

Youth Strike 4 Climate - UK - [view contents](#)

Letters for schools

We hope you find these useful. Please check through them as they may have UK specific references or details that don't apply (such as 2 daughters etc)

Letter aimed at secondary head - 'climate anxiety'

(the aim of this letter is to a) try to avoid fines b) draw attention to the effect inaction is having on our children's stress levels, with references from child psychology studies. This approach has been endorsed by Steve Biddulph, child psychologist)

Dear Headteacher

I am writing to let you know that my 2 daughters will be joining the global youth strike on 20th September 2019, with my permission. As you may know there will be 106 countries & over 1.6k towns or cities taking part in this historic event across all the continents of the globe: <https://fridaysforfuture.org/events/map>

Like many children growing up today, my children are increasingly aware that the climate is set to get very dangerous in their lifetime and that not enough is being done to safeguard their future.

This is of course, is causing them stress and they'll be taking time out of school on 20th September to deal with that stress.

They, like others of their cohort, suffer from an all-pervasive sense of foreboding, that many are calling 'climate anxiety'. Going to the global strike for future will enable them to feel like they have agency and that they don't have to just accept that their world is to be depleted before their eyes.

I've seen first-hand that striking is hugely therapeutic for young people when I accompanied my daughters to youth strikes earlier in the year. There was a sense of relief and a feeling of empowerment. They understandably have a passion to fight for their future and we adults should encourage it in every way we can.

There has been a surge in mental health issues for young people recently. However is it any wonder, when we look at what is bequeathed to them?

World renowned parenting psychologist Steve Biddulph writes that he

'is clear that participating in climate activism is a mental health plus for a generation of young people plagued by anxiety and depression about their world'.

He cites many studies which show the benefits of taking action amongst young people.

I'm also concerned that their predicament could lead them to seek to turn away from reality and towards drugs to block out the doom.

It is for these reasons of boosting mental wellbeing and resilience that I am strongly supportive of my children's choice to attend this historic event.

Adults, who should be their heroes, have left it to children to fight for their own futures. The very low numbers of MPs attending the recent debate in parliament on climate change (the first one in 2 years) lays bare the lack of interest the adults in charge have in fighting for the future of the next generation. I hope that you will be one of the adults to support them in their plight.

You may feel there are safeguarding issues, with children not attending school. I understand you can be held responsible for them during school hours, but as their mother, I have to look at the bigger picture and the safety of their entire future.

I've spent my entire adult life watching an ever-accelerating horror show as the world has gone steadily backwards on climate change. There's been a four-fold increase in emissions just since 2000, with the majority of the damage caused since then.

I cannot stand in my children's way to demand a future. It's not a lot to ask, and yet they're told by adults 'Sorry, it's just too difficult'. I hope you will not be one of those adults.

Lest us not forget what is at stake here; scientists tell us that 3.5° of climate heating will cause such huge changes that civilisation is unlikely to endure. Science tells us that 5° of heating would spell the extinction of humankind.

At our current rate we are told that our trajectory is almost certainly over 3.5° of warming and a small but not insignificant 5% chance of going over 5° within my daughters' lifetime; when they would be the age I am now - if they make it. The likelihood of this cohort of young people dying of old age is increasingly slim.

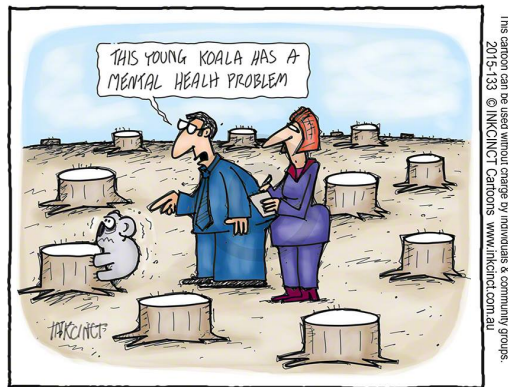
The likelihood that the subjects they learn in school now will be of use in the world they're inheriting, is also becoming increasingly slim. There is a strange irony in that missing out on a day's worth of study now will make it more likely that the rest of the days spent in study will not be in vain.

