

What is the Prevent strategy?

Prevent is part of the government's counter-terrorism strategy to stop people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism

The Home Office explains that Prevent is part of the government's counter-terrorism strategy to stop people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism. Page 1 of the strategy document says that it seeks to:

- Respond to the ideological challenge of terrorism and aspects of extremism, and the threat posed by those who promote these views
- Provide practical help to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism and ensure they are given appropriate advice and support
- Work with a wide range of sectors where there are risks of radicalisation which need to be addressed, including education, criminal justice, faith, charities, the internet and health

What must schools do in response?

We asked the Department for Education (DfE) what schools are obliged to do in response to the Prevent strategy. A representative from the DfE's due diligence and counter-extremism division explained:

All schools are required by law to teach a broad and balanced curriculum which promotes the spiritual, moral and cultural development of pupils and prepares them for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life.

Publicly funded schools are required to promote community cohesion, a duty first introduced through the Education and Inspections Act 2006.

The DfE representative added that schools can help to protect children from extremist and violent views in the same ways that they help to safeguard children from drugs, gangs and alcohol. He suggested that a school's work on Prevent could be seen in this context.

He also said:

Staff can help to identify children whose behaviour suggests that they are being drawn into terrorism

The purpose must be to protect children from harm and to ensure that they are taught in a way that is consistent with the law and the country's values. Awareness of Prevent and the risks it is intended to address are vital.

Staff can help to identify children whose behaviour suggests that they are being drawn into terrorism or extremism. These children can then be referred to the relevant agencies.

What actions might schools take?

The role of schools in Prevent

The Prevent For Schools website explains that schools can provide a safe environment for discussing controversial issues, and help young people understand how they can influence and participate in decision-making. It says:

We believe that schools of all kinds can play a role in enabling young people to explore issues like terrorism and the wider use of violence in a considered and informed way ...

Schools can facilitate understanding of wider issues within the context of learning about the values on which our strategy is founded and our system of democratic government.

It says that the tasks facing schools and colleges are to:

- Raise awareness
- Provide information
- Enable learners to make a positive contribution
- Safeguard young people

Possible school actions

Schools should explore and promote diversity and shared values between and within communities

The Prevent For Schools website goes on to suggest that schools could, for example:

- Review the curriculum, and pupil participation and safeguarding processes
- Explore and promote diversity and shared values between and within communities
- Challenge Islamophobia, anti-semitism and other prejudices
- Build ties with all local communities, seeking opportunities for linking with other schools

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