

Christian Values in Education

Welcome to this issue of CViE *Education Matters*, for Spring 2023.

Education Matters is designed to provide parents and those interested in education with current “snippets” and links to information that might be of help in understanding and dealing with educational issues and bringing up children in a society that, on the whole, does not hold any respect for biblical teaching.

Please contact us at enquiries@cvie.org.uk, if there are topics that you think would be interesting to cover in future editions of *Education Matters*.

In this edition we cover the following:

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A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF CViE

Dear Friends and Supporters of Christian Values in Education,

Welcome to this edition of Education Matters, for Spring 2023.

As parents, we have been given a responsibility to raise our children in the fear and nurture of the Lord and, if ever there is a need to be vigilant, it is today. We are thankful for the promised review of RSHE materials, but know that the concerns raised can only be respected if the voices of parents are truly heard.

As the development of technology continues as rapidly as ever, so those with responsibility for children and young people will want to be enabled and equipped to address the associated challenges.

It is our hope that our CViE supporters will find this edition of Education Matters helpful in these things as you seek to live for Christ in this fallen world –

But the Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you, and keep you from evil.

2 Thessalonians 3:3

On behalf of the CViE Trustees,

With Christian greetings and prayerful good wishes –

Dan Sayers
Chair

EDUCATION

Government publications

The following publications regarding education have been recently published by the government. Some of the topics have been prominent in the news, others have not. These items have been included to alert and equip parents and others interested in education as to what is happening in the wider world of state education.

Apprenticeships

The 'apprenticeship route' has played an important role within employment in this country over many years. Although at times apprenticeships have gone out of fashion there does seem, in recent years, to be a move to promote apprenticeships as a way of providing workplace skills, knowledge and understanding whilst being employed.

The following publications have appeared on 'The Education Hub' which is hosted by the Department for Education.

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“How we are putting apprenticeships on an equal footing with degrees”

This article explains how young people will be able to use UCAS (an organisation that acts as a shared admission service for higher education) to search and apply for apprenticeships, alongside degrees to help them better decide which route is best for them. More detail can be found by [clicking here](#).

“Apprenticeships”

This webpage on ‘The Education Hub’ brings together recent articles on aspects related to apprenticeships and may be a useful starting point in finding out how they are funded, opportunities available and the recently announced ‘returnships’ (a new scheme targeted at adults over the age of 50 who are returning to work or seeking a career change). More detail can be found here: [Apprenticeships](#), or by visiting the government apprenticeship [website](#).

CViE would be pleased to hear from anyone, anonymously, who has been involved in an apprenticeship scheme so they can share their experiences with others. Please feel free to contact us on: enquiries@cvie.org.uk. We are also aware of young people who are seeking apprenticeships at this time and do pray the Lord will guide them in these decisions and hear the prayers of their parents and loved ones for them.

As has been mentioned previously, the CViE publication “Choosing a Career” has been updated and can be found on our website by [clicking here](#), or copies can be freely obtained by contacting us using the details at the bottom of the page.

Children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)

Special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) can affect a child or young person’s ability to learn. This can affect an individual’s ability to socialise, read and write, cope with numeracy, understand things, concentrate or their physical ability.

Sadly, there was a time in education when there was little recognition given to SEND and individuals were written off, described using judgmental words by those around them, and to some extent stigmatised. Often these individuals had other talents and skills which were overlooked. In more recent years there has been support made available for those with special educational needs and disabilities.

“How we are improving support for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)”

The government have announced plans to improve the support for children with special educational needs and disabilities. More detail can be found on ‘The Education Hub’ at: [How we are improving support for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities \(SEND\)](#). More information can be found on the government website by [clicking here](#). A more detailed briefing on the SEND and the Alternative Provision Improvement Plan can be found by [clicking here](#).

We would especially remember those who may have special educational needs and disabilities, whether children or young people or their parents, that they might prove the Lord

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to be their help and strength in the path that they walk. We would also remember the dedication of teachers and assistants involved in teaching and supporting those with special educational and needs that the Lord might help them in the challenges they face in the 'classroom'.

