

Sex Education – the hidden dangers

The past 30 years have seen a substantial increase in the provision of sex education in secondary schools, yet the UK still has the highest rate of teenage conceptions in Western Europe and sexually transmitted infections have continued to rise. There is no evidence that starting sex education in primary school will produce results that secondary school sex education has failed to deliver. Sex educationalists try to allay our fears by saying, “We’re not teaching them about sex at age five, but it’s important they know the correct names for their sexual organs.” I cannot for the life of me see how that helps. It’s unconvincing to say young people are at risk for want of learning the proper names for parts of their anatomy at primary school.

The age at which children should be taught about sex is a matter for parents to decide on a child-by-child basis. There is no set age by which a child needs to know x, y and z, so it’s vital that a centralised sex education curriculum is not imposed upon all schools. Introducing sex education at an early age runs the risk of breaking down children’s natural sense of reserve – children do have a sense of embarrassment and protection towards their private parts. Far from being a hindrance, these natural inhibitions are healthy and provide a necessary safeguard against sexual abuse and casual attitudes towards sexual intimacy later on.

Sex education as it is taught in many schools is part of the problem of our sexualised society, not the solution. Adding more sex education to the curriculum at an ever-earlier age will only exacerbate the problem. There’s very little that children need to know. The most important thing is to develop the character of the child so that they learn self-restraint.

Parents don't need to have a formal talk with children about sex, but children do observe things. If parents have a blasé approach to sexual issues and allow television programmes and music with high levels of sexual content at home, their children are likely to view sexual intimacy as something cheap and will act accordingly. However, if parents speak about sexual matters with modesty, and exercise control over sexual content in the media, then their children will see sexual intimacy as something valuable and worthy of respect.