

From the toolkit of Lancashire's 'Prevent for Schools'

Extremists of all persuasions try to paint the world as black and white, accentuating divisions and difference, and exploiting fears based on ignorance or prejudice.

Education can be a powerful weapon against this, equipping young people with the knowledge, skills and reflex to think for themselves, to challenge and debate; and give young people the opportunity to learn about different cultures and faiths and, crucially, to gain an understanding of the values we share. Exploring ideas, developing a sense of identity and forming views are a normal part of growing up.

Schools can support young people in this: providing a safe environment for discussing controversial issues and helping young people understand how they can influence and participate in decision - making. We need to encourage young people 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 also need to 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. As with other forms of criminality or risk of harm, early intervention is always preferable. Schools, working with other local partners, families and communities, can help support pupils who may be vulnerable as part of wider safeguarding responsibilities.