## Guidance for Parents / Carers on how to keep your child safe online

At Henley-in-Arden we recognise the importance of working with families and the wider community to keep our children safe in and out of school. Young people face numerous potential safeguarding risks in their day-to-day lives, ranging from child sexual exploitation, people trafficking, gang violence and radicalisation by extremist ideologies. As part of our commitment to protect all students at Henley-in-Arden School, we encourage parents/carers to be very vigilant of their child's behaviour both on and offline.

**'Safeguarding vulnerable people from radicalisation is no different from safeguarding them from other forms of harm'**
(***Home Office, Prevent Strategy – June 2015***)

In terms of the threat of radicalisation, we are aware that young people can be exposed to extremist influences or prejudiced views form an early age which emanate from a variety of sources and media, including via the internet and, at times, students may themselves reflect or display views that may be discriminatory or prejudiced. At present there are a wide range of extremist groups in the UK that challenge the core 'British Values' of democracy, liberty, the rule of law, mutual respect and tolerance of diversity.

**Definitions:**

When operating this policy Henley-in-Arden School uses the following accepted Governmental definition of radicalisation and extremism which is:

**Radicalisation** – 'the process by which a person comes to support terrorism and forms of extremism leading to terrorism' (Prevent Strategy)

**Extremism** – 'vocal or active opposition to fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect tolerance of different faith and beliefs; and/or calls for the death of members in our armed forces, whether in this country or oversees' (Prevent Strategy)

**Examples of extremism in the UK today:**

- ☐ Anti-Gay groups (Core Issues Trust) – Such groups use religious ideology to state that LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender) people sinful and anti-Christian. For example, this group has paid for advertising in London which 'asserts the power of therapy to change the sexual orientation of gay people' and states 'homosexual behaviour is sinful'. This is an extreme form of behaviour as they are actively trying to remove the rights of LGBT people to live a lifestyle of their own choice and is therefore an attack on the personal liberty of LGBT people.
- ☐ Anti-Abortion group (Pro-Life Action League) – Such groups use moral and ethical reasons to oppose the right a woman has to have an abortion. Attacks have been carried out on private clinics and women after they have left the clinics. This is an extreme form of behaviour as they are actively trying to undermine the right a woman has to make a decision about her own body.

However, at present the **most significant extremist threats** are currently posed by the **English Defence League (EDL)** and **ISIL / ISIS (Islamic State).**

**English Defence League (EDL)**

It is a far-right wing street protest movement consisting of white English people who want to protect traditional English values against the spread of Islamism in the UK. They have been described as **Islamophobic**.



The EDL was formed in 2009 in response to an Islamic demonstration in Luton against the war in Afghanistan. In November 2011 the EDL formed an alliance with the British National Party (BNP). They currently seek to work with far right extremist groups in Europe to create a 'European Defence League' against the spread of Islam. The principal activity of the EDL has been street demonstrations, often resulting in anti-social behaviour and violent confrontations with police and anti-EDL supporters. The police have banned several marches organised by the EDL due to fear of further violent clashes.

According to Nick Lowles, director of the Civil Rights 'HOPE not hate' campaign, believes the EDL pose two significant risks. One is the formation of street armies prepared to travel around the country to fight against the Muslim community. The other is the group's tactics of carrying placards to deliberately provoke conflict with Muslim communities. Prime Minister David Cameron stated in 2013, 'If you look at the types of demonstrations they have organised, the language used and targets chosen, it looks clear that it is a tactic designed to provoke, to get a response from the Muslim community and create violence'.

**Islamic State (ISIS / ISIL)**



They are a terrorist group who are currently attempting to recruit people around the world to either move to Iraq and Syria to join their movement or carry out acts of terrorism in their own countries. It is estimated that, since 2011, over 500 young British Muslims have travelled to Syria, including 70 girls.

ISIS / ISIL target impressionable young people through social media and the internet to influence their minds using the same tactics as sexual predators. Their message can have a powerful impact on someone who is young, possibly unsure of their path in life, and who may lack confidence. ISIS recruiters have offered cash to British girls as young as 14 to become brides. They tweet pictures of attractive potential future husbands, alongside stirring footage of victory in battle and the heroism of their fighters in an attempt to appeal to both young women and young men. The theme of adventure and freedom from parental control has appeal for some young people. The most recent incident that highlighted the risk posed by ISIS was the murder of 39 tourists in Tunisia in June 2015. 30 of the victims were British citizens.

