Eastbrook School

Challenging Extremism

Eastbrook School recognises that within society there is a very small minority who seek to radicalise young people with an ideology that justifies the use of violence through a distorted interpretation of peaceful religious or political beliefs. While violent extremism poses the greatest threat to life at present, other forms of extremism and prejudice also affect individuals and communities across the country and can be a catalyst for alienation and disaffection and potentially lead to violence; fascism and extreme witchcraft as examples.

We seek to address the underlying issues that can attract young people towards violent extremist causes and we highlight the importance of engaging overtly with our students if we are to make a difference in the longer term.

Our goal is to empower young people to learn together and to question dogma; at school, with their families and in the wider community. Where possible exposing violent extremists and rejecting cruelty and violence in whatever form it takes. We are a focal point for our student community and our ethos continues to build mutual respect and understanding.

We recognise that the professional standards for teachers, contractual and safeguarding frameworks for all adults working with children and young people, require the exercise of a duty of care and, where necessary, the taking of actions for safeguarding and crime prevention. This includes challenging unacceptable behaviour such as racism or bullying that can impact on the wellbeing of individual or groups of pupils and supporting those who may be vulnerable to being drawn into violent extremist activity.

Extremists of all persuasions try to accentuate division and difference, exploiting fears based on ignorance or prejudice. We aim to equip our students with the knowledge and skills to think for themselves, to challenge and to debate. Through our curriculum, we provide the opportunity to learn about a range of cultures, faiths and beliefs.

Exploring ideas, developing a sense of identity and evolving viewpoints are a normal part of growing up. We provide a safe environment for discussing controversial issues and help to involve our students in decision-making and exerting influence.

We encourage our students to express their views, but also to appreciate the impact their views can have on others, to take responsibility for their actions and to understand that the use of violence to further any cause is criminal.

We share the responsibility to:
- Raise awareness with staff, students and their families concerning the threat from violent extremist groups and the risks for young people
- Provide information about what can cause violent extremism and to engage with local and national initiatives accessing support from statutory and voluntary organisations
- Empower young people to create communities that are more resilient to extremism
- Protect the wellbeing of particular pupils or groups who may be vulnerable to being drawn into violent extremist activity, providing effective student support processes
- Form good links with police, families and other partners to share information, developing a network of community contacts and role models
- Promote community cohesion, equalities and wellbeing, implementing effective anti-bullying policies, modelling positive problem solving and encouraging active citizenship

Our School Ethos upholds core values of shared responsibility and wellbeing for all students, promoting mutual respect, equalities and questioning. "Together we Learn."

We promote the core British Values of a democratic society and participation in debate. 'No Platform' policies are no longer sufficient to protect students from exposure to the promotion of hateful opinions and activities. Social Media and the Internet cannot be censored. We believe that our students therefore need to develop their own inner censor through their education; learning to question dogma and to be challenged to reflect upon and justify their own opinions and actions and those of other people they admire.

We promote and model universal rights.

This involves building staff understanding of the issues and the confidence to deal with them through training, discussion and clear systems. This includes:
- questioning techniques to open up safe debate
- the confidence to promote honesty about pluralist views
- ensuring both freedom of expression and freedom from threat
- promoting open respectful dialogue

Our Curriculum promotes the knowledge, skills and understanding to build the resilience of students to explore controversial issues; applying critical analysis and positive social values.

We aim to ensure that our students are looking to become:
- **responsible global citizens** – which includes understanding identity, valuing diversity, working cooperatively to promote positive change
- **confident adults** – which includes developing independence, self-awareness and reflecting upon moral judgements
- **successful lifelong learners** – which includes developing enquiring minds, and engaging with complex issues.
- **critical users** of media messages

Through all subject areas, but predominantly ECS (including RE), History, Geography, English and Media Studies we adapt to recognise local and national needs, challenge extremist narratives and promote human rights. Where external programmes or groups are used we ensure that they support the school goals and values.

We provide safe spaces for students to discuss openly issues that concern them including exploring their own identities and how these relate to the diversity of the society in which they live.

We provide opportunities for students to understand, meet and engage with people from different backgrounds in ways which promote common values, while recognising and valuing diversity within communities.

Our Safeguarding procedures are well known by all staff and focus upon knowing our students and noticing change and / or distress. Effective referral systems enables all staff to draw upon the specialist staff in the school who are regularly trained to a high standard with reference to on-going and contemporary issues.

Our systems and practice enable us to:

- listen to what is happening in the school and the community
- implement anti bullying strategies and challenging racist behaviour
- help students and adults know how to access support in school or through community partners
- support problem solving and repair of harm
- support students at risk through safeguarding and crime prevention processes
- develop effective ICT security and responsible user policies

We regularly monitor risk and maintain ready to deal appropriately with issues which arise. We are alert to the need to respond appropriately to events in the local, national or international news that may impact on our students and communities.

Through our partnership working with the Police we engage with the **'Prevent'** strategy as part of its overall approach to countering terrorism.

