



Tuesday, 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2017

Dear Parents and Guardians,

### **How to talk about terrorism with your child**

Following the tragic event that unfolded in Manchester late yesterday evening, the children have taken part in an assembly today. Upon hearing that some children knew of friends or family members who had attended the concert, or who were in Manchester for other reasons, we decided that we would speak about this as a whole school taking a calm and factual stance. In fact, we are aware that some family members attended this incident as part of the Emergency Services.

We talked about the facts of the event and what terrorism is. We explained that the children should focus on all of the kind, helpful people who reached out to support and help strangers last night. Not only those members of our Emergency Services, but those who assisted with telephones, transport and shelter for those in need. We talked about all the people in our community who keep us safe on a daily basis: family, teachers, friends, the police, the security services and our government. We observed one-minute's silence to reflect upon those who were affected by this act and to think of those who help us and keep us safe.

It can sometimes be difficult for a parent to know how to handle such a sensitive and often upsetting situation. The following are some recommendations for children who have not been directly affected by tragedy.

**Take time to talk about terrorist attacks:** Children look to their parents for guidance and reassurance. Even if your children are reluctant to talk about it at first, take the lead. What you say matters.

**Review what they understand:** As your children continue to deal with terrorist episodes, they may have misconceptions or misunderstandings about what took place, even if they have followed the news accounts. Talk about it in terms that they can understand.

**Identify your children's fears:** Children may have unrealistic fears that we do not anticipate. They might fear an attack on their home or loss of their parents. Take time to find out what your children are thinking about and reassure them.

**Limit television exposure:** Television news presents highly disturbing images and victim accounts that can be too frightening for most children, particularly those under the age of 12.

**Help your children express their feelings about the tragedy:** Share your feelings with your children, but set a good example by expressing your feelings in an appropriate and mature manner. Extreme expressions of anger and grief may not be helpful to your child's sense of security and self-control.

**Express anger in an appropriate manner:** It is understandable that children feel angry, but the target of that anger should be the terrorists, not an entire race or religion. Discourage stereotypes and prejudice which grow so easily from hate and fear. If one person commits an act of terrorism, it does not represent all people of that same race or faith.



**Spend some family time in normal, reassuring activities:** Bake cakes. Go for a walk. Play a favourite game. Do something together as a family that helps your children feel comfortable and secure.

You may find the following links of interest:

- **How you should talk to your children about terrorism**  
<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/nsppc/index.html>
- **How should we talk to children about terrorism?**  
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-39369319>

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'H Singleton'.

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