

STATEMENT ON THE DUTY TO COMBAT EXTREMISM

1. In the Curriculum

The Stanway Federation Academy Trust takes pride in the personal and spiritual development of its young people and seeks to provide every opportunity for students to become positive and emotionally resilient adults with the knowledge and confidence to stand by their own convictions. As a community we also promote the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs.

“The best way to help children resist extremist views or challenge views such as creationism is to teach them to think critically and become independent learners.”

Teachers must not promote partisan political views in the teaching of any subject and are required to ensure that whenever political issues are brought to the attention of students a balanced presentation of the opposing views is offered. This requirement applies not only during scheduled lessons, but in all other areas of the school.

The promotion of both (a) personal responsibility, understanding of the differences between right and wrong and respect for the civil and criminal law and (b) an understanding of how individuals can contribute to the wellbeing of those in the locality and beyond are addressed in many different subjects and contexts, including assemblies. All members of staff are made aware through the process of Performance Management of their fundamental responsibilities in this area. The Performance Management Policy for Teachers requires reviewers to evaluate their reviewees against the Standards for Teachers:

- “showing tolerance of and respect for the rights of others;
- “not undermining fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect, and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs;
- “ensuring that personal beliefs are not expressed in ways which exploit students’ vulnerability or might lead them to break the law.”

At the centre of our curriculum is the opportunity for students to feel as though they can freely and actively participate in discussions. This focus appears throughout key stages 3 and 4, for example:

- External facilitators and workshop leaders enable students to get a direct and honest approach to key ethical and religious issues.
- Students are encouraged to ask and answer questions and not be afraid to touch on controversial issues. For example, students will study a wide range of sensitive and ethical issues such as abortion or euthanasia or religious and philosophical concepts like life after death as it is important to empower our young people in their learning.
- Our classrooms are safe places in which students share their views and our teachers have up to date and relevant knowledge that enables them to give the students the material to help them formulate their own ideas, but also to counter stereotyping and prejudiced views. Student preconceptions are always respected. Many lessons begin with students putting across their ideas and then the plenary provides an opportunity to voice their views again and assess whether they have changed and why.
- In Citizenship, RE and Humanities subjects, role-plays, hot seating, real life case studies, images and newspaper articles are used regularly as a discussion stimulator and as a focus for lessons. This method is very significant as it is focused on the students’ questions and ideas. It also encourages critical thinking, fosters an awareness of experiences of others in the world (for example the experiences of someone who is homeless) while still allowing them to impart and develop their own attitudes and values and as a result nurturing their personal identity.
- The school has a strong and highly visible School Leadership team, which is actively involved in the decision-making and smooth running of the school.

2. Tutor and whole school roles

Within tutor time students are encouraged to discuss current news items from television and in the press. In this context students can be presented with a more balanced view of a particular story and together we can help and support them if they become worried or distressed about any particular story, especially where there has been loss of life. We need to be especially sensitive to students whose family members may be in areas that might be the source of many of these news items.

Themes of tolerance for others and differences in beliefs are also explored in assemblies held for cohorts, key stages and the whole school.

Individual support from senior staff and the pastoral team can be given to any student that expresses more serious anxiety.

3. Role of staff

This school will not tolerate any extremist political or religious views expressed openly by staff or governors either in school to students or other staff members or in more public forums such as social media. Staff members may be subject to disciplinary action if necessary.

Supporting Students: Any of our students may come into contact with extremist literature or propaganda at any time including when on school trips and in the community. Staff leading or accompanying trips must be vigilant to this possibility. It is our duty to support students who may be distressed or frightened by what they read or see. We must always help students to have a balanced view as well as giving them coping strategies in dealing with what may be external pressures, however we do not want students to become phobic about certain groups or religions.

If a student reports that they have been given information about or have heard extremist views, please inform a member of the SLT who will then work with parents and a member of the pastoral team to support that child. Please note: we must be extra sensitive with students who may have a family member living or fighting overseas. We are aware of students currently on roll to whom this may apply. Experience has taught us that there will undoubtedly be others.

There may be occasions where students have come into contact with extremist propaganda and have come to school to proselytise or 'spread the word'. We must be vigilant and report to the designated lead for safeguarding (Mr Johnson) any suspicion or incident. Students are vulnerable to such influences and must be safeguarded from any grooming activities related to extremism.

4. Parents and Visitors to the school

This school does not tolerate any extremist views expressed by any visitors to the school, including parents. If a staff member hears such views then they must refuse any further dialogue with that person and inform a member of the SLT immediately.