

# **Covenant Christian School**

## **Prevention of Extremism Policy**

### **Introduction**

In its attempts to defeat terrorism the government of the United Kingdom has defined extremism to be

*“Vocal and active opposition to fundamental British values including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect of others”.*

Covenant Christian School endorses and will promote these values since they are hijacked biblical values. Aspects of the rule of law appear in the Mosaic law and are illustrated in the story of Naboth’s vineyard. Respect for others of different faiths and beliefs arises out of the belief that we are all made in the image of God. As Christians drawn from various churches we are anxious to preserve the values of religious liberty and tolerance not always shown to us even today. The apostle Paul exhorts us to “live at peace with all men”. Preventing extremism and radicalization that may lead directly or indirectly to violence, and instead promoting British values *must therefore be* a facet in the Christian school’s attempts to safeguard children and to safeguard others.

Since extremism and radicalisation are a safeguarding matter, the Child Protection Officer (CPO) will be primarily responsible for implementing this policy and the Government’s PREVENT strategy but all staff must show vigilance. To this end the child protection officers will need to seek training and be able to provide advice and support to other members of the staff. The Head of School will make all staff aware of their duties on this matter.

### **Education Against Extremism**

Extremists aim to destroy relationships between different communities by promoting division, fear and mistrust frequently using false information and prejudice. Covenant Christian School aims to counter this by being a safe place where children can discuss controversial issues honestly and openly.

Within the curriculum there will be space for them to learn about other faiths, beliefs and cultures and to develop respect and understanding towards people who have a different view of life. Through our general approach to life and especially our daily devotions, we aim to press home the message that conflict should be resolved through dialogue, not violence, and that life has a purpose that does not necessitate resorting to terrorism. There will be lessons when extremism is directly confronted including times when it is currently an issue in the news.

There have been times in which violent action or its incitement might form part of a lesson e.g. in a history class looking at Pope Urban IV’s speech in 1099 AD, that initiated the Crusades. All such lessons will be handled in a way which does not glamourise violence.

At other times it may be appropriate to invite external speakers to help the school in its efforts to build resilience against extremism into the mindset of the pupils. All external speakers are vetted before they are invited. The school expects them to take a fair and balanced approach to controversial issues, so that pupils can understand why people think differently. A record is kept in the school of all external speakers.

## **Dealing with Extremist Influences**

The education of children is always a joint venture involving various agencies including the home as well as the school. Although the school cannot determine the home life of Covenant families they will be encouraged to adopt the same approach to extremism and radicalisation as that of the school.

The school expects all its members, parents whether they teach in the school or not and other members of staff to promote the rule of law, democratic values, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance towards all.

It may appear unlikely that a child attending a Christian school will come across material advocating terrorist activities. It is, however, still possible that he or she will be influenced by audio or visual material they have encountered, for example on the internet. Hence the CPO will regularly assess the risk that children may be being radicalised. The school must endeavour to minimize any possibility that this will happen on its premises. This is one reason why pupils are not allowed in the computer room or with computers in other rooms unless a member of staff is present. In addition the computer network will carry filtering software and pupils with smart phones are expected to leave these in the morning room during school hours. Parents will be encouraged to be as vigilant at home as they are at school.

Secondly staff will endeavour to detect extremist influence at the earliest opportunity. To this end they will watch out for:

- a) comments by pupils indicating they have been exposed to extremist views outside of school,
- b) pupils attempting to access extremist material especially material online,
- c) pupils expressing opinions or using terminology associated with extremist ideology,
- d) lack of respect for other people especially in matters relating to gender, disability, sexual orientation, race, colour or religion,
- e) pupils trying to encourage others to adopt extremist behaviour.

## **Responding to Indications of Extremism and Radicalisation**

Every expression of discriminatory or extremist views, including the use of derogatory language, will be challenged by staff in line with the school's Anti-Bullying and Child Protection policies and where appropriate staff will apply sanctions as set out in its Behaviour and Disciplinary policy.

