

**DRAFT**

**London Borough of Merton**

**Report and recommendations arising from the scrutiny task group review of the implementation of the *Prevent* duty in Merton's schools**

**Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel**

**February 2018**



*Pupils from Sherwood Primary visit the House of Commons*

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### **Acknowledgements**

The task group would particularly like to thank the council officers and directors who shared their experiences and thoughts with us. In addition, we would like to thank all the schools that supported the work of the task group by hosting our visits and allowing us to understand better how the *Prevent* duty is being implemented in Merton's schools. We are also grateful to the community partners that participated in our work.

All contributors are listed in Appendix 1.

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## Forward



It has been a pleasure to lead this task group looking at the implementation of the *Prevent* duty in Merton's schools. The decision to form the task group was set against the background of the four terror attacks that happened between March and June 2017; we wanted to reassure ourselves that Merton's schools are successfully implementing the duty and doing everything possible to prevent our young people from becoming radicalised and doing so in a way that doesn't cause stigmatisation of individuals or communities.

We have found our visits to four of Merton's schools reassuring. Schools know the duty well, are comfortable with its implementation and are embedding this within their safeguarding practice as another way to keep children safe from harm. We were delighted to see some *Prevent* practice taking place within the classroom and how schools are using initiatives such as the UNICEF *Rights Respecting Schools* programme to bring this to life for children. As a result, our recommendations are focused on continuing to improve this practice and to raise awareness of this amongst Merton's community groups.

I would like to thank the other members of the task group for all their hard work and time. Additionally, we are more than grateful to the officers who have supported our work and the community groups that got involved. Our particular thanks goes to those schools (Sherwood, Dundonald, Merton Park and Harris Merton), their staff and children, that hosted our visits. These were a high point of our work. It was both beneficial and rewarding to visit schools to talk to children about concepts such as diversity, tolerance and the British democratic process.

**Cllr Joan Henry**  
**Chair of the *Prevent* duty task group**

## List of the task group's recommendations

	<b>Responsible decision making body</b>
<p><u>Recommendation 1</u> The scope of this task group has focused on the implementation of <i>Prevent</i> in Merton's schools. However, our work led us to understand that preventing radicalisation of Merton's young people requires the support of the whole community. We therefore would like to be sure that other organisations that interact with young people such as sports groups, youth groups, training providers and social landlords etc feel comfortable dealing with safeguarding referrals. We recommend that the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel pick this up in its next work programme either through an item at a Panel meeting or through a further task and finish group.</p>	Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel and Safer & Stronger Executive Board
<p><u>Recommendation 2</u> We recommend the need to proactively work with the Merton community to deliver the <i>Prevent</i> duty. We recommend that the Joint Consultative Committee with Ethnic Minorities engage with local community groups to promote the good work being done in schools to deliver the <i>Prevent</i> duty in Merton and to explore ways in which community groups can support its delivery.</p>	Joint Consultative Committee with Ethnic Minorities
<p><u>Recommendation 3</u> The idea that schools provide young people with a narrative that change is achieved through struggle and time and is not achieved through violence is powerful. We didn't have the opportunity to explore how Merton's schools may already be doing this. However, we recommend that it would be good to explore how through the agreed syllabus support can continue to be offered to schools in developing counter narratives.</p>	SACRE
<p><u>Recommendation 4</u> Based on the four schools we visited we found that despite this being a new duty, imposing an additional workload, Merton's schools, supported by the local authority, are now delivering the <i>Prevent</i> duty which should be celebrated. As a task group we would like to take this opportunity to thank Merton's schools and officers for their work safeguarding the welfare of students including through their implementation of <i>Prevent</i>.</p>	The <i>Prevent</i> task group
<p><u>Recommendation 5</u> We recommend Merton's schools continue to share their <i>Prevent</i> practice and their growing expertise. This would</p>	Children, Schools and Families Department in partnership with school