Finally, the Association of Christian Teachers have published the following article on their website "A Christian perspective to approaching SEND", a summary of a workshop 'A Christian approach to SEND'. The article was written from a biblical and compassionate perspective. We would encourage parents, teachers and others interested in the teaching of those with needs and disability to read the summary. The article can be found by [clicking here](#).

Relationships and Sex Education

Review of the RSE statutory guidance

"Relationships and Sex Education in Schools (England)"

The House of Commons Library Research Briefing "Relationships and Sex Education in Schools (England)" has been updated in light of the recent announcement by the Prime Minister to bring forward the review of the RSE statutory guidance that was scheduled to take place in 2023. This announcement has also been highlighted in recent CViE blog posts and was driven primarily by Miriam Cates MP in her campaign over the past year to ensure that parents were aware of and able to view the materials being used in their children's school to teach RSE. In so doing, Miriam Cates brought to the public's attention the inappropriate nature of many of these materials, particularly the age-inappropriateness of activities and resources that children were being exposed to.

The research briefing is a very helpful reference point to the current situation and can be found by [clicking here](#).

Gillian Keegan, the Secretary of State for Education, published on 31 March 2023 a press release setting out how the review of Relationships, Sex, and Health Education (RSHE) will move forward.

"The review, which was recently accelerated by the Prime Minister and Education Secretary, will be informed by an independent panel to be appointed over the coming weeks to provide external expertise. The panel will bring together input from health, children's development, curriculum and safeguarding. The review will also draw on close work with OFSTED, to understand what material is currently used in the classroom, and consider what improvements might need to be made. The panel will advise on how to put in place clear safeguards to stop pupils from being taught contested and potentially damaging concepts, including introducing age ratings setting out what is appropriate to be taught at what age, to prevent children being taught concepts they are too young to understand".

The press release also states that:

“The government is determined to make sure RSHE teaching leaves children equipped to make informed decisions about their health, wellbeing and relationships, in a sensitive way that reflects their stage of development. The government expects new statutory guidance to be released in the coming months. It will then be subject to public consultation to conclude by the end of the year, coming into statutory force as soon as possible after that. Separately, the Education Secretary, working with the Minister for Women and Equalities, will publish guidance for schools for the summer term on how to respond to children who are questioning their gender identity.”

The press release can be found by [clicking here](#).

CViE will be following closely the roll-out of the consultation and, if the Lord will, seeking to make an informed response to the panel. In doing so, we will look to supporters for their input into this response.

Access to the RSE curriculum materials

Gillian Keegan, Secretary of State for Education wrote on 31 March 2023 to Head Teachers and School Leaders regarding curriculum resources used for the teaching of RSHE ('Letter to Schools: Sharing Curriculum Resources with Parents'). The letter opens with the statement: "In light of recent concerns, I am writing to clarify schools' responsibilities to engage your parents when it comes to sharing curriculum materials, particularly on Relationships, Sex and Health Education. I also want to make clear what the law allows, following public discussions on the risk of unsuitable materials getting into schools".

The letter also makes clear that "The Department is clear that parents should be able to view all curriculum materials". The letter reminds schools of their roles and responsibilities in the delivery of RSHE. Parents, whose children are being taught RSHE (which includes Relationship Education (primary) and Relationships and Sex Education (secondary)), may find this letter of use on occasions when they may have to raise issues over what their children are being taught in their child/children's school.

(Observation: The timing of the letter at the end of the Easter term is interesting, as no doubt some head teachers have put it in the "must read over the Easter holidays pile" and others in the "must deal with this when I return the beginning of the summer term".)

"What do children and young people learn in Relationship, Sex and Health Education"

An article titled "What do children and young people learn in Relationship, Sex and Health Education" appeared on the DfE's blog 'The Education Hub'. The article concludes with the paragraph "We're clear that schools should also only use resources that do not compromise their political impartiality or present contested views in an unbalanced way. We're also clear that materials used must be factual and age appropriate". Although these words sound fine, the missing link seems to have been holding schools to account as to the materials they have been using and whether these were factual and age-appropriate. It is to be hoped now that questions have been asked about the appropriateness of materials, that parents press to

view for themselves what their children are being exposed to and, as needed, raise concerns with their child/children's school. 'The Education Hub' article can be found by [clicking here](#).

