Mr Walter Cha

Chair of Governors

The Portsmouth Grammar School
High Street
Portsmouth
Hampshire
PO1 2LN

28 April 2022

Dear Mr Cha,

We are writing to you as we are extremely concerned about an event that your school will be hosting on 4 May. On 26 April the Portsmouth Grammar School Twitter account featured a notice stating the following:

Calling [#Portsmouth](https://twitter.com/hashtag/Portsmouth?src=hashtag_click) Schools!! Come along to PGS for two hours of inspirational speakers, fun and creativity around issues facing the [#LGBTQIA](https://twitter.com/hashtag/LGBTQIA?src=hashtag_click)+ community on Weds 4 May. Speakers include the inspirational [@PeterTatchell](https://twitter.com/PeterTatchell) & [@junodawson](https://twitter.com/junodawson)

This notice appears to be directed to all schools in Portsmouth without any distinction as to whether they are primary or secondary. Any event involving the discussion of serious sexual topics would not be age appropriate for a child in primary school. However, we would argue that the advertised event is not suitable for any child in school and ought to be cancelled. This is because both speakers have been involved in either making highly inappropriate comments about sex with children or in promoting sexualised and age-inappropriate material to children. We therefore do not believe that a school is the right forum for hosting such an event.

Peter Tatchell is a highly controversial figure who has gained notoriety for comments he made in a letter to *The Guardian* in 1997. In this letter Mr Tatchell said:

*Several of my friends, gay and straight, male and female, had sex with adults from the ages of nine to 13. None feel they were abused. All say it was their conscious choice and gave them great joy…it is time society acknowledged that not all sex with children is unwanted, abusive and harmful*.

While Mr Tatchell has subsequently apologised that these comments were ‘open to misinterpretation’ he has to our knowledge never repudiated them and has consistently remained an advocate for a lower age of consent.

Juno Dawson is a transgender activist and author of the book *Wonderland*, which it is claimed is suitable for those 12 and over. However, in addition to being littered with sexual swear words and sexually explicit descriptions, this book could be potentially misleading and dangerous for many young people. For example, the main character, a ‘transgender girl’ called Alice states:

*I could have said what’s not fair is that I’d never have a period, never have kids, or even a shot at giving birth because of some biological admin error. Some lazy angel…scribbled the wrong gender on my destiny forms.*

This denies the reality of the biological basis of sex and suggests that the fact of being male and female is a purely administrative process.

Elsewhere in the book, Alice states that hormone blockers prevented his body going ‘*too far in the wrong direction*.’ Puberty blockers and cross-hormones permanently change a young person’s body. Most children and young people who experience gender dysphoria do not persist with it in to adulthood. The tragic case of Keira Bell illustrates the damage that can be done when a young person’s claims of dysphoria are accepted at face value. Permanent damage was done to Keira Bell’s body. She stated: *I don't know if I will ever really look like a woman again... and I don't think anyone knows what will happen to my body in the future’*. It is grossly irresponsible to expose those as young as 12 to the idea that these treatments are in some way harmless.

Dawson’s book also features sex in which drugs are involved. One sexual encounter involves the use of MDMA. MDMA, otherwise known as Ecstasy is a Class A illegal drug, possession of which can lead to a prison sentence of up to seven years or an unlimited fine or both. We do not understand how a book featuring this could be suitable for a 12 year old. The book also contains a scene of attempted gang rape.

Given the evidence above we do not believe that this event should be taking place in a school. We are not convinced, given the past record of the speakers, that teaching would be delivered in an appropriate or discrete way. It needs to be remembered that LGBT issues are controversial and contested issues and many parents will consider such an event extremely age-inappropriate for their children.

We would urge you to cancel the event out of respect for parents and the safety of children and young people.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely



Piers Shepherd

Senior Researcher