There are several factors that may make a child more **vulnerable or susceptible** to the threat of radicalisation from different extremist groups:

- A conviction that their religion or culture is under threat and treated unjustly.
- A 'grudge' against another group, i.e. – a white British child may have seen a brother attacked by a Muslim group or vice-versa.
- A tendency to look for conspiracy theories and distrust of mainstream media.
- The child feels they did not 'fit in' and has a need for identity and belonging, i.e. – they do not feel welcome at the local mosque or church.
- The child has a need for more excitement and adventure.
- The child is susceptible to influence by their peers/friends.
- Family upheaval, i.e. – parents' divorce, father not present, sibling sent to prison, mother has a new partner .
- Loss, i.e. – child is struggling to cope with a death in the family or friendship group.
- High levels of poverty in the family and need to address this feeling, i.e. – 'My dad can't find work due to the number of immigrants in the UK'.
- Lack of boundaries in the family, i.e. – parents allow child to stay out late and are not aware of what the child is doing.
- Anger management issues, i.e. – struggles to control emotions and pushes boundaries / challenges authority.
- Low self-esteem, i.e. – previously bullied at school or within the family or community means the child wants to improve themselves.
- A natural leader, i.e. – child bullies others and is active in a local gang.
- Tendency to commit acts of anti-social behaviour and previous links to crime.
- Constant use of social media, playing violent video games, tendency to watch violent films or videos online.
- Social exclusion, i.e. – spends too much time in bedroom on his or her own.
- The child has an on-going sense of failure, i.e. – under-achieves at school and feels like he or she persistently disappoints their parents.
- Poor attendance record at school and high levels of truancy.
- Mental health issues can exacerbate other vulnerabilities mentioned above.

There are **behaviour changes** that a parent / carer is best placed to notice which may indicate their child has been exposed to extremist ideology from organisations such as **EDL** and **ISIL / ISIS**:

- Graffiti symbols, writing or art work promoting extremist messages or images, i.e. – Swastika/St. George's flag/white badge etc.
- Accessing extremist material online, including through social networking sites.
- Distributing extremist literature and documentation.
- Significant changes in language, behaviour, actions. For example, they become aggressive, argumentative and domineering, short-tempered, angry, bitter or developed a new found arrogance.
- Displaying unusually aggressive behaviour towards others, i.e. – involvement in fights or gang-related activity.
- Changes in friendship groups and suddenly no longer friends with previous friendship groups.
- Becoming fixated on a subject, i.e. - taking an unusual interest in current affairs, particularly the conflict in the Middle East or immigration in the UK.
- Talking about a 'sense of injustice', i.e. – it was wrong for UK/USA to invade Iraq and Afghanistan or it is not right that 'foreigners' are coming into the UK and taking jobs from British people. The content of their conversation may appear 'scripted' suggesting they have been told what to say or are recalling something they have read/been told in an online chat / forum.
- Starting to ask inappropriate questions about religion, culture, sexuality, immigration, death, war.
- Isolating themselves for long periods of time and being secretive about what they have been looking at online or reading.
- Displaying a loss of interest in activities they used to previously enjoy doing.
- Use of extremist or 'hate' terms to exclude others or incite violence against others based on race, religion, culture, gender and sexual orientation.
- Start to question the human rights of others, i.e. – making inappropriate comments about women or LGBT community.
- Attempting to impose extremist views or practices on siblings, other family members and friends. For example, are they quick to condemn or dismiss viewpoints that contradict their own?
- Expressing anti-Western or anti-British views that conflict with the values of democracy, liberty, the rule of law, mutual respect and tolerance of diversity.
- Referring to 'them and us' when making references to society and religions.
- Expressing sympathy for extremist groups like ISIL / EDL and condoning their actions and ideology.
- Expressing sympathy and understanding for those who have joined ISIL or the EDL.
- Asking questions about traveling distances and times to countries like Turkey, Iraq and Syria.
- Constantly playing video games that promote war, conflict and violence (reinforces messages that violence can lead to change).
- Requesting to keep their own passport and birth certificate in their bedroom.
- Changes in appearance, i.e. – wearing EDL badges (100% White), shaved head, tattoos, start to wear burka.

In addition, there is common extremist terminology that may indicate a young person is under the influence of extremist ideology, notably from ISIL / ISIS:

'**Dawlah'** – term used by ISIL to refer to the 'Islamic state'.
**'Caliphate'** – ISIL supporters describe the territory they control in Iraq / Syria.
'**Mujahid'** – someone who wants to fight as part of the 'Jihad' (Holy War).

'**Shahada**' – refers to someone considered to be a
martyr. '**Kuffar'** – a term used by ISIL to describe non-
Muslims.
'**Ummah**' – the phrase is used by ISIL to refer to the 'world community of Muslims'.
'**Rafidha**' – word used by ISIL to refer to those who refuse to accept the Islamic state.

