



FAIRLANDS PRIMARY SCHOOL & NURSERY

Pound Avenue
Stevenage
Hertfordshire
SG1 3JA

17 June 2011

Dear Parent/Carer

SEX & RELATIONSHIPS EDUCATION

You will be aware that the school has been preparing to implement the programme of sex and relationships education that has been agreed in our school policy.

Following an invitation to view screenings of the video materials attended by approximately 55 parents, we have received expressions of concern from the parents/carers of 67 children of the 369 in the school.

It is worth noting that only 11 of these have been individual, written expressions of concern.

The remaining expressions of concern from parents/carers of 56 children have been received in the form of a petition, under a blanket statement '*Petition to stop sex education lessons until at least Year 6*', which I received yesterday morning. Although this appears to be a high figure, I have to express my concern that many of the signatories on the petition did not attend the screenings of the materials and I can only assume that they have therefore based their decision to sign on hearsay about the content of the materials we are using.

Interestingly, out of the 67 children that the expressions of concern relate to, 23 are children currently in the Foundation Stage (Nursery or Reception). I would like to make it clear that these children will not be starting any form of sex and relationships education until this time next year, right at the end of the summer term in Year 1.

Although I am always pleased to hear the views of parents, it is worth also noting that petitions are often an unhelpful way to express views, particularly where the issues are complex and a range of opinions and personal views need to be explored on a case by case basis.

The governors' Teaching & Learning Committee have discussed this situation at length and have agreed the following:

- **To hold an additional evening viewing of the Year 1-4 materials** to be shown on Wednesday 22nd June from 6-8pm. This will enable parents who work or have been unable to view the materials already, to do so.

- **To give parents an opportunity to discuss their views and concerns individually, with a member of staff or a governor.** There will be an opportunity to have a short appointment after the screening on Wednesday. In addition, the normal Parent Forum on the day after, Thursday 23rd June, will be replaced with another individual ‘surgery’, where parents can discuss their views and concerns. If you would like to make an appointment at either of these opportunities, then please contact the school office.
- **To review the content of the Sex & Relationships Education Policy, in line with our normal schedule of policy review.** The next full governing body meeting takes place on Tuesday 28th June, when final decisions will be made about the content of the policy and the materials to be used. *The planned sex education lessons for Years 1-5 will therefore be postponed until after this date.* As there have been no substantial objections for Year 6, we are currently continuing with delivery of this part of the curriculum, unless a specific request has been made for a child to be withdrawn.
- **To engage the support of our Family Lives Worker, Sara Hassell, in delivering workshops to support parents in talking to their children about sex and relationships.** We will try to organise this as soon as possible. Please look out for further information relating to this in the future.
- **To provide additional support for parents of children currently in the Foundation Stage.** As a high level of concern has been expressed from parents in Nursery and Reception, we will hold an additional presentation/workshop specifically for these parents, to explain the sex education programme fully and prepare for transition to the summer term of Year 1.

I would like to restate that, under the 1993 Education Act, parents have the right to withdraw their children from any aspects of sex and relationships education that does not form part of the statutory curriculum. Ultimately, if you disagree with the content of the sex and relationships education policy, you should exercise this right.

This is obviously an important, personal decision to make for your own child. **I would therefore encourage all parents to have at least viewed the materials before they arrive at any conclusions, rather than relying on hearsay from other parents about the content of the materials to be used.** As a school, we will offer you any support we can in making this decision.

There will be a further letter going out to Year 1-5 parents before any further sex education lessons are delivered, asking for a final indication of whether you wish your child to participate or not. This letter will go out after the governors meeting on Tuesday 28th June.

I do hope this clarifies the current situation.

Robert Staples, Headteacher