

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Statement by Muslim organisations in Ireland on the Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) in Irish Schools.

The implementation of the updated Relationships and Sexual Education Curriculum (RSE) in Irish schools has sparked discussions and brought significant concerns among many communities, including the Muslim community in Ireland. Aspects of the updated curriculum are at odds with Islamic beliefs causing challenges and tensions for Muslim parents.

As a minority, religious and cultural group, Muslim parents hold specific values and perspectives on matters related to relationships and sexuality. In the SPHE/RSE programme, there is a need to address the concerns of Muslim parents and to highlight the importance of maintaining a programme that is sensitive to and inclusive of all parental views.

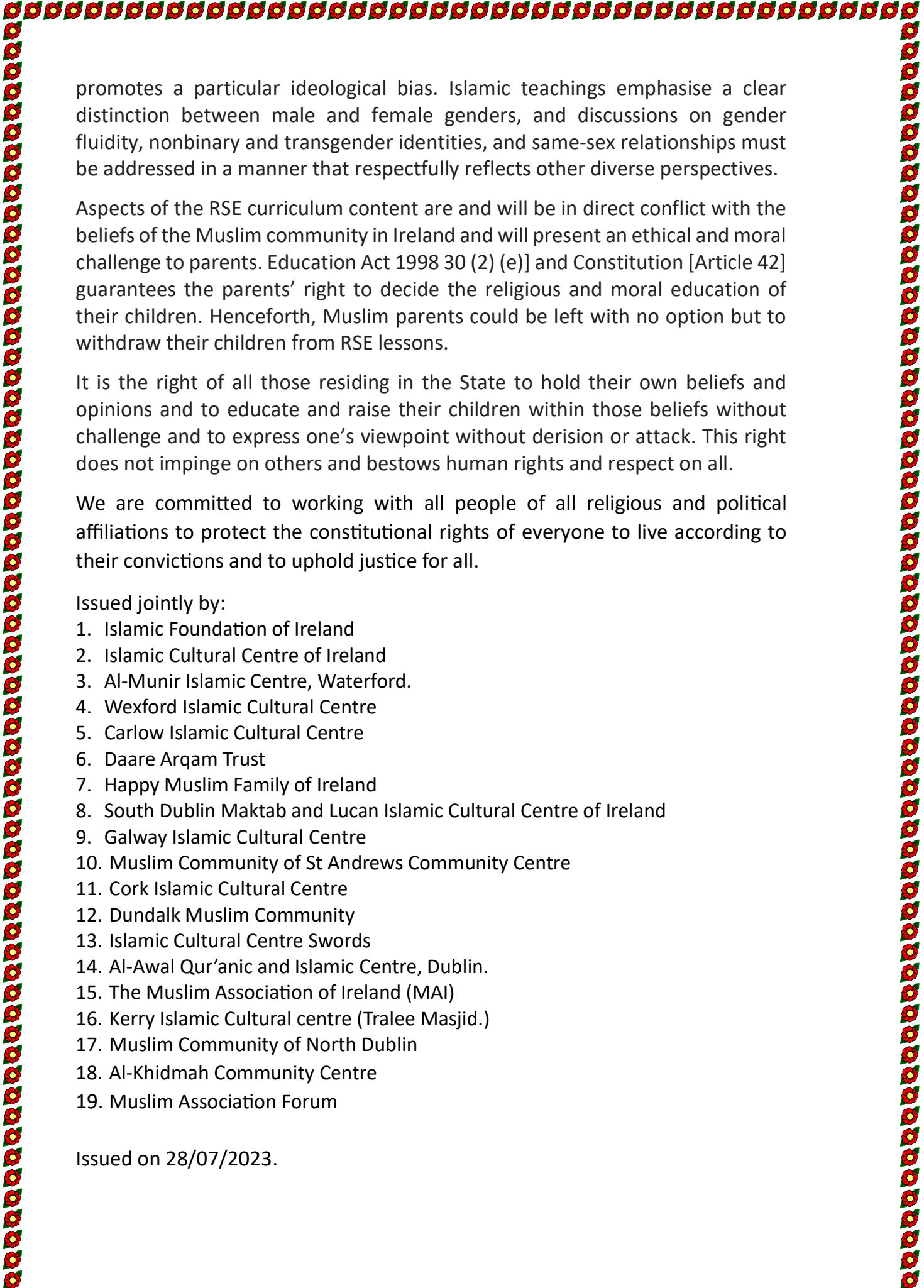
Muslim parents, as all parents, play a crucial role in shaping their children's values and beliefs and have the right to determine when and how their children are introduced to topics related to relationships and sexuality. Muslim parents prioritise modesty and privacy in discussing sensitive topics with their children while being cognisant of their maturity and development.

While it is important to educate young individuals about sexuality and relationships, there is a real concern among the community that the curriculum is exposing children to explicit material that they may not be emotionally or developmentally prepared to handle and could undermine aspects of faith formation provided by parents.

Islamic teachings provide guidance on all aspects of relationships, sexuality, and conduct. Parents feel that there is a lack of cultural sensitivity and that the RSE curriculum overlooks and marginalises their religious perspectives, leading to feelings of exclusion and a sense of the curriculum undermining their faith and cultural heritage.

The curricular focus on contraception, safe sex practices and consent sends a message that may promote a permissive attitude to sexual activity, contrary to Islamic teachings. Islam promotes healthy boundaries, emotional well-being, and the building of meaningful relationships, which are crucial to navigating complex interpersonal dynamics.

Parents have also voiced concerns as to how the RSE programme addresses gender identity and sexual orientation and it is felt that the RSE Curriculum



promotes a particular ideological bias. Islamic teachings emphasise a clear distinction between male and female genders, and discussions on gender fluidity, nonbinary and transgender identities, and same-sex relationships must be addressed in a manner that respectfully reflects other diverse perspectives.

Aspects of the RSE curriculum content are and will be in direct conflict with the beliefs of the Muslim community in Ireland and will present an ethical and moral challenge to parents. Education Act 1998 30 (2) (e)] and Constitution [Article 42] guarantees the parents' right to decide the religious and moral education of their children. Henceforth, Muslim parents could be left with no option but to withdraw their children from RSE lessons.

It is the right of all those residing in the State to hold their own beliefs and opinions and to educate and raise their children within those beliefs without challenge and to express one's viewpoint without derision or attack. This right does not impinge on others and bestows human rights and respect on all.

We are committed to working with all people of all religious and political affiliations to protect the constitutional rights of everyone to live according to their convictions and to uphold justice for all.

Issued jointly by:

1. Islamic Foundation of Ireland
2. Islamic Cultural Centre of Ireland
3. Al-Munir Islamic Centre, Waterford.
4. Wexford Islamic Cultural Centre
5. Carlow Islamic Cultural Centre
6. Daare Arqam Trust
7. Happy Muslim Family of Ireland
8. South Dublin Maktab and Lucan Islamic Cultural Centre of Ireland
9. Galway Islamic Cultural Centre
10. Muslim Community of St Andrews Community Centre
11. Cork Islamic Cultural Centre
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13. Islamic Cultural Centre Swords
14. Al-Awal Qur'anic and Islamic Centre, Dublin.
15. The Muslim Association of Ireland (MAI)
16. Kerry Islamic Cultural centre (Tralee Masjid.)
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