<p>allow Merton's schools to develop additional opportunities to learn from each other as well as allowing schools to reach out into and build links with other communities which would support their implementation of <i>Prevent</i>. We recommend that the Children, Schools and Families Department explore ways to encourage and support the Merton family of schools to share their <i>Prevent</i> practice to learn from each other.</p>	<p>governing bodies and proprietors</p>
<p><u>Recommendation 6</u> Specifically, we recommend that the opportunity to utilise The UNICEF <i>Right's Respecting Schools</i> Programme to deliver the <i>Prevent</i> duty continues to be promoted to all Merton's primary schools. Information about how this is already being successfully used by some of Merton's schools should be provided. This would help more of Merton's schools receive their level 2 <i>Rights Respecting Schools</i> Award which requires schools to be outward facing and active in building community links. Thought should be given to identifying other programmes that promote rights and respect that could support the delivery of the <i>Prevent</i> duty in Merton's schools. We noted the work done by Stonewall with schools in promoting diversity and tolerance.</p>	<p>Children, Schools and Families Department in partnership with school governing bodies and proprietors</p>
<p><u>Recommendation 7</u> We recommend that the MASH continue to work with schools to understand their respective duties and information sharing requirements around the <i>Prevent</i> duty.</p>	<p>Children, Schools and Families Department</p>

## Report of the *Prevent* duty task group

### Purpose

1. The Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel has recognised the importance of the role schools play in their implementation of the *Prevent* duty to help keep children and young people from risk of radicalisation. Members were mindful of the four terror attacks that happened in just three months between the end of March and the end of June 2017, (Westminster, Manchester, London Bridge and Finsbury Park). In commissioning the task group their aspiration was to highlight, collate and share *Prevent* practice as well as support the Merton community to work collectively to prevent radicalisation.
2. In order for the review to be effective (and achieved in the time constraints imposed by the forthcoming local elections in May 2018), it was agreed that the task group would exclusively focus on the *Prevent* practice demonstrated by Merton's schools.
3. Additionally, it was agreed that if feasible, the task group would consider examples of innovative and successful practice in schools from outside the borough.
4. The terms of reference for the task group were agreed as follows:
  - a. To examine the full range of *Prevent* practice being delivered in Merton's schools including primary, secondary and special settings;
  - b. To identify practice that is effective and innovative as well as any specific challenges faced in delivering the duty and how these are addressed by schools;
  - c. To consider the support provided by borough Police and the wider Merton Safeguarding Children's Board partnership (which includes schools themselves);
  - d. To identify any additional support that school practitioners would welcome being provided by Merton's [Safer and Stronger Partnership](#);
  - e. To look at how schools work to safeguard their pupils from being stigmatised by the duty; and
  - f. To collate, celebrate and disseminate *Prevent* practice happening in Merton's schools to assist local practitioners and those outside of the borough.

### What the task group did

5. The work of the task group can be split into four main areas:
  - a. *Prevent* training;
  - b. Desk research;
  - c. Consultation with the local community; and
  - d. School visits.

#### *Prevent* training

6. The task group benefitted from presentations on the *Prevent* duty provided by Evereth Willis, Equality and Community Cohesion Officer for the Council and Keith Shipman who supports the Merton family of schools in its implementation of the duty. Additionally, task

group members attended governor training on the *Prevent* duty. Cllr Henry, in her role as chair of the task group, also attended a GovNet conference on the role of education in tackling radicalisation.

7. We have learned that *Prevent* is the Government's strategy to respond to the challenge of extremism and seeks to prevent individuals being drawn into terrorism. It is just one part of *Contest*, the Government's broader counter-terrorism strategy.
8. The *Prevent* strategy responds to the ideological challenge of terrorism and the threat faced from those who promote it. The objective is to prevent individuals from being drawn into terrorism and ensure that they are given appropriate advice and support. *Prevent* is delivered in partnership with sectors and institutions where there are risks of radicalisation that need to be addressed. Priority areas include education, faith, health, criminal justice and charities.
9. The terms extremism and radicalisations are precisely defined by the *Prevent* strategy;
  - a. Extremism is the vocal or active opposition of fundamental British values, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs; and
  - b. Radicalism is the process by which people come to support terrorism and extremism and, in some cases, to then participate in terrorist activity.
10. The *Channel Programme* is a key element of the *Prevent* strategy and is a multi-agency approach to protect people at risk from radicalisation; individuals at risk are identified, a multi-agency panel assess the nature and extent of the risk and then an appropriate support plan is developed based on individual needs. *Channel* is a voluntary process with interventions delivered by local partners and specialist agencies; it is about offering the individual support. It should also be noted that the panel may determine that there is no risk and that therefore no intervention is required.
11. The *Prevent* duty requires schools to 1) identify when pupils, their peers or their parents may be putting them at risk and to refer this through the agreed process (to the Merton Safeguarding Children Board and onto to the *Channel Programme*); 2) teach pupils *British Values* through the school ethos to help protect against radical narratives; and 3) take reasonable steps to ensure that the school building, staff and access to IT are all keeping pupils safe.
12. It was clarified that the *Prevent* duty is not intended to stop pupils debating controversial issues. On the contrary, schools should provide a safe space in which children, young people and staff can understand the risks associated with terrorism and develop the knowledge and skills to be able to challenge extremist arguments.
13. Possible signs of radicalisation were highlighted as being absent from education, out of character changes in dress, behaviour and peer relationships, secretive behaviour, losing interest in friends and activities, showing sympathy for extremist causes, glorifying violence and possessing illegal or extremist literature.



