

THE PREVENT STRATEGY - INFORMATION FOR PARENTS

Introduction

With many children being curious about what they see on the news and on the internet, radicalisation and extremist views may be a topic that your child is already aware of, or may have questions about.

The Welsh Government has asked all schools in Wales to inform parents of the **Prevent Strategy**. Whilst extremist views and radicalisation may not be a big issue in some parts of Wales, we as a school, are obliged to share this strategy with parents in order that everyone is kept fully informed of what measures are in place. The Prevent Strategy is intended to equip parents to deal with any questions that they or their child may have, and to provide access to help should it ever be needed.

What is the Prevent strategy?

Prevent is a government strategy designed to stop people from supporting terrorist or extremist causes.

The Prevent strategy covers all types of terrorism and extremism, including the extreme right wing, violent religious groups and other causes.

How does the Prevent strategy apply to schools?

From July 2015 all schools (as well as other organisations) have a duty to safeguard children from radicalisation and extremism. This means that schools have a responsibility to protect children from extremist and violent views in the same way they protect them from, for example, drugs or gang violence. Importantly, schools can provide a safe place for pupils to discuss issues so they better understand how to protect themselves.

What are schools doing already?

Many of the things schools already do to help children become positive, happy members of society also contribute to the Prevent strategy.

These include:

- Exploring other cultures and religions and promoting diversity
- Challenging prejudices and racist comments
- Developing critical thinking skills and a strong, positive self-identity
- Promoting the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils, and values such as democracy, the rule of law and mutual respect

Schools will also protect children for example by using filters on the internet to make sure they can't access extremist and terrorist material, or by vetting visitors who go into school to work with pupils.

Different schools will carry out the Prevent duty in different ways, depending on the age of the children and the needs of the community.

Isn't my child too young to learn about extremism?

The Prevent strategy is not just about discussing extremism itself, which may not be appropriate for younger children. It is also about teaching children about tolerance and mutual respect. The school will make sure any discussions are suitable for the age and maturity of the children involved.

Is extremism really a risk in Wales?

Extremism can take many forms, including far right views, animal rights activism, and various forms of religious extremism. Some of these may be a threat in Wales.

Should I be worried?

The chances of you being affected are small. Most people will never support violent extremism or terrorism and the amount of children or young people who become involved is low. However we all need to be vigilant and the best way to protect children and young people is to stop it before it happens.

So what can I do?

It is the job of everyone to prevent the radicalisation of young people. Parents, teachers, friends and family all have a part to play in making sure that extremist ideas are challenged.

As a parent you are the main influence on your child's identity, particularly when they are young, so this is the time to reinforce positive messages to them about being comfortable with who they are.

You might want to try some of the following:

- Talking can help your child to develop informed and balanced views. Be willing to have open and honest discussions about their thoughts and feelings on local and international events. Not allowing them to talk about topics like this can increase their curiosity and draw them into finding out more in other ways e.g. via the internet.
- As they get older children naturally start to look for a separate identity. At this stage teenagers may become confused about who they are and where they fit in society. Extremists exploit this confusion with a negative, distorted focus on one aspect of young people's identity at the expense of all others. Offer reassurance. Make sure they know it's all right to be confused and that they can always come to you for guidance.
- Teach your child that expressing strong views and trying to change things for the better is fine but that they should not take violent action against others or support those that do.
- Talk to your child about what they see on the TV or the internet and explain that what they see or read may not be the whole picture. Help your child to understand the dangers of becoming involved when they may not have the full information.
- Encourage your child to show an interest in the local community and show respect for people from all backgrounds.
- The internet is one way young people connect with or are targeted by extremists who want to exploit them. Remind your child that the people they contact over the internet

may not be who they say they are and may be telling them things that are not true. Stay alert for potential warning signs like increased secrecy and explain to them that anyone who tells them to keep secrets from their family or teachers is likely to be trying to do them harm or put them in danger.

Remember, protecting children from extremist influences is a team effort so if you are concerned about anything get some advice and support. Parents are often the first to notice worrying changes in their child's behaviour, but it's hard to deal with these issues alone.

If you are worried:

- Talk to your child's teacher or another person in school that you trust.
- You can also receive support and advice from your local police by telephoning 101 or Crime stoppers on 0800 555111. They will treat the matter confidentially and will do all they can to help to prevent your child turning to behaviour that breaks the law.

Remember: asking for help won't get your child into trouble; it could save them from harm.

KEY TERMS

Extremism – *vocal or active opposition to fundamental British values such as democracy, the rule of law and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs*

Ideology – *a set of beliefs*

Terrorism – *a violent action against people or property, designed to create fear and advance a political, religious or ideological cause*

Radicalisation – *the process by which a person comes to support extremism and terrorism*

USEFUL RESOURCES

www.internetmatters.org

Website has lots of information advice and resources to help children stay safe online

www.educateagainsthate.com

Gives practical advice to parents and teachers on how to protect children and young people from radicalisation and extremism