

Medway PSHE education
TACKLING AND PREVENTING EXTREMISM

Teacher's Notes

These notes accompany four lesson plans on preventing extremism and radicalisation, designed for Medway schools. The focus throughout the lessons is on extremism of all kinds, including far-right groups, far-left groups, animal rights extremism, eco-extremism and religious extremism.

This resource seeks to support schools in building pupils' understanding of these issues and building resilience to the divisive narratives and ideologies spread by extremists of all kinds.

Tackling extremism is considered a safeguarding issue by Ofsted. The new Ofsted inspection handbook (from September 2015) states that inspectors will consider:

the effectiveness of leaders' and governors' work to raise awareness and keep pupils safe from the dangers of ...radicalisation and extremism and what the staff do when they suspect that pupils are vulnerable to these issues.

And that

inspectors will evaluate the extent to which the school successfully promotes and supports pupils':

- *personal development, so that they are well prepared to respect others and contribute to wider society and life in Britain.*

Specifically, in relation to safeguarding, the inspection framework specifies that:

Inspectors will want to consider evidence that children and learners are able to understand, respond to and calculate risk effectively, for example risks associated with – radicalisation and extremism ...

Schools have a duty, under the Prevent strategy, to prevent young people being drawn into terrorist activities through radicalisation. In addition, they have a moral concern about the risks, to their pupils and the communities they serve, from extremism and the radicalisation of their pupils.

Schools can build pupils' resilience to radicalisation by supporting inclusion and a sense of belonging in the community and by providing a safe environment for debating controversial issues. As part of this whole school approach, PSHE education lessons can develop knowledge and understanding of the factors that lead to extremism, and skills such as critically evaluating the media and the messages of charismatic speakers and groups, as well as developing attributes such as resilience, empathy and respect for others.

These guidance notes should be read before teaching the sessions. It is important that teachers are well prepared to deal with any issues arising from the taught sessions. To encourage pupils to participate in the lessons, teachers should ensure that the content, approach and use of inclusive language reflect the diversity of the school community, and help every pupil to feel valued and included in the classroom.

Creating a safe learning environment

A safe learning environment helps pupils feel comfortable with sharing their ideas, values and attitudes without attracting negative feedback, and will help teachers to manage discussions on sensitive issues confidently.

It is good practice for teachers to:

- work with pupils to establish ground rules about how they will behave towards each other in discussion

Examples of ground rules include:

- Everyone has the right to be heard and respected.
 - The conversation stays in the room (although it is important to explain the limits of confidentiality).
 - We will use language that won't offend or upset other people.
 - We will use the correct terms, and if we don't know them, we'll ask the teacher.
 - We will comment on what was said, not the person who said it.
 - We won't share our own, or our friends', personal experiences.
 - We won't put anyone on the spot.
 - We won't judge or make assumptions about anyone.
 - We have the right to pass.
- offer some opportunities for pupils to discuss issues in small groups as well as sharing views with the class
 - make boxes available in which pupils can place anonymous questions or concerns, to avoid having to voice them in front of the class
 - provide access to balanced information and differing views to help pupils clarify their own opinions and views (making clear that behaviours such as racism, discrimination and bullying are never acceptable in any form)
 - be sensitive to the needs and experiences of individuals – some pupils may have direct experience of some of the issues
 - distance the learning from pupils to discourage personal disclosures in the classroom and to keep the learning environment safe
 - always work within the school's policies on safeguarding and confidentiality
 - link PSHE education into the whole school approach to supporting pupil welfare
 - make pupils aware of sources of support, both inside and outside the school.

Further guidance on creating a safe learning environment is available from the PSHE Association.

It is also important for teachers to be aware of the disclosure policy in their school. Before teaching these sessions, teachers should know the correct procedure if a young person discloses information which concerns them.

Notes on teaching about radicalisation and extremism

Terminology

The UK Government has defined extremism as: ‘vocal or active opposition to fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs. We also include in our definition of extremism calls for the death of members of our armed forces.’

