

[Local Authority address]

[address]

[date]

**RE: Women and Gender Studies in schools**

Dear [name],

I write to ask what my Local Authority is doing to promote substantive equality for girls in schools.

I firmly believe in gender equality and that, as a society, we have some way to go before women and girls are accorded the same level of opportunity, inclusion and respect as men and boys.

The Equality Duty requires schools and government bodies to promote gender equality and to prevent discrimination against girls, yet schooling adds to the problem rather than working towards solutions. Gender Studies are taught piecemeal in a very small minority of schools. Common teaching materials, across the curriculum, uphold gender stereotypes and exclude the contributions and perspectives of women. Teacher training does not encompass specific ways to prevent occupational segregation, discrimination, harassment and violence against girls. Gender is widely considered to be a non-issue and gender activist teachers are marginalized.

Our schools are failing girls by denying them the opportunity to analyze and to influence the gender issues that determine their life choices. By denying these same learning opportunities to boys, schooling upholds a culture rife with damaging myths about gender roles.

In my experience, [...]

Specifically, I would like to know exactly what is being done locally to address the problem of gender inequality in local schools. I would also like to know how you intend to provide for the basic rights, health and wellbeing of girls in those schools.

The Astell Project is campaigning for the introduction of Women & Gender Studies into schools as a free-standing, compulsory course for 13-15 year old girls and boys. It also calls for the government to conduct an equality audit of the curriculum and to make it clear to schools that structural reforms do not obviate the need to comply with the Equality Duty.

I support these policy aims and look forward to learning where the Local Authority stands on these issues. I will forward your response to The Astell Project.

Yours sincerely,

[signed]