School inspections in England

"School inspections in England: OFSTED"

The House of Commons Library Research Briefing "School inspections in England: OFSTED" has recently been updated and is a useful overview of how the school inspection process operates. The Briefing also refers to the calls for reform to OFSTED inspections. The recent media reports of a primary school head teacher in Berkshire who took her life because of her school being rated 'inadequate' by OFSTED and has raised questions about the efficacy of the inspection process. No one would disagree with the view that there needs to be a process to ensure the standards of teaching and education in schools within the state education system. However, the question arises "how is this done?"

In speaking with those involved in school governance or working in schools - for example, head teachers or classroom teachers - the thought of an OFSTED inspection often brings unnecessary concern, pressure and foreboding. Concern has also been expressed, in recent years, over the effectiveness of OFSTED's complaints procedure for schools who may wish to question their OFSTED rating. The Briefing can be found by [clicking here](#).

Do pray for fellow Christians who are involved in governing and managing schools or classroom teaching or related roles up that they might be helped in those many challenges and pressures they face - and not forgetting those believers who may be HMIs working for OFSTED.

Steve Beegoo, Christian Concern Head of Education, has very recently written a reflective piece "Instead of OFSTED". Steve does bring out, in this article, the emotional pressure on schools of OFSTED inspections together with identifying that the inspection process should be a developmental one. This is a valid comment, however, the challenge may lie in the mindset of OFSTED, who consider that their role is simply to "inspect education and care providers, challenge them to improve and help them to get the support they need". The article "Instead of OFSTED" can be found by [clicking here](#).

School attendance

"What are 'ghost children' and why is school attendance important?"

This article was recently published on DfE's 'The Education Hub'. The article considers the term 'ghost children', used by the media to describe children of school age, who are not registered pupils at a school and not receiving suitable education e.g. inadequate "home-schooling".

The choice of the words "adequate home-schooling" is interesting or some may say intriguing. Although, there is recognition of home education as suitable education, by implication there is also "inadequate home-schooling" which may suggest some inquiry by government and local authorities? The article describes why school attendance is important,

and includes a section - "How is attendance for children who are home-schooled measured?" – making allusion to government plans to make it compulsory for local authorities to keep a register of children educated somewhere other than at school. This is purported to help in identifying where home education falls short.

The article can be found by [clicking here](#).

SOCIAL AND ETHICAL ISSUES

Taking industrial action

It would be hard in recent months not to have noticed the widespread disruption to a number of public services caused by industrial action and strikes. This level of industrial action has not been seen for a number of years and may well be a new situation to Christians in the workplace. We live in a fallen world, and discontent with the things that we have is found in a self-centered nature at enmity against God (Romans 8:7).

For Christians caught up in these industrial disputes, the question of how to respond is a very real one. There is also a need to keep in mind the economic backcloth to the current disputes. Economically our country at the present time is in a sad state. This has been brought about by the aftermath of COVID-19 policies, the turmoil over the leadership of the country, international trading conditions and the impact of the war in Ukraine (particularly on energy and food supplies). Depending on our worldview, these things will be seen as events that merely have happened (and 'man' is able to overcome them) or as an overruling Hand in chastising a country that has turned its back on the Word of God.

The following extracts and references have been compiled to help families to discuss these matters as well as those who may be caught up in deciding what to do when faced with strikes and picket lines.

"Should Christians Strike?"

The Industrial Christian Fellowship (ICF) published a document in 2011 "Should Christians Strike?" in which the author identified a number of key principles in determining an appropriate Christian response to industrial action. Amongst these principles was the question "What is the motivation for my actions?" Jeremiah informs us that we have a deceitful heart, thus as Christians we need to be so careful not to be carried up with the spirit of the age and always to examine our motives. The apostle Paul exhorts us to be content with such things as we have (as provided of the Lord) - as the Lord's people do we believe the Lord will supply our every need? Therefore, is it right to take part in any action that is for personal financial gain? There may be, however, situations where there is social injustice and exploitation and for conscience sake, we may feel the need to take action which may include leaving our employment - none of these things are written lightly as there will be much prayer in seeking the Lord's guidance in this matter.

