



# The Appleton School

## Safeguarding Newsletter – December 2025

### Online Safety

#### Radicalisation

There's a chance that your child may meet people online or visit websites that could lead them to adopting extreme views or experiencing radicalisation.

Curiosity could lead your child to seek out these people, or they could groom your child. They could then encourage your child to adopt beliefs or persuade them to join groups with extreme views and actions.

Watch a parent's story about her son - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MLRSBJPiX24>

#### What is radicalisation?

Radicalisation is a process by which individuals, often young people, move from supporting moderate mainstream views to supporting extreme ideological views.

This process can occur online through exposure to and engagement with violent ideological propaganda, or offline through extremist networks. Radicalisation makes those at risk more likely to support terrorism and violent acts of extremism, and possibly even commit such criminal acts themselves.

More information from Internet Matters - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yjAmB0UHnHE>

#### Radicalisation facts and statistics

The number of right-wing extremist pieces of content investigated by the Metropolitan Police's Counter-Terrorism Internet Referral Unit surged from three in 2016 to 222 in 2020 – a 74-fold rise

More than 1,600 children under the age of 15 were referred to a government anti-terror scheme (PREVENT programme) according to figures.

#### How could your child become radicalised?

Young people may be vulnerable to a range of risks as they pass through adolescence. They may be exposed to new influences and potentially risky behaviours, influence from peers, influence from older people, or the internet as they may begin to explore ideas and issues around their identity.

There is no single driver of radicalisation, nor is there a single journey to becoming radicalised. The internet creates more opportunities to become radicalised, since it's a worldwide 24/7 medium that allows you to find and meet people who share and will reinforce your opinions. Research tells us that the internet and face-to-face communications work in tandem, with online activity allowing a continuous dialogue to take place.

#### Why could social networking be a concern?

Your child may actively search for content that is considered radical, or they could be persuaded to do so by others. Social media sites, like Facebook and X, can be used by extremists looking to identify, target, and contact young people. It's easy to pretend to be someone else on the internet, so children can sometimes end up having conversations with people whose real identities they may not know, and who may encourage them to embrace extreme views and beliefs.

Often children will be asked to continue discussions, not via social media, but via external platforms such as WhatsApp or Discord. Moving the conversation to less mainstream platforms can give users a greater degree of anonymity and can be less easy to monitor.

People who encourage young people to do this are not always strangers. In many situations, they may already have met them, through their family or social activities, and then use the internet to build rapport with them. Sometimes children don't realise that their beliefs have been shaped by others, and think that the person is their friend, mentor, boyfriend, or girlfriend and has their best interests at heart.

### **What are the signs to look out for?**

There are a number of signs to be aware of (although a lot of them are quite common among teens). Generally, parents should look out for increased instances of:

- Being secretive about who they've been talking to online and what sites they visit
- A move from expressing moderate views to following more extreme views
- A sudden conviction that their religion, culture or beliefs are under threat and treated unjustly
- A conviction that the only solution to this threat is violence or war
- Lack of feeling of belonging or a desperate need to find acceptance within a group
- Displaying intolerant views to people of other races, religions or political beliefs

### **What are schools doing to protect children?**

In 2015 the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act placed legal responsibility upon schools to "prevent people from being drawn into terrorism." A telephone helpline has been put into place for teachers, governors, and other staff to raise concerns directly with the Department for Education. Teachers will assess the risk of pupils being drawn into extremist ideologies.

The counter-terrorism requirements also include warnings against extremism, and staff in schools have received training to identify children at risk and "to challenge extremist ideas." Schools are also required to ensure that pupils do not access extremist material online. Nevertheless, it is important to protect children from extremism in the home, too, and ensure that they feel they are surrounded by trusted adults who they can speak to an approach in the event of a dangerous situation.

### **What is the prevent strategy?**

Protecting students from the risk of radicalisation is part of schools' overall safeguarding responsibilities.

### **What is Channel?**

Channel is a voluntary, confidential program that safeguards people identified as vulnerable to being drawn into terrorism. It is a multi-agency process, involving partners from the local authority, the police, education, health providers and others.

### **Recommended resources can be found:**

- <https://www.internetmatters.org/hub/>
- <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/individuals-referred-to-and-supported-through-the-prevent-programme-april-2019-to-march-2020>
- <https://actearly.uk/>
- <https://www.educateagainsthate.com/radicalisation-and-extremism/>
- <https://jantrust.org/>