

Speech

Nicky Morgan speaks about tackling extremism

From: [Department for Education, The Rt Hon Nicky Morgan MP and Home Office](#)

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Education Secretary Nicky Morgan announces a package of measures to protect children from extremism.



It really is a pleasure to speak here at Bethnal Green Academy

A school that as we've just heard, knows all too well the devastating impact that extremist ideology can have on young people, schools and whole communities.

I know that this has been an immensely difficult time for everyone involved here, but I want to commend Mark [Keary - Principal of Bethnal Green Academy and CEO of Green Spring Education Trust] and his staff for the leadership that they've shown in the face of this tragedy.

I spoke to Mark shortly after the girls fled and was impressed then by his determination to ensure that other students' education was not interrupted.

And for the whole school's commitment, as he outlined to me at the time, to ensure that pupils here continue to thrive in a safe, tolerant environment where the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, mutual respect and tolerance are enshrined in everything you do. Thank you to Mark, and all of your staff and leadership team.

If you'd been drawing up the job description for Secretary of State for Education, just 5 years ago, I'd doubt that tackling extremism would have featured at all. How different things are today.

In fact, my first task as Education Secretary was to [respond in Parliament to Peter Clarke's report on the Trojan Horse affair in Birmingham](#).

Since then I have led a department which has found itself at the forefront of the fight to protect and safeguard young people from the threat of extreme and fundamentalist ideologies.

And that threat is like no enemy we have faced before - an enemy not defined by physical geography, but by a shared set of warped beliefs.

An enemy that thanks to new technology has a potential channel from camps in Syria to homes right here in the United Kingdom - an enemy determined to take away our future by focusing their efforts to target the next generation.

Defeating such an enemy requires a co-ordinated response. Not just from the police, intelligence and security services, but from civil society - from schools and from parents.

Because left unchecked those that seek to destroy our way of life start to do so, by, as the Prime Minister said at the Conservative Party Conference last year, putting poison in the minds and hatred in the hearts of impressionable young people.

It's hard to comprehend that promising, bright girls from this school took the decision to leave their homes, families and country to join a brutal terrorist group.

But I do know this, they didn't take that decision alone - instead they were systematically targeted and groomed.

Daesh has developed sophisticated social media strategies to allow them to spread their lies and propaganda on an unprecedented scale.

They prey on and exploit young people's vulnerabilities - claiming to offer them an identity and a sense of belonging, which is nothing more than a fiction built on lies and manipulation.

That's why, just as we so proactively take steps to safeguard children from sexual exploitation, the threat of gangs, drugs or FGM [female genital mutilation], we must all of us here today stand together as government, parents, teachers, heads, charities and civil society groups.

All of us must work to protect children from the threat that Daesh poses.

Doing that isn't easy.

Far from it. I absolutely understand the concerns of teachers and school staff who've said to me, this isn't our role, this isn't why I came into the profession, it's not what schooling should be about.

But to those teachers and staff I say this - the most powerful thing that you can do to keep young people safe, are the things that you do every single day:

- engaging, broadening horizons and challenging young minds
- ensuring young people leave school as well-rounded young people - ready to be active citizens, able to participate in society, with an understanding of the responsibility that brings

That is why our work to tackle extremism - and specifically the [Prevent duty](#) are absolutely not about shutting down debate in

schools - in fact they're about reinvigorating it.

Because what defines every extremist organisation throughout history is that more than anything else their mission is to close and narrow young minds - to indoctrinate, instruct and inspire hatred.

That's what we saw in the Birmingham schools at the heart of the Trojan Horse Affair: a concerted attempt to limit young people's world view and spread poisonous views which had no place in our education system.

That's why we are taking action to remove those responsible from our classrooms and have put robust measures in place to prevent anyone else from being able to do the same again.

But that action alone will not be enough to keep young people safe. Alongside tackling extremists directly, we must also ensure that young people understand British values - that they have the tools and arguments they need to challenge extremism and to deconstruct the false claims of groups like Daesh.

It means that schools and universities need to be able to recognise the difference between a debate involving an academic controversialists like Germaine Greer and some of the events hosted by groups like CAGE, which have no place on our campuses and certainly not in our schools.

That isn't easy, there's no hard and fast rule, age appropriateness matters, as do the motivations of the speakers.

It requires judgement - but just as we must be absolutely clear that we should never give those who peddle extremist ideologies entry in to our schools or colleges, so too we must guard against inadvertently hiding young people from views which we simply think are wrong and disagree with.

We will not do young people any favours by wrapping them in cotton wool or subscribing to a definition of safe spaces that makes young people more fragile, and that seeks to protect young people from offence rather than from extremism.

The difference matters.

I hold no truck with the move on some campuses to limit debate and ban those with offensive rather than extremist views.

Far better, I think, to tackle Germaine Greer's wrong-headed views about gender identity in open debate.

