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THE TIMES

Letters to the Editor

Sex education call

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Sir, If all schools in England become academies, as the government intends, none of them will be required to teach basic sex and relationships education (SRE). Currently only local authority-maintained schools must teach about puberty, human reproduction, sexually transmitted infections and HIV. As these schools are phased out, no child will be guaranteed an education that includes factually correct and age-appropriate information about their health and wellbeing.

Evidence clearly shows that good- quality SRE empowers young people by reducing unwanted pregnancy, early and coerced first sex, as well as resulting in earlier disclosures of child sexual abuse. New reports of high levels of sexting, sexual violence and harassment in schools highlight the urgency of the situation. With overwhelming support for SRE from teachers, parents, young people, child protection and health organisations and MPs themselves, the government must act without delay to require all schools, including academies, to provide high-quality SRE. The alternative would be to knowingly leave the next generation of children dependent on the internet to help them understand sex and at greater risk of abuse and ill-health.

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