

Prevent at Park Hill Primary School

Prevent. Prevent is part of the Government counter-terrorism **strategy**. It's designed to tackle the problem of terrorism at its roots, **preventing** people from supporting terrorism or becoming terrorists themselves. **Prevent** operates in the 'pre-criminal space'.

Section D: Prevent Duty Statutory Guidance

Below are some questions and answers relating to the new duty on schools and colleges to have due regard to 'Prevent'.

What is 'Prevent'?

The [Prevent duty guidance](#) describes 'Prevent' as part of the government's counter-terrorism strategy, CONTEST. The aim of the 'Prevent' strategy is *"to reduce the threat to the UK from terrorism by stopping people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism."*

The enactment of Part 5 of the *Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015* gives the 'Prevent' strategy legal status in that schools and colleges in England and Wales are now obliged by statute "to have due regard" to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism.

What does "having due regard" mean?

The glossary of terms contained in the statutory [Prevent duty guidance](#) says 'having due regard' means that schools and colleges *"should place an appropriate amount of weight on the need to prevent people being drawn into terrorism when they consider all the other factors relevant to how they carry out their usual functions."*

Paragraph 10.45 of the [Prevent strategy](#) document published in 2011 sheds a little more light on the matter by explaining that *"schools can help to protect children from extremist and violent views in the same ways that they help to safeguard children from drugs, gang violence or alcohol."*

What will be deemed 'extremist'?

The terms 'extremist' and 'extremism' are not defined by legislation. However, the [Prevent strategy](#) document defines 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."* The document also includes in its definition of extremism *"calls for the death of members of our armed forces, whether in this country or overseas."*

What does 'having due regard' mean for schools and colleges in practice?

The [Prevent duty guidance](#) says 'having due regard' requires schools and colleges to:

- (a) **have “robust safeguarding policies** in place to identify children at risk and intervening as appropriate;”
- (b) **provide staff with training** “that gives them the knowledge and confidence to identify children at risk of being drawn into terrorism and to challenge extremist ideas.....”; and
- (c) **“ensure children are safe** from terrorist and extremist material when accessing the internet in school, including by establishing appropriate levels of filtering”.

What does 'having due regard' mean for teachers in practice?

The Prevent duty attaches to the governors and/or proprietors of schools and colleges, not to the individuals who work in them. Therefore, teachers are not obliged to 'have due regard' to the statutory duty. However, teachers are likely to be subject to an express or implied contractual obligation to take such steps as the school or college deems necessary to meet its statutory duty.

The [Prevent strategy](#) document provides that school staff can help to protect children from extremist and violent views by:

- (a) having awareness of 'Prevent' and “the risks it is intended to address”;
- (b) ensuring that children are taught “in a way that is consistent with the law and our values”; and
- (c) helping to identify and refer to the relevant agencies “children whose behaviour suggests that they are being drawn into terrorism or extremism”.

What are the risk factors teachers may be expected to look for in individual pupils/students?

The [Prevent duty guidance](#) is lacking in detail and does not address this point. However, previous guidance from the Department for Children Schools and Families (DCSF) [Learning together to be safe](#) states that *“there is no obvious profile of a person likely to become involved in extremism and there is no single indicator of when a person might move to adopt violence in support of extremist ideas.”*

It suggests, however, that the following signs and behaviours could indicate vulnerability:

- Graffiti symbols, writing or art work promoting extremist messages or images.
- Pupils accessing extremist material online, including through social networking sites.
- Parental reports of changes in behaviour, friendship or actions and requests for assistance.
- Partner schools, local authority services and police reports of issues affecting pupils in other schools.
- Pupils voicing opinions drawn from extremist ideologies and narratives.
- Use of extremist or 'hate' terms to exclude others or incite violence.

How are schools and sixth form colleges expected to incorporate the 'Prevent' strategy into their existing safeguarding policies?