The following extract, under the heading "What is the motivation for my actions?", from the ICF document mentioned above, has been included to help those faced with industrial disputes in the workplace. (Do keep in mind this was written in 2011):

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“An important question we need to ask ourselves is “Why am I doing this?” what are the likely gains and losses. At one level this is an entirely practical question, is the potential benefit worth the likely cost? This is a cost which needs to be identified as more than simply lost earnings, but the stress and pressures that it may well place on family life, and the potential impact within our workplace environment in terms of damaged relationships, diminished trust etc. We may feel that these are not particularly Christian concerns, but I would argue that one of the gifts an effective Christian can bring to the workplace is the ability to stand back, think things through and make informed objective decisions. A key question that a serious Christian might ask themselves is “can I help others address and think through these questions?” There is also a deeper moral question. Some years ago, junior doctors engaged in industrial action because they believed the excessive hours they were expected to work was making them so tired that patients were being put at risk. This seems entirely different than simply striking to achieve improved pay and conditions. This is not to say that one is right and the other is wrong – they are just different. There are issues of justice, which include ensuring that profits and benefits gained through shared employment are appropriately and fairly distributed. Employers have a moral responsibility to show concern for the material well-being of their workforce and to act justly in administering the proceeds of their endeavour. This though reciprocates through employees bearing a fair share of the pain in difficult and hard times. God has called us to be a people who seek justice; He has also called us to put the well-being of others before ourselves. For a Christian, the core question is whether our motivation for taking action is compatible with the values of our faith. This might include asking whether we are acting out of spite, greed or in anger and frustration, or whether we are pursuing issues of justice, equity and fairness.”

(Source: go to <http://www.icf-online.org/downloadpdfs/> and scroll down to ‘Strikes’)

“Industrial Action: Is there a Biblical response?”

The Association of Christian Teachers, at the beginning of the year, published an article “Industrial Action: Is there a Biblical response?” posing the question “Should Christian teachers join with the proposed strike action?” Although written for those involved in education, the article is very well thought-out, biblically-based and would be of help to others faced with the dilemma of whether to take strike action. The article concludes with the searching question “Will the action impede my Christian witness?” As Christians we need to be kept mindful that we are not our own but are bought with a price and that the Lord commanded His people to take up their cross daily and deny themselves. The following extract is the answer to a question posed in the article:

“It is important for Christians to remember that the world watches their behaviour. Whatever decisions are made over industrial action, to seek justice and to be peacemakers in the midst of disputes and conflicts is paramount. When talking through the issues in the staffroom, an attitude of faithful and thoughtful service towards employer and devotion to pupils will speak louder than the actual conclusion. Respect and honouring all involved, striving for peace and reconciliation in all of our relationships, including in the workplace surely fits the teaching of Jesus in Matthew 5:9 that, **Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.** Those who choose not to strike would perhaps submit that humility, submission, and enduring wrongs are important virtues to cultivate as followers of Jesus. First century believers often faced persecution and mistreatment for their faith but remained committed to

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spreading the message of the Gospel. And Christ himself exemplified humility perfectly, most evidently in his willingness to humble himself and submit to God's will, even to the point of death on the cross. The Bible teaches that Christians should seek to put the needs of others before their own and to love and serve one another. When all sides in a conflict or dispute are willing to follow these principles and seek the welfare of others, it can lead to long-term resolution and reconciliation. But it's clear that we don't operate in a context where all parties are seeking to serve and consider the needs of others. There is, unfortunately too much selfish ambition and vain conceit on both sides of the fence. Having considered some Biblical principles, it's pretty clear to conclude that there is no easy 'right' or 'wrong' answer to this conundrum. What is clear though, is the need to pray for the discernment and guidance of the Holy Spirit to inform our individual consciences. We must recognise that this is an issue where we as Christian teachers will disagree and come to different conclusions about. Let's show humility and view it as an opportunity to show grace to one another. I pray for all those thinking through decisions on industrial action and ask that God will give you much wisdom as you seek to honour Him. Whatever you choose to do this spring term, may you humbly seek God's ways as you go about it."