Radicalisation is defined by the UK Government in this context as ‘the process by which a person comes to support terrorism and extremist ideologies associated with terrorist groups’.

‘Radicalisation Research’ states that ‘research has shown many terrorists are not radicals and most radicals are not terrorists. Indeed, there are many models of radicalisation most of which stress how difficult it is to predict and identify accurately.’

Why do people become violent extremists?

Current thinking is that many young people, especially those who are vulnerable or isolated from their peers or family, seek clarity of purpose in their lives, and once they find what they believe is that purpose, the internet gives them access to a huge support network that confirms, rather than challenges, their new-found ‘world view’ and organisations who will happily recruit them for their own agenda.

Those who encourage or get others to commit acts of violent extremism often target vulnerable young people, who are led into believing that violence can earn respect, riches or even glory. For a small number of our young people, radicalisation offers them ‘justification’ or ‘permission’ to indulge in violent behaviour which is something that excites them.

The vulnerabilities and pull factors for violent extremism are similar to those experienced in gang culture. An MI5 report found that the factors most likely to lead a person to join so-called Islamic State (IS) were:

- (a) Trauma
- (b) Immigration without family members, leading to social isolation
- (c) Criminal activity (especially prison).

Misconceptions

There are many misconceptions about who becomes radicalised and why.

Faith basis

Although there is often a faith justification for terrorist attacks, recent research by MI5 suggests that often it is those who are less knowledgeable and/or are recent converts to a faith who get involved in terrorist activities, as they are more vulnerable to being led by a seemingly more knowledgeable faith leader. There have been terrorists and extremists from all backgrounds, races and faiths over the years (eg ANC – Nelson Mandela, IRA, Unionists, Ku Klux Klan). ISIS/ISIL/IS are in the news a lot at the moment – a group with Islamic roots – but most Muslims believe that IS distort Islamic teachings to justify violence and their desire for power.

The recent Trojan Horse scandal in Birmingham schools suggested that tackling Islamic extremism should be a big priority for society. Yet other faith-based schools have also faced

criticism – see the following article for further details: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-27681560>

Many faith schools have a strong community ethos. It appears from research that faith and regular attendance at a place of worship or similar can actually be a protective factor.

Migration link

Research suggests that, in the UK, most people who take part in extremist activities are not migrants. Those that become involved who do come from a non-White British heritage are often second- or third-generation children of migrants who feel isolated. According to research, this may be partly due to discrimination still being present in our communities.

Best practice in teaching on extremism and radicalisation

A school programme which aims to effectively minimise risks associated with young people adopting extreme views or becoming radicalised may wish to consider covering the following aspects of learning in their planned PSHE education programmes:

- Teaching young people how to recognise and protect themselves from extremism and radicalisation through raising awareness of the process of radicalisation and the consequences of extremism.
- Teaching young people how to protect or support friends who they feel might be developing extreme beliefs or behaviours, or are at risk of radicalisation. (This is the same as any other ‘at risk’ friend – so includes exploring things like when to keep and when to break a confidence, how to support them in getting help or how to get help for them.)
- Equipping young people with the skills to prevent themselves being influenced or recruited by extremists. Skills which are protective and underpin work in many PSHE education areas include:
 - developing critical and flexible thinking
 - setting compelling aspirations and goals
 - clarifying values and beliefs
 - effective questioning
 - identifying, evaluating and managing risk
 - assessing and evaluating arguments
 - the ability to separate ‘fact’ from ‘opinion’
 - understanding ‘influence’, ‘persuasion’ and the emotional power of charisma
 - understanding that the number of people who are convinced something is true is not related to its actually being true.
 - supporting young people to have a sense of community through participation in discussions and events which aid community cohesion.

In all PSHE education it is important to remember that knowledge alone is not enough. There is a balance to be achieved between ‘teaching directly about’ the subject matter (for example extremism), and the crucial ‘underpinning protective learning’, including the development of the skills and attributes young people need to manage their lives, keeping themselves and others healthy and safe.