Pupils and staff will be encouraged to take action if they have concerns that instances of extremism and radicalization, or indeed any advocacy of violence, are arising in the school. In the first instance, staff should report the matter directly to the head of school. If the issue arises from the words or actions of a pupil, the head will investigate the occurrence and, if necessary, raise the matter with the pupil's parents and the CPO. Teaching staff will be alerted to the problem and the Local Safeguarding Children Board will be asked for advice if appropriate. In particular the board will be asked whether the child or children involved should be referred to the Channel program. If it is possible that a crime has been committed the school will contact the police

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Stockport Children's Social Care 0161 217 6028  
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# Appendix

## How do we define extremism and terrorism in the UK?

The government is determined to defeat extremism and terrorism in all its forms.

Extremism is the vocal or active opposition to our fundamental values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and respect and tolerance for different faiths and beliefs. We also regard calls for the death of members of our armed forces as extremist. (Source: Counter Extremism Strategy, October 2015)

Terrorism is defined as action designed to influence the government or intimidate the public, done for the purpose of advancing a political, religious or ideological cause, which endangers or causes serious violence to people or property, or which seriously disrupts an electronic system. (Source: Terrorism Act, 2000) One of our greatest current challenges is the global rise of Islamist extremism and the threat posed by Daesh (also referred as Isis, Isil, Islamic State or IS). Daesh's terrorist activity and its social-media output have led to an unprecedented number of attacks carried out in its name, exporting the threat to countries with little or no history of terrorism, and they have also encouraged young British people to travel to conflict zones.

We also face a threat from extreme rightwing groups, who share an ideology based on intense hostility to minorities and a belief that violence between ethnic and religious groups is inevitable. Alongside antisemitism and racism, hostility to Islam has become a common element of these groups.

## What resources are available to help implement the duty?

The Prevent duty guidance makes it clear that frontline staff who engage with the public need to understand what radicalisation means and why people may be vulnerable to being drawn into terrorism as a consequence of it. They need to be aware of what we mean by "extremism", the relationship between extremism and terrorism, the measures available to prevent people being drawn into terrorism and how to challenge extremist ideology. They also need to understand how to find support for people who might be exploited by radicalising influences.

Institutions covered by the Prevent duty may wish to consider further training resources available within the Prevent Training Catalogue to support their implementation of the Prevent duty. An e-Learning training package is available to help implement the Prevent duty. This training is introductory and provides a foundation on which to develop further knowledge around the risks of radicalisation and the roles involved in supporting those at risk.

## How do people become radicalised?

The process is different for each individual, but there are certain factors which are usually present. Personal vulnerabilities or local factors can make a young person more susceptible to

extremist messages. These may include behavioural or family problems, lack of perceived status or belonging, and involvement in criminality.

Underpinning the radicalisation process is an extremist ideology that seems appealing and credible, often because it appears to make sense of the young person's feelings of grievance or injustice. There is usually a radicalising individual encouraging others to develop or adopt extremist beliefs. The internet is increasingly used to spread extremist messages, so young people often don't meet this individual in person.

Finally, there is often an absence of positive, supporting factors which would protect the young person from radicalisation – such as a supportive network of family and friends, a teacher who notices a problem and intervenes to help, or a more formal intervention process such as a mentoring scheme.

## **What are the warning signs of radicalisation?**

There is no single route to radicalisation. It can occur quickly, or over a long period. Sometimes there are clear warning signs, in other cases the changes are less obvious. Teenage years are a time of great change and young people are often solitary, quick to anger and distrustful of authority. Teachers are well placed to recognise when a student is acting out of character. The behaviours described here are intended as a guide to help you identify possible radicalisation: have confidence in your professional judgment and seek advice if something feels wrong.

Pupils may become argumentative and unwilling to listen to other people's points of view. They may refuse to engage with or become abusive to peers who are different to themselves, perhaps on the basis of race, religion, gender or sexuality. They may also become susceptible to conspiracy theories and feelings of persecution.

Changes in friendship groups and appearance can also be an indication: students may distance themselves from friends, both online and offline, convert to a new religion, significantly change their appearance or clothing, and reject activities they used to enjoy.

Pupils at risk may also change their online identity, including their social media name or profile image. Some will have two parallel online profiles – one their 'normal' or old self and the other an extremist identity, often with another name. They may spend excessive amounts of time online or on their phone, and be secretive and reluctant to discuss what they're doing.

More explicit signs include expressions of sympathy for extremist ideologies and groups or justification of their actions, accessing extremist material online, including on social networks such as Facebook and Twitter, possessing other forms of extremist literature, being in contact with extremist recruiters and joining or seeking to join extremist organisations.