**14. The scope of this task group has focused on the implementation of *Prevent* in Merton's schools. However, our work led us to understand that preventing radicalisation of Merton's young people requires the support of the whole community. We therefore would like to be sure that other organisations that interact with young people such as sports groups, youth groups, training providers and social landlords etc feel comfortable dealing with safeguarding referrals. We recommend that the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel pick this up in its next work programme either through an item at a Panel meeting or through a further task and finish group (Recommendation 1).**

#### Prevent in Merton

15. In total 37 *Prevent* referrals were made between June 2015 to June 2017. This includes 28 in total from education (76% of all cases). Of these, 14 were from primary schools. All referrals were male with 26 cases aged 16 and under and ten cases aged over 16 (one case has no recorded date of birth). Of the ten aged over 16, one case involves someone in their 30s and the rest are aged 16-19. There have been four cases that have been referred to *Channel*. All are secondary school referrals.

16. Conducted recently, (the final report was published on 25 August 2017), Ofsted's combined inspection of Children's Services in Merton includes the following comments under the judgement of the Merton Safeguarding Children Board (which was judged outstanding):

17. *"The comprehensive range of high-quality, up-to-date policies and procedures are exemplary. These are regularly reviewed by the board and the business improvement group to ensure compliance and to ensure that policies are relevant. The board promotes a strong and transparent learning culture, setting high standards and drawing effectively on independent research. The promote and protect young people subgroup (PPYP) provides strategic and effective oversight of multi-agency policies, protocols and procedures regarding children at risk, including risk from sexual exploitation, radicalisation and extremism.*

18. *"The board is actively engaged with the 'Prevent' duty on radicalisation, which includes a wide range of partners, including the police, schools and early years settings, and faith, voluntary groups and the wider communities. MSCB guidance on safeguarding children and young people from the harmful messages of violent extremism and terrorism has been reviewed to ensure its current relevance. The guidance is clear and informs partners of their safeguarding responsibilities. It incorporates helpful lists for recognising risk and links to referral pathways for the MASH and the Channel programme, which focuses on providing support at an early stage to people who are identified as being vulnerable to being drawn into terrorism. The board has also consulted with a range of community groups, especially with regard to its strategy on female genital mutilation, which is reviewed appropriately through the policy subgroup.*

#### Desk research

19. The Government consulted on the *Prevent* guidance just after the duty came into effect (conducted in March 2015). Schools were included in the respondent groups. This can

be read in detail [here](#) with the following headlines provided on what support schools wanted at this time:

- a. Further clarity on the definitions of terms ‘extremism’ and ‘British values’;
- b. Integrating the *Prevent* duty into existing safeguarding mechanisms;
- c. The guidance to focus on working with faith groups and other community partners (to specifically bolster pupils’ theological resilience to troubling narratives);
- d. Further guidance on how to implement the objectives of the duty at a local level;
- e. Templates for risk assessments, action plans and flow charts;
- f. More training with guidance/clarity on who should receive this training and clear standards for training;
- g. Funding – to provide dedicated funds to deliver the *Prevent* duty;
- h. More clarity on what will be monitored in terms of the delivery of the duty and what mechanisms will be used to achieve this monitoring;
- i. More examples of good practice and sharing of good practice using different forums including online;
- j. The need to be careful about the weighting given to international terrorism against other forms of extremism, particularly Right Wing Extremism; and
- k. Linkages established to related policies or strategies. For example, equalities and community cohesion.

