

Parents not consulted about sex lessons for five-year-olds

By **Laura Clark**
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NO parents were consulted over the decision to introduce compulsory sex education for children as young as five, it emerged yesterday.

A Government review group commissioned up-to-date surveys of pupils and teachers but used a ten-year-old study into parents' attitudes by an advocate of sex education, according to newly-released documents.

The group was also told there is insubstantial international evidence for introducing sex education before youngsters become sexually active.

But the group still recommended it should be implemented as statutory for all pupils - advice accepted by the Government late last year.

The lessons - branded 'too much, too young' by critics - will involve children learning to label private parts from the age of five.

For the first time, personal, social and health education (PSHE) will be put on the mandatory school curriculum.

Norman Wells, director of the Family Education Trust, said:

'Treated with utter contempt'

'While the review group sought the views of young people and teachers, no effort was made to speak to parents. It all adds up to show that parents are being treated with utter contempt.'

Documents obtained under the Freedom of Information Act show a review group set up by ministers analysed parents' views by asking Professor Roger Ingham, of Southampton University's Centre for Sexual Health Research, to review 'existing studies' of parental attitudes.

He relied on five studies dating back to 1978 with the most recent study from 1998.

A spokesman for the Department for Children, Schools and Families said: 'The independent external group included representatives with a broad range of views on SRE (Sex and Relationships Education), including faith groups, governors, heads and teachers - many of whom are parents themselves.'