We have a straight forward and well communicated Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy that enables all staff to pass on concerns at whatever level to highly strained specialist members of staff. We provide a scripted, corporate response when necessary to controversial local, national or global events. These effective and regularly reviewed safeguarding procedures enable us to use informed professional judgement to implement strategies in individual cases and draw on wider support from the community.

With particular reference to risks of vulnerability to extremist views or activities, we look for:
- Graffiti symbols, writing or art work promoting extremist messages or images
- Students accessing extremist material online, including through social networking sites
- Any reports of changes in behaviour, friendship or actions and requests for assistance
- Local authority services, and police reports of issues affecting pupils in other schools
- Students voicing opinions drawn from extremist ideologies and narratives
- Use of extremist or 'hate' terms to exclude others or incite violence

We respond by:
- Removing any hate-related graffiti and challenging views expressed through classroom discussion
- Supporting pupils through normal student welfare strategies
- Involving external agencies to ascertain whether there are other risk factors to be taken into account and determining an appropriate support plan.
- Contributing to a multi-agency assessment where appropriate in line with the local authority protocols.
- Problem solving and repairing harm - developing techniques for personal support, resolving conflict and repairing harm.

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1. Access to violent extremist material

While watching for leafleting and local contacts, our main concern is the access provided by the internet to violent extremist videos and propaganda accessed via websites or contact via social networking sites.

We are aware that:
- Extremists use persuasive narratives to attract people to their cause based on a particular interpretation or distortion of history, politics or religion. We encourage our students to challenge ideas, think for themselves and take responsibility for their actions.
- There is no obvious profile of a person likely to become involved in extremism, or single indicator of when a person might move to adopt violence in support of extremist ideas. We aim to know our students, listen and respond to their changing needs. If members of staff do have concerns about behaviour patterns, they know how to refer through the safeguarding procedures in the school.
- Overtly challenging Islamophobia, anti-Semitism and other prejudices promotes a strong sense of belonging within the school.
- It is crucial that we challenge any behaviours which harm the ability of individuals and groups to work together and model ways to recognise grievance and repair harm

2. Building staff understanding of their roles and confidence in their skills:

We incorporate into our INSET programme the development of teaching skills for dealing with controversial issues and provide opportunities for small group supported discussion
- We enforce safe behaviours in the use of the internet. We receive regular updates from the local authority and the police (via our school liaison police officer and safer neighbourhood team).

3. Working with the local community

Our open door policy allows members of the community to share any information regarding tensions within the communities served by the school. We are an active partner in community leadership (with other school leaders, statutory agencies and with community groups), attending Community Peace Initiatives and engaging with the Safer Neighbourhood Team, local faith communities and supplementary schools.

We encourage our students to support the vulnerable and to use democratic and lawful vehicles for Protest.

We are prepared, when necessary, to challenge any unacceptable views expressed by families on the school premises and model ways to solve problems with consultation not confrontation.

4. Managing Risks
Although there are very few instances of young people being exposed to violent extremist messages within schools, this is a risk of which we need to be aware. Risks could arise from:
- harmful influences – for example from governors, staff, parents, external groups or other students
- inappropriate use of ICT systems
- external groups using school premises

All such issues would be investigated using the relevant professional standards, the legal system or subjected to the relevant disciplinary procedures. All such issues are referred to the local authority and police and reported to the Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA), the Vetting and Barring scheme) may also need to be informed.

The school's recruitment and induction arrangements (including for governors) make explicit the role of all staff and governors in keeping students pupils safe from harm and we operate in accordance with the relevant regulations for the conduct and vetting of staff, including DBS checks, DFE registration and ISA.

Effective arrangements are in place for monitoring and reporting racist incidents, prejudice-related bullying and hate crime.

We promote effective and responsible use of ICT to prevent staff or students accessing illegal or inappropriate material through school ICT systems, including having appropriate monitoring systems in place with recourse to police and other partners as necessary.

Our Acceptable Use Policy ensures that use of material related to violent extremism is prohibited; and ensures that students, staff and governors are clear about the policy, monitoring practices and the sanctions. This ensures that staff, students and families are aware of the issues regarding risk.

5. External groups using school premises or facilities

We are aware that there have been examples of groups linked to violent extremism trying to use school premises for campaigning or other events. We ensure that our lettings policy sets out the values of the school and makes clear that any group whose aims are counter to those values may not hire the facility.

6. Responding to events

National and international incidents can have a particular impact on schools along with local counter terrorism operations and related community tensions. We understand our community and remain aware of what may impact on our students and we are prepared to respond.

This may take the form of:

- whole school, year group or class-based sessions to promote opportunities for informed discussion
- promoting human rights and legal protection
- personal support for staff and students most affected.
- Local authority and partner services may be drawn on for:
- advice, briefings or support from police or other agencies
- educational psychology service support for school leaders in responding to incidents
- individual student support
- media management
- human resources support for staff issues
- the school emergency plan including post-event actions to ensures appropriate processes for supporting students and staff

We recognise that, while it remains very rare for school age children to become involved in extremist activity to the point of committing criminal acts, young people can be exposed to extremist influences or prejudiced views, including via the internet, from an early age. We work with other local partners, families and communities, to help support pupils who may be vulnerable as part of wider safeguarding responsibilities.