20. It is notable that community respondents to the same consultation made clear their concern that front line workers might not be sufficiently knowledgeable or well trained to distinguish between extremism on the one hand and usual religious practice on the other. It was suggested that faith as a potential positive influence should be covered in the provided training.

21. Additionally, we found that *Prevent* has faced public criticism. For example, some teachers in England have expressed concern about being required to report pupils who show signs of being drawn into extremism. It has been stated that there is worry about the possibility of stigmatising Muslim students ([here](#)).

22. This research helped inform us before we started to engage with community partners and visit schools in Merton.

#### Consultation with the Merton community

23. We wrote to all the members of the *Joint Consultative Committee with Ethnic Minorities* and invited them to attend an evidence gathering session to share their views on *Prevent* and specifically how this is being delivered in the borough’s schools. Despite issuing this invite twice, only two organisations contacted us and attended the task group.

24. The Muslim Women of Merton: The Task Group heard from two members of the Muslim Women of Merton group, Yasmin Farooq and Fareeda Bader. Both work within the education sector, Yasmin as an inclusion mentor and parent coach/trainer and Fareeda as

a primary school teacher. However, both work outside of Merton and their professional knowledge is therefore not gained inside the borough.

25. They expressed concern about children with behavioural issues that are often vulnerable. There was also reference to children being stigmatised (it is assumed by the *Prevent* duty) and a lack of trust within the wide community/society.
26. Several suggestions were made to address these concerns. Yasmin and Fareeda called for:
  - a. Community-based initiatives that support dialogue across communities, overcome disengagement and isolation and promote cohesion and peace. The example of the *Peace of Cake* initiative was cited; this is operating in Lewisham and a few other London Boroughs and offers simply social occasions to bring people together to help overcome resentments and allow communities that haven't previously met to get to know each other. Subsequently, we learned that this initiative has been employed in Merton with the Baitul Futuh Mosque. A similar event, entitled '*Diversity-tea*,' was also delivered by the Merton Islamic Community Centre that brought together people of faith and no faith;
  - b. Provision of parenting training that is culturally appropriate for parents from the Muslim community. Parents need support especially where their children are vulnerable but this needs to be culturally appropriate in order to be effective. The example of [Approachable Parenting](#) was given. This is a parent training initiative that is described as, "guiding Muslim families to better parenting"; and
  - c. Opportunities for safe and secure outlets for children and young people outside of school that are provided in such a way that children from a Muslim background are able to participate. The example of the *Muslimah* initiative was provided; this was a youth club in Merton for Muslim girls and their friends with which their parents were happy for them to participate delivered by volunteers and supported by Merton Youth Service.
27. Task group members agreed to ask Yasim and Fareeda if they could survey the Merton Muslim community through their networks to find out if there are examples of schools in the borough that are acknowledged as:
  - a. Undertaking activity to build community cohesion; and/or
  - b. Providing out of school activities in such a way that offers safe and secure outlets for children and young people with which parents from the Muslim community feel comfortable.
28. Undertaking this survey wasn't feasible. However, the Muslim Women of Merton expressed their desire that more be done to explain *Prevent* and to work in partnership with community members to deliver the duty.
- 29. We recommend the need to proactively work with the Merton community to deliver the *Prevent* duty. We recommend that the Joint Consultative Committee with Ethnic Minorities engage with local community groups to promote the good work being done in schools to deliver the *Prevent* duty in Merton and to explore ways in which community groups can support its delivery (Recommendation 2).**

30. Ray Skinner, Secretary and Trustee, Morden Park and Playing Fields Community Trust: presented the aspiration of the Morden Park and Play Fields Community Trust to use the former London playing fields site to provide sporting facilities and activities that promote community cohesion and mutual respect among different communities.
31. The aim is to bring the 65 acres of land given for the playing fields back into use for a range of sports through a community-led enterprise. It was highlighted that the trust deeds includes an explicit commitment to sporting activities being used to promote community cohesion.
32. Keith Shipman highlighted that community cohesion activity, part of the evidence of both groups, would in effect come before *Prevent* activity. This was a key part of the first iteration of the *Prevent* strategy; it was premised on the belief that community cohesion could be effective in preventing radicalisation. There remains a question about whether community integration would be effective in tackling the stigmatisation the Muslim community specifically feels as a result of *Prevent*.
33. We have concluded it is a good sign that so few community partners took up the opportunity to talk to us about *Prevent* in Merton's schools and may demonstrate that in Merton *Prevent* isn't seen as problematic or a significant issue for our community partners.
34. Dr Afzal Ashraf: we were fortunate to additionally meet with Dr Afzal Ashraf, who teaches at the School of Politics and International Relations at the University of Nottingham and has expertise in terrorism and counter terrorism, religious extremism, counter narratives, global security and conflict. (He is also a resident in the neighbouring borough of Wandsworth.)
35. Whilst Dr Ashraf is not familiar with the *Prevent* duty in schools he did express some discomfort with the approach and is concerned it places an unfair burden on schools. He highlighted that young people often have genuine grievances with the world which they desire to change and that these grievances can be magnified by those that seek to radicalise them. He suggested the need for schools to provide young people with a narrative that change is achieved through struggle and time and not through violence. Various historical examples were cited that could be studied to illustrate this counter narrative. For example, the abolition of slavery.
- 36. The idea that schools provide young people with a narrative that change is achieved through struggle and time and is not achieved through violence is powerful. We didn't have the opportunity to explore how Merton's schools may already be doing this. However, we recommend that it would be good to explore how through the agreed syllabus support can continue to be offered to schools in developing counter narratives (Recommendation 3).**

#### School visits

37. We are fortunate to have been able to visit four of Merton's schools to look at their *Prevent* practice (three primary schools and one secondary). We are grateful to them for the time, information and advice that they provided to our work. We are reassured by our visits to

Merton's schools. We found that, contrary to the picture portrayed in the national media, Merton's schools are:

- a. Comfortable with the *Prevent* duty; they understand the referral process and are successfully delivering teaching on '*British Values*';
- b. Firmly embedding *Prevent* within other safeguarding practice. They clearly demonstrate that the duty is about protecting pupils from harm and not about criminalising behaviour. Risk of radicalisation is seen as being comparable to grooming that might lead to Child Sexual Exploitation;
- c. Adding additional emphasis to teaching that was already happening before the duty came into place. All stated that they have had to become more overt in their teaching of *British Values* to deliver the *Prevent* duty rather than having to change the curriculum; and
- d. Working with parents and carers as appropriate to safeguard pupils. This can involve anything from speaking directly with parents about a specific issue to providing generic information on safeguarding to holding events to engage parents or provide specific training for example on internet safety. All the schools we visited reported a good response from parents even if turn out at some events can be low.

### **Sherwood Primary School, Mitcham**

38. Task group members (Cllrs Braund, Henry, Holmes and Jones) were delighted to visit Sherwood Primary School in Mitcham (during mid November 2017). This is a two form entry primary school with nursery provision, located in the east of the borough close to Mitcham Common. Pupils are drawn from a wide and diverse range of minority ethnic backgrounds with no dominant group. Sherwood had just received an Ofsted inspection (finishing earlier in the same week as the task group's visit) with the judgement awaited.
39. The visit was hosted by Executive Head, Tina Harvey. During the visit task group members attended assembly, met and talked to the members of the school council, enjoyed a tour of the school and met with Ms Philips, the head of religious education and Kam Matharu and Lucinda Varchione-Francis, the co-ordinators of the UNICEF *Rights Respecting Schools* programme (which forms part of the school's approach to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development).
40. During the visit, it was clearly demonstrated how the school is delivering the *Prevent* duty. This is strongly positioned as part of the school's robust safeguarding practice alongside support for issues such as online safety and anti-bullying. It is facilitated through the religious education curriculum, which is broad and encourages understanding and tolerance of those from other faiths, as well as the PSHE curriculum. It was emphasised that this approach starts in Early Years, and that the school is supported by parents and carers.
41. Sherwood uses both its school council and the UNICEF *Rights Respecting Schools* Programme<sup>1</sup> to support the delivery of the *Prevent* duty and to promote respect for others

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<sup>1</sup> UNICEF describes the *Rights Respecting Schools* Award as embedding the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights in daily school life, giving children the best chance to lead happy and healthy lives and to be responsible active citizens. Having seen it in action in a number of schools encompassing a range of communities, we wonder if part of its success comes from it being based on the Universal Declaration making it

amongst pupils. The school recently gained the *Rights Respecting Schools* level 1 award. Task group members saw how the scheme is reinforced through the school day. For example, in assembly where there was a focus on Article 15 (*Children have the right to meet together and to join groups and organisations, as long as it does not stop other people from enjoying their rights. In exercising their rights, children have the responsibility to respect the rights, freedoms and reputations of others*). Displays throughout the school showed the different articles. The school also uses opportunities such as *British Values Week* and *Democracy Week* as a means to focus on engendering tolerance and independence within the children.

42. Members of the school council were able to talk to the task group about the importance of democracy and valuing the views of others. They had recently visited the House of Commons with local MP Siobhain McDonagh in addition to visiting Cllr Marsie Skeet, the Mayor of Merton, at the Civic Centre building. It was noted that children were able to explain their rights in depth to Ofsted inspectors during their recent inspection. The school is currently working towards level 2 of the *Rights Respecting Schools Award*. This requires more community working and international links than level 1.
43. The school has not had any *Prevent* referrals and neither has it had any bullying or racist incidents to report. Tina Harvey confirmed that there is confidence in delivering the duty and that whilst the duty is challenging and has required changes in the curriculum and how it is delivery (making the focus on values more overt) the support received from the Council has been appropriate.
44. Task group members greatly enjoyed their visit and particularly value the time staff and pupils gave them to explain Sherwood's approach to the *Prevent* duty.

#### **Dundonald Primary School, Wimbledon**

45. Task Group members Cllrs Henry and Jones greatly enjoyed their visit to Dundonald Primary School in mid November 2017. This is a two-form entry primary located in Wimbledon. We are grateful to Headteacher Fiona Duffy and her deputy Katy Waters for supporting our visit.
46. The implementation of the *Prevent* duty is strongly positioned as part of the school's safeguarding practice. This starts with the school's ethos ("Our school community will provide a caring, safe and supportive environment where everyone is encouraged to be creative, challenged and happy in their work and play, and where UNICEF Rights are respected and valued by all") and is embedded throughout the school's work. The emphasis is very much on a whole child approach with a strong focus on the child's voice. Students are involved throughout the school reflecting the school's ethos and demonstrated through the school council, the annual bullying survey and initiatives such as the worry box accessible in every classroom. Even visitors to the school are reminded of their duties in helping safeguard children and every topic map includes a focus on how it will help deliver the *Prevent* duty.

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more effective among students and parents from a diverse range of backgrounds compared to an emphasis on 'British Values'.

47. Dundonald is another UNICEF *Rights Respecting School*. It holds level one and is working towards level 2. This is being delivered through a student-led steering group which is distinct from the school council. We were fortunate to see how the UNICEF universal rights are used and embedded through class practice by a visit to Year 4. Students were debating whether a character in the book they were reading should join a gang. We were delighted to hear eloquent arguments from both sides, with students demonstrating respect for the views of others with whom they disagreed. This emphasised the importance of listening to others and allowed students to put forward an argument against a view with which they disagreed. Like other classes, Year 4 had agreed their own class charter as a way of making the UN Charter relevant to each student. This involved a process where students were active in discussing and agreeing which aspects of the charter they wanted their class to focus on.
48. The school holds an international fortnight every two years which is used to promote the different cultures, languages and nationalities that comprise the school. This is used to emphasise how students are all different but equal, building respect, tolerance and understanding. It has also been a key way in which the school has managed to engage with its parent body, many of whom have seized this opportunity to showcase their own cultural background. This has helped breakdown barriers to participation which is to the benefit of safeguarding. The school has also provided parent workshops on subjects such as bullying and growth mindset and there is a parent forum which convenes every month.
49. The emphasis on different but equal was also reinforced by the school's recent participation in Odd Socks Day where children all wore differently decorated socks; all do the same job well but look very different.
50. Whilst our visit was quite brief, we saw an impressive variety ways the school is working to embed safeguarding practice and the *Prevent* duty.