There are a range of social media sites that are used by all extremists to groom young people. In terms of ISIS / ISIL:

- ☐ ISIL supporters use **Facebook** to share content, such as news stories and videos, among their peer groups.
- ☐ **Twitter** is a popular platform for pro-ISIL accounts. It is easy to establish an account, stay relatively anonymous and share material.
- ☐ **Youtube** is used to host videos, both with official ISIL output and videos created by users themselves. Multiple 'dummy' accounts can be set up so that when videos are taken down they can be reposted quickly.
- ☐ **ASK.FM** is used by people considering traveling to Syria or Iraq and provides information on travel, living standards, recruitment fighting and broader ideology.
- ☐ **Instagram** is used by fighters and ISIL supporters to share the photo sets frequently used by ISIL media organisations.
- ☐ **Tumblr** is an online blogging site and is used by ISIL fighters to promote longer, theological reasons why people should travel to Syria and Iraq. It is popular with female ISIL supporters, who have written blogs addressing the concerns girls have about traveling to the region, such as leaving their families and living standards in Syria.
- ☐ Private messaging apps, such as **WhatsApp, Kik, SureSpot and Viber**, are also commonly used to share messages on what to pack to travel and who to contact when they arrive in Iraq or Syria.

**What can parents / carers do if they are concerned their child is being exposed to or influenced by extremist ideology?**

Parents / carers can gain useful information from a website called 'Families against stress and trauma' (FAST) on how they should respond to any concerns. The website offers the following broad guidance to parents / carers:

'If you have concerns that this may affect your child, you may want to raise the issue with someone you trust, perhaps a friend or family member who knows your child well. Explain your worries, and find out if they have noticed anything out of the ordinary. Two heads are better than one, and hearing another perspective may help you decided if something is seriously wrong, and suggestions on the likely cause.

If, following this, you believe your child is at risk, the first thing to do is to talk to them. It's important to remember not to be confrontational. This is a sensitive subject and needs handling carefully as you don't want to push them away or shut them out. They need to be able to speak to you candidly. So be calm, don't get angry and they're far more likely to open up to you. Encourage them to share their ideas and opinions. For example, many young people who act on their support for ISIS by travelling are often not aware of the realities and consequences of what they are about to do, or the arguments against it. This is what they need to know:

- Any young person who travels to Syria will tear their family apart. We have met many families who have gone through this and many have told us that they will never be able to live a normal life again.
- Your child may want to 'help the people of Iraq and Syria', but they need to know that the people of both countries do not want them there. The extremist groups operating in the region, particularly ISIL, bring nothing but death and suffering and young people who join are part of the problem, not the solution.
- Imams and religious scholars from all corners of the globe have spoken out against ISIL and their message is clear – ISIL is un-Islamic and damages the name of Islam. They have strongly condemned ISIL's actions with religious arguments.
- The reality of life in Syria or Iraq will be very different from that portrayed by ISIS supporters on social media. Girls may not have a choice in whom they marry and may be subjected to sexual assault. There is absolutely no romance or adventure.
- Boys may be expecting 'Call of Duty', but the reality is that ISIL fighters kill innocent civilians, most of whom are Muslims.
- ISIL frequently executes those who try to leave. There may be no way out.

The same principles apply if you are concerned that you child is in danger of being radicalised by any form of extremist group, including those based in the UK and mentioned above.

Please refer to further information on the FAST website for how to handle potentially difficult conversations with your child about any concerns relating to radicalisation. Further support can be accessed through **JanTrust (0208 889 9433), NSPCC (0808 800 5000) and ThinkuKnow (0870 000 3344). Alternatively you can call the police directly on 101 to register your concerns and ask for support.**

**General safeguarding information for parents / carers**

It's not always easy to keep track of what your children are doing online. But every parent needs to be aware of the risks posed by the internet, which can be a platform for those seeking to sexually exploit children, as well as influencing their minds. The same tools should apply for safeguarding your child. There are simple steps you can take;

- Have a discussion with your children about what they are doing online, what apps and programs they use. Emphasise the importance of caution in what they are sharing and who they are friends with. Help them understand the importance of applying critical thinking to news and opinions they see online; not everything they read will be true, and not everyone they talk to will be honest about their identity.

- Consider setting up your own social media profiles, for example on Twitter or Facebook, and be friends with/follow your children.

- Be aware of who your children are friends with on Facebook and who they follow on Twitter. According to Ofcom, a worrying 1 in 3 12-15 year olds may be in contact with people they don't know via their social networking sites.

- Keep up to date with what they post, and what others are posting on their walls. Use your instinct if something appears inappropriate or out of character.

- Many parents have voiced their concerns about the sheer amount of extremist and graphic content which is readily available online from a simple search. If you are worried that your child may have seen something troubling, you can check their internet history - it is fairly easy to see what pages they have visited using their desktop computer, laptop, phone or tablet.

- You can also turn on the parental safety features that most online platforms offer, which can filter out or block harmful material.

As well as all of the links on our own website, here are some great websites for parents that can help you learn more about child online safety, such as  Internet Matters,  Safer Internet,  Parental Controls.