

UK parent Lisa Diaz calls for a school strike on October 1

Chris Marsden, Julie Hyland
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The Socialist Equality Party and the *World Socialist Web Site* calls for maximum support by workers for the proposal by British parent Lisa Diaz for a school strike on Friday October 1.

Lisa, a member of the Safe Education for All (SafeEdForAll) group, first made a call for action by parents to take place on October 22. But the extent and pace at which children are being infected, the criminal response of Prime Minister Boris Johnson's government and the mounting concern expressed by other parents convinced her to move the protest forward.

On September 16, just two weeks after state schools in England formally reopened, it was announced that over 100,000 children were absent with a confirmed or suspected COVID infection. Some 59,000 had a confirmed COVID-19 infection and another 45,000 had suspected cases. One in every 100 secondary school pupils is ill with the disease.

On Wednesday, the Chief Medical Officer (CMO) for England Chris Whitty and his deputy Jonathan Van-Tam told parliament that “roughly half” of all schoolchildren aged between 12 and 15 have already been infected with COVID and that the infection of the rest was “inevitable”.

Children of secondary school age have the highest rate of COVID infections, followed by primary school children. Close to 90 children in the UK have already been killed by COVID-19 and an estimated 38,000 aged 2–16 are currently living with Long COVID.

Lisa is asking parents to keep their child at home on October 1 and to post a picture of their school uniform on social media. Yesterday she posted two videos here and here in which she urged parents to send letters to head teachers, local authorities, councillors and MPs “saying ‘I do not consent to my child being used in a

herd immunity experiment’, in a brutal experiment in which they will inevitably, in Chris Whitty and Van-Tam’s own words, be exposed and catch a novel virus which has killed 88 children already, and which leaves one in seven with debilitating long term effects.” The videos were viewed over 15,000 times in a matter of hours.

Lisa spoke of the acute dangers facing children due to the “utter lack of mitigations in schools. Because they’ve not been vaccinated, because they’re like sitting ducks waiting to catch a disease that is completely preventable... I was just looking yesterday [September 23]: 14,534 naught to nineteen-year-olds caught COVID in one single day...”

“And I don’t accept it when Whitty and Van-Tam say it’s inevitable. It’s not inevitable, there’s so much that we could do. We’ve already missed the opportunity to vaccinate our kids over the summer.”

She asked, “Why are the Department for Education turning it around and trying to blame it on parents? Why are they saying mitigations are robust? There’s nothing robust. Why are you trying to say it’s all down to parents doing lateral flow [tests] two days a week? We’re sick of the lies. We’re sick of the gaslighting. We’re sick of you getting scientists to say ridiculous things like children don’t catch it at school, they catch it on the bus! It’s not good enough. We won’t take it anymore.”

Lisa told the *World Socialist Web Site*, “I put out a tweet for a school strike, initially for October 22 because something has to be done. People were coming back to me and saying they agreed but it wasn’t soon enough. And they are right. It wasn’t soon enough. In fact, the date I’ve suggested now, October 1, isn’t soon enough. By this time next week, another 100,000 children will be off school from COVID. That’s what

has happened in the last week. That's the tragedy of all this.

"We need collective action and we need to keep raising awareness. Because the politicians have failed us. The unions are failing children. The claim that children are not so affected by this is a lie.

"In the US, Dr. Anthony Fauci, chief medical adviser to President Joe Biden, has said that no child should just be left to catch COVID. We are out of step with Fauci. We are out of step with Independent SAGE's Dr. Anthony Costello, and Dr. Eric Feigl-Ding. He sent out a tweet pointing out 'When 8 infants die, 3 million pillows are recalled. Nobody says 'But, but, but... We need to learn to live with pillows that suffocate babies!' Meanwhile, 480 kids have died of COVID-19 [in the US] – an astounding 20 died last week alone!'

"Absolutely right. I always say, if there was a disease that made noses drop off, you wouldn't expose children to it. But because we can't see the impact of this disease, the damage it causes to the cortex, to organs, it's supposed to be OK. Well, it's not. Because it's not only the deaths of children. It's the long-term damage that is being caused.

"So for Chief Medical Officer for England Chris Whitty and his deputy Jonathan Van-Tam to say that it is 'inevitable' children will catch it is outrageous. It makes me furious. When did we become a country that stopped protecting children?

"Ordinarily, we would do everything to protect a child but not in the case of Covid? How can that be? How can deaths be minimised on the grounds that those who lost their lives may have had underlying health conditions? What kind of society is this? It shouldn't be a point of indifference because a child or adult has autism, diabetes, asthma, Downs Syndrome, etc. All lives are precious.

"Yet the media say those who want this to save lives and protect health are 'extremists.' Well, those willing to let people die and children suffer are the real extremists. There is nothing inevitable about the damage being caused by letting this virus rip. It can be stopped. It has to be stopped and I hope this school strike is taken up, makes people aware and contributes to that."

The SEP urges our supporters and readers of the WSWs to send messages of support to Lisa's twitter account (@sandyboots2020) and when applicable to

take part in the protest.

The October 1 school strike protest must become a spearhead for popular opposition to children being infected with COVID to appalling and even deadly effect. Millions of parents and working people feel the same way as Lisa. Supportive statements posted on her Twitter page included, "Many already are taking matters into their own hands. We as parents have to protect them. We have to show our kids what we're made of. What matters," and "We can affect change, we can take a stand, we can say NO!"

The extent of opposition was expressed in the popular take-up of the hashtags #ParentStrike2021 and #SchoolStrike2021, which between them have had a global reach of over 1 million people over the last seven days. The #parentstrike2021 hashtag has been shared over 37,000 times.

This sentiment finds no organised expression because the policy of sacrificing human health and lives for corporate profit is shared by all the major parties—the Labour Party included—while the education unions play the key role in enabling the opening of schools, colleges and universities. The SEP urges teachers and other educators to take a stand alongside parents and pupils on October 1, as a demonstration of opposition to this grotesque betrayal.

The same situation exists in every single country and must be met with a unified international response. As WSWs International Editorial Board Chairman David North tweeted, "This is a powerful statement by Lisa. Her call for action deserves the widest support, not only from parents in the UK but throughout the world. The massive scale of infection and death is the outcome of gov't-corporate policies. The working class must take action."

To discuss these vital issues, please contact the WSWs or the Educators Rank-and-File Safety Committee.



To contact the WSWs and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact