

Appendix 1

Navigating discussions about extremism

When addressing sensitive topics, such as the rise of extremism movements, while using the *Difference* resources, it is vital to approach the conversation with care, sensitivity, and awareness of pupils' emotional wellbeing.

In today's fast-moving world, children are increasingly exposed to complex social and political issues, making this a crucial time for shaping their values. Creating a psychologically safe and supportive environment allows pupils to explore these topics openly, ask questions without fear, and develop a deeper understanding of justice, inclusion, and community.

Create a safe space for discussion

Start by setting clear guidelines for discussions. Emphasise the importance of respect, kindness, and active listening. Let pupils know it's okay to ask questions and express their thoughts but remind them to be considerate of how their words might impact others. Reinforce that the classroom should be a place where everyone feels safe and valued, regardless of their background or beliefs. Establishing this environment supports open, honest, and empathetic dialogue.

Acknowledge and clarify

If the topic of extremism comes up, acknowledge it in a way that is age-appropriate and not overly distressing. Explain that sometimes, people express strong opinions through actions that may be harmful or unfair to others. Stress that while everyone has the right to their views, it's important to understand how such actions can affect others, especially when they promote exclusion or hatred. Use this opportunity to discuss the values of compassion and hospitality, explaining that these principles encourage us to care for others and to treat everyone with kindness and respect.

Focus on core values

Reframe the discussion around the core values of empathy, respect, and understanding. Encourage pupils to think about how they can contribute to a more positive and inclusive society. Discuss how compassion involves understanding and caring for others' feelings, while hospitality means welcoming and respecting everyone. This is a chance to reinforce the importance of kindness and standing up against unfair treatment in a thoughtful and constructive manner.

Provide reassurance and positive actions

Reassure pupils that while there are difficult issues in the world, many people are working to make things better. Highlight the positive actions they can take, such as showing empathy towards others, being inclusive, and speaking up against unkind behaviour in ways that are appropriate for their age. Emphasise that their own acts of compassion and hospitality can make a significant difference in their communities.

By guiding these discussions with sensitivity and focusing on values such as empathy, compassion, and hospitality, you'll help pupils navigate complex issues while reinforcing important moral principles. This approach not only supports their emotional wellbeing but also encourages them to act with kindness and respect in their interactions with others.

Optional prayer

Dear God,

We thank you for the gift of understanding and the power of kindness. Help us to open our hearts to others, showing compassion in our words and actions. Teach us to listen with empathy, to welcome everyone with love, and to stand up for what is right in a way that reflects your grace.

Guide us to be a light in the world, spreading peace and respect wherever we go. May we always seek to build a community where everyone feels safe, valued, and loved.

Amen.