### **Merton Park Primary School**

51. This is a one form entry primary school situated in the Merton Park ward. Councillors Braun, Cowper, Henry and Jones represented the task group during the visit that took place in late November 2017. We are grateful to Headteacher Kirsty Gooderick and Deputy Head Kate Parson for their time and for supporting our visit.
52. As with the other schools we visited, *Prevent* is firmly embedded as part of the school's safeguarding strategy. The biannual and September refresh of staff safeguarding training was emphasised. The schools' approach is to never assume that 'it can't happen here'. One way in which the school protects children is by monitoring attendance very closely.
53. The school emphasises the importance of pupil voice; class councils support the school council feeding back ideas to be addressed. Students are also given the opportunity to make decisions. For example, students select what charity the school will support each year. The religious education curriculum promotes respecting difference whilst students are encouraged to be independent through initiatives such as older students running clubs for their younger peers.

54. As another UNICEF *Rights Respecting School* (the school has already achieved the level 1 award), the charter underpins and is reinforced through the behaviour policy as well as individual class charters. Good behaviour is encouraged in circle time and in the Star of the Week assembly. The aspiration is to make the rights real and tangible for students.
55. This is further reinforced through the curriculum where students are encouraged to focus on critical thinking and learn about how others don't benefit from the same rights that they enjoy. For example, students have learned about Aborigines and how indigent children were forcibly removed from their families.
56. To achieve the *Rights Respecting School* level two award, which focuses more on the school's relationship with the local community and on students being global citizens, students are being encouraged to discuss what is happening in the news (Newsday Tuesday). During Anti-Bullying Week, the school participated in Odd Socks Day to emphasise the different but equal message.
57. We were delighted to do a tour of the school which was led by members of the school council. During this we visited the ICT suite and saw how students are supported to keep themselves safe online. This includes a smart code which all students know well and an on screen button which allows them to instantly report content that makes them worried.
58. The school reported that it feels no discomfort in delivering *Prevent* and as with other schools it has incorporated *Prevent* into the existing curriculum. There hasn't been any negative reaction from parents. It has only made one referral specifically for *Prevent* which it was judged didn't need to be progressed.

### **Harris Academy Merton**

59. This is a large mixed secondary school located in the Pollards Hill ward. We are grateful to Rachel Simpson, the SENCO and safeguarding lead (including *Prevent*), for the time she gave us and for supporting our visit which took place in early December 2017 and was conducted by Councillors Henry and Jones.
60. Again, it was demonstrated that implementation of the *Prevent* duty sits firmly within and as part of the school's safeguarding policy. It was explained, that as part of Harris, the Academy benefits from advice on safeguarding, including *Prevent*, from both the federation and colleagues in Merton Council. This includes access to staff training on *Prevent* (WRAP training). The federation has provided the school with a generic safeguarding policy which it has adapted to reflect its own needs and context. This is supported by a more detailed policy on *Prevent*. The school has a governor with designated responsibility for safeguarding including *Prevent*. Reviews are held twice a year with the designated governor.
61. Delivery of the *British Values* element of *Prevent* is achieved through the school ethos and the existing curriculum. This has been extensively mapped to the *British Values* content. For example, in year 7 students learn about medieval history and the early development of government and democracy and students in all years must focus on critical thinking about texts in English. Again it was emphasised that *Prevent* has not required big changes within school but rather it has been about emphasising and/or being more explicit. The



school is now training pupils so they are able to make appropriate safeguarding reports. It is mindful of the need to be even handed and ensure that the focus on extremism isn't just about Islamic fundamentalism but also looks at the risks of radicalisation by right wing extremism. Work with pupils has been supported by the St Giles Trust which has delivered workshops for pupils on safeguarding issues including *Prevent* and gangs (the cost implications of this though are significant for the school). In addition to the school council, students also act as peer mentors with the aspiration for students to be trained to become wellbeing ambassadors. This helps support good communication between students which is important to safeguarding.

