



# St Mark's West Essex Catholic School

*an Academy Trust School*

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Headteacher Miss E Heaphy BSc MA PGCE NPQH

Dear Parent/Carer

## **Keeping Children Safe in Our Schools**

I know that you are aware of the duties we all have as parents, carers and professionals who work with children and young people to do our very best to keep them safe. For school staff and other professionals, these duties are a statutory responsibility. They require schools to do everything they can to protect children from physical abuse, sexual exploitation, radicalisation and anything else that may harm them. Some of these duties come about as a result of specific legislation, in addition to the general requirement to keep children safe. An example of this is the responsibility that schools have to protect children and young people from radicalisation as part of the Prevent duty. St Mark's is proud of its diversity and see this in action in so many ways. We all want Harlow to thrive and develop into a place where we are all proud to live, learn and work. The role St Mark's plays in all aspects of keeping children and young people safe is a vital component of this ambition.

## **Understanding the Prevent Duty**

Nationally over 850 people of interest to the police have travelled to Syria and Iraq to join terrorist groups. We are at the same time seeing Far Right groups exploit the migration crisis to recruit young people to their disturbing cause. Prevent is about safeguarding. It is sad but an unfortunate fact that there have been cases around the country, including locally, where people have been drawn into joining terrorist and extremist groups.

The Prevent duty requires all schools and specified organisations to uphold and promote the fundamental values (referred to as British Values) of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs. It places a responsibility on schools to ensure that staff are fully engaged in being vigilant about radicalisation and that, in line with all existing safeguarding advice and practice, that they work alongside other professional bodies, agencies and parents to ensure that pupils are safe from harm.

At St Mark's we have continually worked with staff and pupils to do our very best to keep everyone safe. As a school we will be delivering further sessions, through PSHE lessons, to all pupils in Years 7 – 10 this term. All pupils will receive 5 or 6 sessions to support them in 'Learning to be safe'.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at school at anytime

Yours sincerely

**David Rowland**