



# OAKLANDS CATHOLIC SCHOOL

## PREVENT STRATEGY

Parents may wonder why schools are so concerned about the radicalisation of young people but there is a very real and present danger if we are complacent and we think 'not us'. Any young person who has access to social media is as much at risk from being exposed to extremist views (whether that is extremist Islamic views or views of organisations such as the English Defence League) and therefore has the potential to be 'groomed' by very sophisticated means which are particularly attractive to young people.

The Prevent Duty is part of our statutory Safeguarding responsibility and we strongly advise parents and carers to be aware of the vulnerability many of our young people have when they are so beholden to their mobile phones and tablets; the very means by which they could be drawn into radicalization or at the very least, become exposed to some of the more dangerous ways of thinking these sites promote.

## **Keeping Children and Young People Safe Against Radicalisation and Extremism**

The parent/child relationship is the foundation to keeping children safe and supporting their social development and educational attainment.

Parenting can be a challenging task. Maintaining a positive relationship can sometimes be difficult as children grow and develop and seek an identity that may be different from their own family.

Children and young people have a natural curiosity which as parents we want to encourage. However, as our children grow up we have to take different steps to ensure their safety.

Currently a number of young girls and boys have been persuaded to leave the country against the wishes of their families, or in secret, putting themselves in extreme danger.

### **Why might a young person be drawn towards extremist ideologies?**

- They may be searching for answers to questions about identity, faith and belonging
- They may be driven by the desire for 'adventure' and excitement
- They may be driven by a need to raise their self-esteem and promote their 'street cred'
- They may be drawn to a group or individual who can offer identity, a social network or support
- They may be influenced by world events and a sense of grievance resulting in a need to make a difference

### **How might this happen?**

#### On-line

The internet provides entertainment, connectivity and interaction. Children may need to spend a lot of time on the internet while studying and they may use other social media and messaging sites such as Facebook, Youtube, Twitter, Instagram, Vine or Whatsapp. These can be useful tools, but we need to be aware there are powerful programmes and networks that use these media to reach out to young people and can communicate extremist messages.

### Peer Interaction

Young people at risk may display extrovert behaviour, start getting into trouble at school or on the streets and may mix with other children who behave badly, but this is not always the case.

There are no typical characteristics of young people who may be more at risk than others. However a sudden change in behaviour could be a potential indicator. Sometimes those at risk may be encouraged, by the people they are in contact with, not to draw attention to themselves. If you feel there is a change in your child's behaviour, parents are encouraged to inquire about their children's wellbeing. It is important for parents to keep an open channel of communication that involves listening to their children's views and concerns. You may not always agree with your child, but you should convey to them that you've understood his or her point of view and want the best for them in life. However, if you are concerned about your child, you may want to talk to a trusted adult.

### TV and media

The media provide a view on world affairs. However, this is often a very simple version of events which, in reality, are very complex.

Children may not understand the situation fully or appreciate the dangers involved in the views of some groups. They may see things in simple terms and not have the whole picture.

### **Recognising Extremism – signs may include:**

- Out of character changes in behaviour and peer relationships
- Secretive behaviour
- Losing interest in friends and activities
- Showing sympathy for extremist causes, including radical Islamic causes or far right wing political views.
- Glorifying violence
- Possessing illegal or extremist literature
- Advocating messages similar to illegal organisations such as “Muslims Against Crusades” or other non-proscribed extremist groups such as the English Defence League

## **How can parents support children and young people to stay safe?**

- Know where your child is, who they are with and check this for yourself
- Know your child's friends and their families
- Keep lines of communication open, listen to your child and talk to them about their interests
- Encourage them to take up positive activities with local groups that you can trust
- 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
- Allow and encourage debate and questioning on local and world events and help them see different points of view
- Encourage your child to show an interest in the local community and show respect for people from all faiths and backgrounds
- Help your child to understand the dangers of becoming involved in situations about which they may not have the full information
- Teach them that expressing strong views and trying to change things for the better is fine but they should not take violent action against others or support those that do
- Be aware of your child's on-line activity and update your own knowledge
- Know what social media and messaging sites your child uses
- Remind your child that people they contact over the internet may be pretending to be someone else or telling them things that are not true
- Explain 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

**If you have any concerns you can contact the police directly on 101 or alternatively you can speak to Mrs Oldroyd, Deputy Head and Designated Safeguarding Lead for further guidance and support.**