If you doubt this doomsday scenario, please listen to climate scientists - they're scared and have been for some time. There is no point in listening to anybody on this issue other than those who have studied and meticulously collected mountains of data on it.

If there is a history to look back upon, I would like my daughters to be able to say 'I was there, at the first global strike for the future'. I'd like you, their headteacher, to be able to endorse their choice and to be on the right side of history.

Like Nelson Mandela, the Suffragettes, Ghandhi, all of whom have statues in Parliament Square, I'd like my daughters to go to Parliament Square to be able to recount their part in changing this world around so that we take care of this planetary home in the vast blackness of space and its universal laws of physics that we are so cruelly governed by.

Best regards,



References

<http://www.climatecoded.org/2010/09/what-would-3-degrees-mean.html>

<https://www.bbc.com/ideas/videos/are-you-suffering-from-climate-change-anxiety/p073zgqd?playlist=sustainable-thinking>

<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdf/10.1002/jcop.21914>

In it together: Exploring how belonging to a youth activist group enhances well-being Anne C. Montague Francisco Jose Eiroa-Orosa *Journal of Community Psychology* First published: 17 October 2017 <https://doi.org/10.1002/jcop.21914>

Abstract

Findings from this study suggest that there are a number of positive psychological benefits to being a youth activist, implications for psychology and youth civic engagement are also considered.

Bandura, A. (2000). Exercise of human agency through collective efficacy. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 9(3), 75–78. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8721.00064>

Baumeister, R. F., & Leary, M. R. (1995). The need to belong: Desire for interpersonal attachments as a fundamental human motivation. *Psychological Bulletin*, 117(3), 497–529. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.117.3.497>

Christens, B. D. (2012). Toward relational empowerment. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 50(1–2), 114–128. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10464-011-9483-5>

Christens, B. D., Winn, L. T., & Duke, A. M. (2016). Empowerment and critical consciousness: A conceptual cross-fertilization. *Adolescent Research Review*, 1(1), 15–27. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40894-015-0019-3>

Letter aimed at secondary school headteacher - 'Exceptional circumstances'

(This letter draws attention to the 12 years left and calls it exceptional circumstances, which under UK law is grounds for parents to seek permission for children to be absent)

Dear Headteacher,

I give my permission for my child <name> to not attend school on Friday 20th September; in order to join the Youth Strike 4 Climate protest taking place across the UK on that day.

I'm aware of UK law that permits parents to only give permission for their child to miss school on medical grounds or in a few other cases, one of which is under "exceptional circumstances".

My view is that having only 12 years left to cut CO2 emissions by 50%, as per the latest UN IPCC report, is pretty dire and exceptional circumstances to find ourselves in. And it is in this light that I'm giving my child permission.

It is very disempowering and depressing for today's children to hear the constant horrific news about the environment; such as:

- 200 species go extinct per day;
- a football pitch size of rainforest was destroyed each second in 2017 and is expected to accelerate under Bolsonaro.
- a rubbish truck load of plastic is dumped in the ocean every minute;
- since the first UN summit on climate in 1995 the global emissions have risen by 60% and continue to rise.
- devastating impacts of extreme weather are in the news on a daily basis

I hope attending this demonstration will help my child to feel empowered and able to stand up for what is right, and for a better future for herself.

I support her to attend the youth strike as part of active civic engagement, which is a core part of the curriculum. People under 18 years can't vote, but with more of their life in the future, rather than the past, it's they who are most affected by climate breakdown.

Many other forms of protest have had little impact on the status quo of burning more and more fossil fuels. Nothing like enough is being done by governments throughout the world, including our own UK government.

I respect her decision to attend this protest and I hope and expect you will support her too.

Kind regards,

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Letter 1 - aimed at primary school headteacher

Dear <> Primary School,

On Friday 20th September 2019, school, college and university students from across the UK will be striking to raise awareness of the climate emergency that will impact their lives and that of their future children and grandchildren, calling for the Government to take more urgent action.

