster who led Harrogate's Ashville College through a period of significant change.

Michael Crosby, Ashville's seventh headmaster, died on Thursday, April 11. He was 74.

Leading the school from 1987 to 2003, he oversaw radical developments in its history, including the development of a new music and drama centre, an expanded boarding house for girls and, above all, its sixth-form centre.

Pre Prep began in Mr Crosby's time, initially as part of Junior School, before its own building was constructed.

Mr Crosby and his wife Dianne, along with their two children Helen and Peter were involved with all aspects of Ashville and the Ashvillian community, the school has said.

"He encouraged Ashville to look outward, raising tens of thousands of pounds for domes-



MICHAEL CROSBY: Ashville College's seventh headmaster, who has died at the age of 74.

tic and overseas causes, especially Open Arms Malawi. He encouraged overseas tours to widen experiences, even taking part in a Great War Battlefields Tour which involved him plodding through muddy trenches near Ypres.

"Shortly into his retirement Michael was diagnosed with cancer which he faced with great dignity and courage.

"His broad Christianity was a key feature of his appreciation of everyone he met. Ashville owes him deep respect and gratitude – without him, many aspects of current school life would be missing."

Headmaster Richard Marshall said that he was well aware of Mr Crosby's "fine standing" within the school community.

"He will be greatly missed, and we extend our condolences to Dianne, Helen and Peter and their families as they and we come to terms with their loss."

Jamie Search, chair of governors, said: "Michael worked with my father, as then chair at Ashville, so I know first-hand the enormous dedication Michael gave to the school.

"He always strived to make things better for all at Ashville, pupils and staff alike."

Space scientist to speak at futures fair

A SPACE scientist is to be guest of honour at a Yorkshire school's careers fair on Friday.

Queen Mary's School's female futures' fair, open to girls and parents across the region, is aimed at inspiring a generation of women in their careers. Dr Suzie Imber, winner of the BBC 2 series *As-*

tronauts: Do You Have What it Takes?, is to attend on Friday afternoon. Further guests include keynote speaker Wendy Loretto BCon PhD, Dean of the University of Edinburgh Business School.

Carole Cameron, head of Queen Mary's School, said: "We are extremely excited to be wel-

coming Suzie Imber and Wendy Loretto alongside a whole host of successful women from a range of professional backgrounds.

"This event provides an opportunity for the school to inspire and empower girls from across the region to believe that they can achieve anything."

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