(Source: <https://www.christian-teachers.org.uk/blog/industrial-action-a-biblical-response>)

There is also an irony in all this in as much as those involved in public services are concerned with serving others and yet action is taken that impacts on the lives of those being served. The Lord keep us from a judgmental spirit and grant us prayer for those caught up in industrial action from whatever perspective. Might we also pray that wisdom might be given to those of His people to do that which is right in the sight of the Lord and not in the sight of others.

Choices in schooling

CViE has publicly taken the view that the responsibility for the education of children is that of their parents and whatever educational choice parents make, they cannot abdicate their responsibility and accountability to others.

As in the UK, there are debates going on in the USA over public education (i.e. that provided by the state) or private Christian education or home education. The Gospel Coalition hosted a debate between two individuals, one of whom had chosen to send their children to public (state) school and the other had chosen private Christian schooling. The discussion was well moderated and very respectful. The debate/discussion lasted 55 minutes and was titled "Should Christian Parents Send Their Children to Public (State) Schools? Both parties provided their reasons and the individual whose children were in public (state) school had been very favoured with schools their children had attended. Also, they may not have been faced with the issues that have crept in to educational curricula today. The debate can be viewed by [clicking here](#). CViE would be interested to hear from our supporters, anonymously, as to their impression of the video by contacting us on enquiries@cvie.org.uk

The debate does seem to have caused critical reaction, in the USA, to the contribution relating to public (state) schools. Whether we agree with the educational choice that parents make for their children, we should be respectful of their position and not fall into a standpoint "there is only one way to educate children and that is the way we educated our children!".

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Perhaps another important question is the one currently being addressed by CViE is “whose children are they anyway?”

Also in reflecting on introduction of Relationship Education (primary) and Relationship and Sex Education (senior), and the infiltration of ideologies contrary to the Word of God - how will the question “where were the Lord’s people when this was going on?” be viewed by the following generation?

TECHNOLOGY

Artificial intelligence

Artificial intelligence has been a subject in the headlines recently and questions may have been asked as to where it all will end.

In an article relating to AI and education, the question was posed “Should Students Use AI for Writing Assignments?”. The article goes on to consider how the author’s own institution has started to address this question and the initial conclusion was that “using AI for early research is OK, using AI to write is wrong”.

Somewhere, amongst this debate is the related topic that came to the fore in academic writing with the advent of readily available information on the Internet – that is, the question of plagiarism. A simple definition of plagiarism is “the fraudulent representation of another person’s language, thoughts, ideas, or expressions as one’s own original work.” Perhaps a simpler word for plagiarism is cheating, living in a fallen world corrupt self-centered nature looks for an easy way of doing things. Those who have been in further and higher education in recent years will be familiar with plagiarism software such as “turnitin”. This software is used to detect phrases within the piece of written work that may have been taken from other sources and not appropriately referenced.

We do pray that those that know the truth of the Bible and who may be at university will be given help to pray **Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.**

The article “Should Students Use AI for Writing Assignments?” can be found by [clicking here](#).

CViE would be pleased to hear anonymously from teachers, students or others about the challenges faced in maintaining the integrity and completion of assignments. There may also be views on the challenges of AI. Please feel free to contact us at enquiries@cvie.org.uk

Use of technology as Christians

This short article was recently published in the TableTalk magazine and includes a very short video (under 2 minutes) presented by Tim Challies addressing the question “How Should We Think about Technology As Christians?”.

Although first published in January 2020, the points made are still very relevant and the concluding comments concerning our use of the Internet: “Will I use this (technology) to serve God by serving other people? Or will I use this to harm other people and dishonor

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God? So we should have that awareness and then determine day by day, “I will use this well. I will use this to honor God and serve other people” are useful considerations in self-examining our Christian walk and conduct. The article can be found by [clicking here](#).

