4-Minute Briefing

Educational Approaches to Violence Prevention

MERSEYSIDE Violence Reduction Partnership

1 Why the protective role of school matters *(1 minute)*



Violence is not inevitable – it can be prevented

Schools are one of the strongest protective factors in a young person's life. Evidence shows that when pupils feel connected to school, attend regularly, build positive relationships, and develop social and emotional skills, they are less likely to become involved in violence.

Violence prevention is not an additional programme

It is embedded in the culture, relationships, expectations and experiences that shape a young person's day-to-day life. Every interaction is an opportunity to strengthen protection and support positive outcomes.

Schools are uniquely placed to do this through: Education Guidance poster final [1]

Implementing the DfE Guidance on Preventing Serious Violence in Education

For further information on implementing a whole-school approach to violence prevention, professionals are encouraged to review the Department for Education's Preventing Serious Violence in Education guidance [2], which provides practical recommendations on building a strong culture, supporting inclusion, teaching key skills and creating safe environments.

2 A Social Norms Approach *(1 minute)*

Most young people do not carry weapons or engage in serious violence. However, many overestimate how common these behaviours are, which can influence attitudes and decisions.

A social norms approach helps to challenge these misconceptions by reinforcing that safe, positive behaviours are the norm. Education settings can support this through consistent messaging, positive role models, celebrating prosocial behaviour, and ensuring discussions about violence are proportionate and evidence-informed.

In practice:

- Challenge myths with facts and pupil voice.
- Promote positive role models and behaviours.
- Use consistent prevention messages across the setting.
- Avoid sensationalising rare incidents.

3 Implementing this Briefing *(1 minute)*

Do:	Ask:
Consider your local context, data and student voice.	Is this an evidence-based approach?
Brief staff before delivery.	Does it avoid shock and scare tactics?
Provide clear signposting to Fearless, Childline and safe, trusted adults.	Is this the right intervention?
Align universal and targeted support.	Delivered in the right way?
Review the Youth Endowment Fund education practice guidance [3].	For the right pupils?
	At the right time?

4 Using External Partners Effectively *(1 minute)*

Evidence based and carefully considered external partners can strengthen violence prevention by bringing expertise, lived experience, and real-world context. Their impact is greatest when integrated into a wider whole-school approach rather than delivered as stand-alone sessions.

- Ensure partners are evidence-informed and align with your school's values and safeguarding approach.
- Intergarte their input into the whole-school approach.
- Choose partners with relevant expertise, lived experience, and proven impact.
- Be cautious of approaches that rely on fear, shock, graphic content, or oversimplified messages.

Work with partners to complement and enhance your existing approach.

"Prevention isn't one lesson, one assembly, or one campaign. It's the culture, relationships, and opportunities we create every day."

1. https://youthendowmentfund.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/Education-Guidance-poster-final-3.pdf
2. https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/understanding-and-preventing-serious-violence-in-education/preventing-serious-violence-in-education
3. https://youthendowmentfund.org.uk/reports/education-guidance/