

Education Secretary Fears Homeschooling Is ‘Poisoning’ Kids

The education secretary has ordered officials to review home education in England over fears that parents could be “poisoning” their children’s minds.

According to senior government sources, homeschooling is now “on the radar,” and they want to discover exactly how many children are taught at home, beyond the reach of inspectors.

But concerns have been raised that regulation of home education greatly undermines the role of parents.

‘Poison’

The Independent on Sunday reported that the government is considering giving parents and teachers a “specific point of contact” at local councils in order to raise issues about a child.

An unnamed senior government source said: “There has always been the freedom in this country for people to educate their children at home. Many people do it very well.

“But we need to know where the children are and to be certain that they are safe. For every parent doing a brilliant job, there may be someone filling their child’s mind with poison. We just don’t know. We don’t have reliable figures.”

Safeguard

“It’s more than a slippery slope, it’s off a precipice really.” –Fiona Nicholson

Under the current law, parents are ultimately responsible for ensuring their children receive an education and they are not obliged to tell local authorities if they decide to homeschool.

A spokesman for the Department for Education said they are working with Ofsted inspectors “to address their concerns about home education being exploited, while safeguarding the rights of parents to determine how and where to educate their children.”

He said they have already provided extra inspectors to “eradicate extremism in education.”

Legal Duty

Conservative MP Graham Stuart, Chairman of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Home Education, criticized the idea of a government register.

“The legal duty to educate a child rests with the parents, not the state. That is a long-standing settlement in this country,” he commented.

Fiona Nicholson, of the Home Education Consultancy, said she is against compulsory registration for parents, where they will have to inform the local authority about what they are doing. She said, “You can’t separate it from having to ask permission.”

‘Precipice’

“You can disagree with lots of ways parents bring up their children, but until a crime has been committed, or there is a substantial child protection issue, I don’t think it’s anybody’s business. It’s more than a slippery slope, it’s off a precipice really.”

Last week, the Chief Inspector of Schools said that parents who choose for their children to be educated according to their own faith must ensure they are tolerant of other religions.

Sir Michael Wilshaw made the comments while being interviewed about three unregistered Muslim schools in Birmingham that were recently shut down by Ofsted.