‘Own The Problem’ Evening

This may seem a strange title but refers to a presentation made to parents at the Rehoboth Christian School, Norwich (Ontario, Canada) that serves Dutch Reformed Congregations. The presentation, aimed at parents, was concerned with the dangers and problems children and young people face with easy access to the Internet.

The presentation consisted of introductory remarks followed by (4:20) an address on temptation based on Genesis 39. This was followed by (13:02) a presentation by Jonathan Van Maren spoke very ably on the impact of technology on our minds and how this can lead to addiction. The speaker also reinforced the point that the Internet and social media portals to secular culture that up until now the Christian communities have been able to keep from their midst. This presentation was followed by (47:25) by a teacher demonstrating various apps on a smart phone and how easy it is to be drawn into looking at imagery that may not be appropriate. After this presentation, there were a number of questions posed for those present to consider (1:17:24), the video was then paused recommenced (1:18:41) to receive feedback on the discussion that had taken place. (Please note the figures in brackets relate approximately to the timing on the video)

CViE would commend the video to you and hopefully the timings will allow you to watch the presentation in either one or two sittings.

The video can be accessed by clicking [here](#).

Internet Watch Foundation

Of all the items included in this edition of *Education Matters*, this item is probably the one that has made us fearful, not because of bringing it to supporters’ attention but due to the way it raises awareness of the dangers that young people could well be exposed to in their own bedrooms.

The Internet Watch Foundation is a not-for-profit organisation that works towards the global elimination of child sexual abuse imagery online. On the webpage - “Make Sure Your Home Doesn’t Have an Open Door to Child Sexual Abusers” - there is an explanation as to the title and a short video that very powerfully illustrates the concerns expressed in the surrounding narrative. The webpage also contains an acronym ‘TALK’ which reinforces many of the points made in previous issues of *Education Matters* around child safety. The acronym stands for:

TALK to your child about online sexual abuse - and listen to their concerns.
AGREE to ground rules about the way you use technology as a family.
LEARN about the platforms and apps your child loves - take an interest.
KNOW how to use tools, apps and settings to keep your child safe online.

There is a TALK resource that can be downloaded to help parents and carers in addressing the online safety of children and young people. The IWF TALK website can be found by [clicking here](#).

QUICK BYTES

The following links have been provided to other topics that are of concern to Christian parents.

Social media

This article in the Washington Post raises concerns over the effect of social media on the mental health of teenagers and can be found by [clicking here](#).

This article is a review of a book by a French neuroscientist “Screen Damage: the Dangers of Digital Media for Children” by Michel Desmurget and can be found by [clicking here](#).

Transgender issues

This article focuses on an emerging issue in public (state) education in the USA whereby school officials have been secretly “socially transitioning” children - the article can be found by [clicking here](#).

This article – “The trans war on the family” - highlights how gender ideologues are driving a wedge between parents and their children. The article opens with the statement that “the great thing about parental love is that it is unconditional” and then goes on to show how trans activists are trying to break this bond. The article can be found by [clicking here](#).

This very recently published report by the Policy Exchange – “Asleep at the Wheel: An Examination of Gender and Safeguarding in Schools” - reveals that “schools are increasingly becoming influenced by gender ideology, to the extent that fundamental safeguarding principles are being compromised by school’s approaches to children with gender distress and their peers”. The report also demonstrates that “many schools are failing to routinely inform parents when a child discloses gender distress, compromising single-sex spaces, and many are teaching gender identity beliefs within Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE) as if they are facts. Gender affirmative care is prevalent within the school system, despite this being at odds with safeguarding principles that have been enshrined in law for decades”. The report can be found by [clicking here](#).

“Navigating the Transgender Issue” is the title of a Creation Ministries International webinar, if the Lord will, to be broadcast on Friday, 5 May 2023 7:30 p.m. The presenter is Hans Degens who is currently a Professor at Manchester Metropolitan University and active in the church in Cheshire. Details of the CMI webinars can be found by [clicking here](#).

[NOTE: Although we make every effort to ensure these links mentioned are accurate, up-to-date and relevant, CViE cannot take responsibility for content and pages maintained by external providers, nor do we endorse all information, religious views or opinions posted on these third-party websites.]