The [Prevent duty guidance](#) is again lacking in detail on this point. It says schools *"will need to consider the level of risk to identify the most appropriate referral, which could include Channel or Children's Social Care, for example."* It also requires these policies to *"set out clear protocols for ensuring that any visiting speakers – whether invited by staff or by children themselves – are suitable and appropriately supervised."*

The DCSF's [Learning together to be safe](#) is a little more detailed. It provides schools and colleges with examples of how they might manage risks presented by:

- harmful influences, e.g., from governors, staff, parents, external groups or other pupils;
- inappropriate use of ICT systems; and
- external groups using school premises

It does not, however, indicate which acts/behaviours warrant a referral to Channel or Children's Social Care.

What is 'Channel'?

The Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) guidance, [Prevent, Police and Schools](#), describes Channel as *"a multi-agency approach to identify and provide support to individuals who are at risk of being drawn into terrorist-related activity."*

By way of example:

A 13 year old pupil begins drawing swastikas on his exercise books, desks and walls and also using racist language. A youth worker at the club the pupil attends observes this behaviour and refers the matter to the Channel team. Multi-agency information is then collected. The pupil's father is in prison for racist violence whilst his mother is a drug user. The boy has made contact with a violent white supremacist group who appear to be radicalising him. A multi-agency plan is approved to support parenting skills, to deliver a strong counter-narrative and to provide positive role models.

Are schools and sixth form colleges responsible for making a referral to 'Channel'?

No, they are not. The Act provides that a chief constable may refer an individual to a panel *"only if there are reasonable grounds to believe that the individual is vulnerable to being drawn into terrorism."*

Under section 36 of the *Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015*, each local authority will now be required to ensure that a 'Channel Panel' is in place for its area. Each panel will be required, among other things, to:

- assess the extent to which an 'identified individual' is vulnerable to being drawn into terrorism;
- prepare a support plan if the panel considers that the 'identified individual' is vulnerable;
- make arrangements for the support to be provided in accordance with the support plan; and
- keep the support plan under review.

What role does the local authority play?

The role of the local authority is, as indicated above, to establish a 'Channel Panel' and, in addition, to assess in consultation with schools, colleges and other front-line service providers, the level of risk to children and young people in the area and what those risks are. The local authority must then produce a local action plan to *"identify, prioritise and facilitate delivery of projects, activities or specific interventions to reduce the risk of people being drawn into terrorism...."*

Schools and colleges will be required, no doubt, to adapt their existing safeguarding policies to better reflect the requirements of the local action plan. If

you work in one of the areas [here](#) identified by the Home Office as priority areas (refer to page 97), there is likely to be a local action plan already in place.

Does the ‘Prevent’ strategy apply to teachers?

The Union’s casework experience to date indicates that the actions of individual teachers are as much the subject of scrutiny by various agencies as the actions of individual pupils. Teachers should be aware that under the Prevent strategy schools and colleges are encouraged to view governors and staff as potential sources of ‘risk’ – much as they are in relation to other safeguarding matters.

[Learning together to be safe](#) provides that “*school governors and staff, including temporary staff, may express views, bring material into the college, or use or direct students to extremist websites, or act in other ways that are counter to the professional standards expected of staff or potentially against the law. In such an event they should be subject to normal professional disciplinary procedures and if necessary schools should ensure that behaviours are taken up with the local authority and police.*”

Does this mean teachers are prohibited from discussing controversial issues at school or college?

No, it does not. The ‘Prevent’ strategy recognises that the curriculum offers teachers a context in which to discuss controversial issues. Lessons also offer pupils a safe place in which to air grievances.

[Learning together to be safe](#) states “*In using teaching, learning and the curriculum to build resilience to violent extremism, schools can build on what they already do to:*

- *help pupils to develop knowledge of religion, history, geography, citizenship, English (particularly the critical study of the media) and analyse current issues of concern;*
- *help pupils to develop the skills needed to evaluate effectively and discuss potentially controversial issues;*
- *provide safe spaces for pupils 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; and*
- *provide opportunities for pupils to understand meet and engage with people from different backgrounds in ways which promote the common values while recognising diversity within communities.”*