62. Harris works directly with parents especially where there is a concern about a student. Additionally, the school provides training sessions on issues such as internet safety (through CEOP) which could be better attended. However, the relationship with parents and their reaction to safeguarding concerns is good.
63. One particular issue identified by the Academy regards safeguarding for children that are from outside of the borough. This can be more complicated for the school to report and the support offered isn't always as comprehensive as that provided by Merton. Whilst the Academy is clear that it is its responsibility to ensure it receives a response to any referral it makes, this can sometime be a lengthy process and it would be good for agencies to respond in a more timely manner. It was noted that the software now used by the school for tracking referrals is good and has helped managed this process.
64. We have been interested to note that our experience of *Prevent* in Merton's schools is supported by the recently published research report from the Aziz Foundation: What the *Prevent* duty means for schools and colleges in England as a whole ([here](#)). This found that:
- a. Survey respondents had engaged with and accepted the idea of '*Prevent* as safeguarding';
  - b. The majority of interview and survey respondents expressed fairly high levels of confidence with regards implementing the duty;
  - c. The *Prevent* duty is perceived to have little changed the everyday practices of school staff;
  - d. Most respondents did not perceive the *Prevent* duty to have had a 'chilling effect' on discussion and debate; and
  - e. Few respondents questioned the legitimacy of the *Prevent* duty.
65. However, this report does raise the issue of workload burden and hidden costs which we encountered to a limited extent in our visits. Additionally, it cites concern amongst BME respondents that *Prevent* is making it more difficult to foster an environment in which students from different backgrounds get on well with one another. We didn't encounter this as an issue in our visits.
- 66. Based on the four schools we visited we found that despite this being a new duty, imposing an additional workload, Merton's schools, supported by the local authority, are now delivering the *Prevent* duty which should be celebrated. As a task group we would like to take this opportunity to thank Merton's schools and**

officers for their work safeguarding the welfare of students including through their implementation of *Prevent* (Recommendation 4).

67. We recommend Merton's schools continue to share their *Prevent* practice and their growing expertise. This would allow Merton's schools to develop additional opportunities to learn from each other as well as allowing schools to reach out into and build links with other communities which would support their implementation of *Prevent*. We recommend that the Children, Schools and Families Department explore ways to encourage and support the Merton family of schools to share their *Prevent* practice to learn from each other (Recommendation 5).
68. Specifically, we recommend that the opportunity to utilise The UNICEF *Right's Respecting Schools* Programme to deliver the *Prevent* duty continues to be promoted to all Merton's primary schools. Information about how this is already being successfully used by some of Merton's schools should be provided. This would help more of Merton's schools receive their level 2 *Rights Respecting Schools* Award which requires schools to be outward facing and active in building community links. Thought should be given to identifying other programmes that promote rights and respect that could support the delivery of the *Prevent* duty in Merton's schools. We noted the work done by Stonewall with schools in promoting diversity and tolerance (Recommendation 6).
69. We recommend that the MASH continue to work with schools to understand their respective duties and information sharing requirements around the *Prevent* duty (Recommendation 7).

#### What happens next?

70. This task group was established by the Council's Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel and so this report will be presented to its meeting on 1 February 2018 for the Panel's approval.
71. Once approved by the Panel, it will go to Cabinet which will be asked to provide a formal response to the Panel within two months.
72. The Cabinet is asked to respond to each of the task group's recommendations, setting out whether the recommendation is accepted and how and when it will be implemented. If the Cabinet is unable to support the implementation of any of the recommendations, then it is expected that a clearly stated reason will be provided for each.
73. The lead Cabinet Member (or officer to whom this work is delegated) should ensure that other organisations to whom recommendations have been directed are contacted and their response to those recommendations is included in the report.
74. A further report will be sought by the Panel six months after the Cabinet response has been received, giving an update on progress with implementation of the recommendations.

DRAFT

## **Appendix 1: witnesses at meetings**

- Evereth Willis, Equality and Community Cohesion Officer
- Keith Shipman, Education Inclusion Manager
- Yasmin Farooq and Fareeda Bader, the Muslim Women of Merton
- Ray Skinner, Secretary and Trustee, Morden Park and Play Fields Community Trust
- Dr Afzal Ashraf, the School of Politics and International Relations at the University of Nottingham
- Tina Harvey, Executive Head, Sherwood Primary School, Mitcham
- Kam Matharu and Lucinda Varchione-Francis, the co-ordinators of the UNICEF Rights Respecting Schools programme, Sherwood Primary School, Mitcham
- Fiona Duffy, Headteacher and Katie Walters, Deputy Head, Dundonald Primary School, Wimbledon
- Kirsty Gooderick, Headteacher and Kate Parsons, Deputy Head, Merton Park Primary School
- Rachel Simpson, the SENCO and safeguarding lead, Harris Academy Merton