UK: Same-Sex Relationships and HIV Included in Sex Education

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All public schools in the United Kingdom will be required to teach comprehensive sex education that includes HIV/AIDS and same-sex relationships, announced U.K. officials on November 5, reports Pink News.

The updated sex education lessons for younger students in primary schools will feature topics on puberty, same-sex relationships, marriages and civil unions in addition to HIV and other sexually transmitted infections. Older students in secondary school will be taught the emotional implications of having sex as well as more details about HIV, contraception and gay and lesbian relationships.

In addition, parents will not be allowed to withdraw their children from sex education classes once the adolescents reach 15 years of age. Previously, they could withdraw their children from class up age 19. This change will ensure teens receive a year of sex education before they reach the age of consent.

Deborah Jack, chief executive of The National AIDS Trust, welcomed the changes. “We are pleased that discussion of same-sex relationships and HIV is included in the education program,” Jack said.

“HIV is a serious long-term condition, and young gay men remain the group of young people most at risk,” she said. “In the past, young gay men have often been ignored in sex and relationships lessons in schools, and the result has been a rise in young gay men being diagnosed with HIV.”

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