Because it's the resilience that young people develop through that challenge and debate which will be their best defence should they ever then find themselves confronted by the truly hateful views of extremist groups.

I hope that all of you as educators will agree with me that our approach to protecting young people must be twofold.

We must continue to root out those who peddle extremism in our schools, but at the same time we must equip young people with the mental agility, arguments and insight to see through and overcome the propaganda of extremist groups, be it the Islamist extremism of Daesh or the fundamentalism of the far right.

As a government we are determined, and I am determined, to provide schools with the support they need to do this.

That is why I am delighted to be launching the [Educate Against Hate website](#)  today alongside the Minister for Security [John Hayes MP].

The site brings together the best advice, support and resources available for parents, teachers and school leaders who want to learn how to protect young people from extremism and radicalisation, and that really is the result of successful collaboration between the Department for Education, the Home Office, the NSPCC, Internet Matters, Childnet, ParentZone, UK Internet Safety Centre, and the many other organisations who have contributed resources.

What's so important about this resource is that it doesn't just offer information for teachers and schools - but parents as well.

While schools may be able to spot the signs of radicalisation, the

truth is much of it takes place beyond the school gates, in families or friendship groups, in communities and increasingly online.

That means parents must be equipped to help protect their children from extremism.

They need to understand the threat that extremist organisations pose, how radicalisation happens, what the warning signs look like and who to turn to for support if they are ever worried.

The information and advice available on Educate Against Hate will be an invaluable resource in helping them to do that and I encourage all parents to visit the site and familiarise themselves with the information it provides.

But as I said, schools also play a key role in spotting the signs of radicalisation - just as they do when young people experience other threats or difficulties, such as CSE [child sexual exploitation], eating disorders, mental health problems or drugs.

Schools can pick up those behavioural changes which may signal that a student is being radicalised before their peers or even their parents have spotted those signs.

That is why it is so important that schools see protecting children from radicalisation as part of their safeguarding duties. I know that the vast majority of staff in schools do this already and want to play their part.

And I want [Educate Against Hate](#)  to become a tool that helps them do that.

It provides up-to-date, practical advice that will help heads and governors understand the procedures their school should have in place to robustly tackle the threat, and will help teachers facing these issues in the classroom to understand radicalisation, its warning signs, and crucially where they can get further support.

Further resources, particularly those that help teachers to build children's critical thinking skills, will be added over the coming

months.

And as the threat evolves, as we know it will, the site will be updated so that it continues to be a live and relevant source of support.

Alongside this, I want to make sure that wherever children are being educated they are safe. I have said before, and I reiterate today, I fundamentally support the right of parents to decide where and how to educate their children.

Our duty as the government is to make sure that those children are safe from harm. So when children are taken out of school and taken off the register, we must know where they end up to ensure they are safe not just from radicalisation, but also from female genital mutilation, forced marriage and child sexual exploitation.

That is why, today I am also launching a [consultation on improving communication and co-ordination between schools and local authorities to help them quickly and effectively identify children who are missing from education.](#)

By strengthening regulations and allowing local authorities to obtain the information they need, we will ensure that they don't waste time filling information gaps, but instead focus efforts and resources on children who are at risk.

Finally, alongside protecting children who are missing in education, we will take action to tackle those institutions where children are being educated in [illegally operating unregistered schools.](#)

And let me be clear what I mean by an unregistered school, I mean an institution that is operating and educating young people full time and therefore should be subject to the same requirements as any other school.

These unregistered schools often fail to meet even basic safety and educational requirements - putting young people at risk, and in some cases evidence suggests subjecting them to extreme and intolerant views.

For too long these illegal schools have been operating under the radar. No more.

Let me be clear if you operate an unregistered school, you are committing a criminal offence and will face the consequences.

We have been working closely with Ofsted and local authorities to identify and tackle these schools, and the Chief Inspector has powers to make unannounced visits to any institution that he suspects is operating unlawfully as an independent school.

Indeed, these powers have already allowed Ofsted to work with the local authority to secure the closure of several unregistered schools operating in Birmingham.

But we must do more to take tough action against those who disregard the law in this area, and so I have agreed to give Ofsted additional resources so that they can go out on the ground to locate and investigate unregistered schools.

I have also instructed Ofsted to start preparing prosecutions against the proprietors of these schools.

Britain's classrooms have for centuries shaped great minds, who in turn have gone on to shape the course of history.

That is why it is so important that we do everything we can to ensure they remain places of enquiry and engagement, not breeding grounds for intolerance and indoctrination.

There will be no single knockout blow against those who seek to corrupt young people, but the action we are taking, to protect children inform parents and support teachers will put us firmly on the front foot.

It demonstrates our total commitment towards ensuring that we prevail in the battle against hateful extremist ideologies.

Because we want to ensure that every single child is where they should be - receiving a great education that will help them to build a bright future.

Thank you.

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