The action of striking develops their courage to stand up for what they think is important. It empowers them and allows them to exercise their democratic rights. It also supports the current curriculum in learning about the world around us and our contributing to society.

I shall be allowing my child to take part in the UK-wide school strike on Friday 20th September 2019. I know other parents are interested, so I shall make it clear that any children wanting to attend will need to be collected and supervised by a parent, carer or nominated adult as per school policy. Unsupervised children will not be allowed to join the strike.

The school need not take any action, or it can embrace the opportunity to talk about climate change with the children and is welcome to join us. I am happy to come and talk to you more about this.

Kindest regards,

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Letter 2 - with more details and references

(this is an early letter before many people had heard of Greta Thunberg! I think now most schools around the world know who she is :-) It aims to inform, if parent feels that the head my not know about the science)

Dear Headteacher.....

My name isand I am mum of who is attending yearclass in School.

After thinking very long and hard about the climate issues that are facing us, and the lack of action by government and media, we came to conclusion that we would like to join the UK-wide Youth Strike for Climate. Students from schools, sixth form colleges or universities are striking in cities across the UK and in unison with students across the world on Friday 20th September.

This letter is to let you know that will not attend school in order to join this protest.

Greta Thunberg, a 16 year old girl, started striking in September and has since then gained followers globally, protesting about the lack of awareness, action or concern We believe this action will put pressure on our authorities, government and media to inform people about the true scale of ecological disaster and put pressure on them to cooperate globally, as children are doing in their strikes, to act with due speed and ambition to create more resilient communities and a better future for the youth of today.

You may already be aware of the UN report from October 2018, which gave governments of the world just 12 years to go before we're on course for dangerous levels of climate change. In that time we need to reduce current emissions by 50% as well as remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere to avert the worst effects of climate change.

According to a World Wildlife fund report, which came just a few weeks after the UN climate report, we've lost 60% of populations of animals with backbones since 1970. We've lost 83% of numbers of fresh-water animals.

Many studies from mainstream research bodies show that 150 - 200 species a day are going extinct and this rate is accelerating.

The number of wild mammals, ie. that aren't human or livestock is just 4% and their habitat is being eroded ever more.

There are an increasing number of large areas of 'ocean dead zones' where no fish survive because of the harmful agri-chemicals that have been allowed to run off into the water.

90% of plastic waste produced has never been recycled and the equivalent of a garbage truck of plastic waste is emptied into the oceans every minute.

All these facts are well-documented and come from prestigious sources, such as the UN, WWF etc.

These are some media for your reference:

Please see IPCC report explained in 20min video here. Note: this report is extremely depressing...

<https://youtu.be/rjilFauDY-w>

Sadiq Khan declaring Climate Emergency

<https://twitter.com/sadiqkhan/status/1072563406807449600?s=21>

Speech by Greta Thunberg, 15 year old girl at UN #COP24

<https://twitter.com/ajenglish/status/1074325780367257600?s=21>

Sir David Attenborough, the world's most famous environmentalist, has urged politicians at a UN climate conference to do something about climate change, saying that the "collapse of our civilisations.. is on the horizon"

<https://twitter.com/theprojecttv/status/1069874518447947776?s=21>

And speech by Antonio Guterres, Secretary General of United Nations, where he is, among other things, encouraging young people to make the stand.

http://webtv.un.org/watch/ant%C3%B3nio-guterres-secretary-general-delivers-speech-on-climate-change-and-his-vision-for-the-2019-climate-change-summit/5833142929001/?term=#.XBd_Is2TJ-o.twitter

Hence today's children face an unsafe future planet, with extreme weather causing crop failures and food shortages. They have a right to demand that adults do better by them. We hope that standing up for their future will be a learning and empowering experience.

We understand that this is lot to take on board, but as Greta Thunberg has shown us, no actions are to small to try to make a world a better place.

We hope you will understand our position and you will support our plan action.

Will very much look forward to hear from you.

Many thanks in advance,

Name + Surname