

Covid cases surging in UK schools: Support October 1 school strike!

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British parent Lisa Diaz issued another video Saturday in support of her proposal for a school strike on Friday October 1. Last Friday, Lisa, a mother of two children, posted two videos here and here, calling on parents to keep their child at home on October 1 and to post a picture of their school uniform, alongside a mask, on social media on the day of the strike.

The three videos have collectively been viewed over 100,000 times.

In Lisa's video Saturday, she notes that "the current data from the Office for Statistics shows that one in 43 primary school age children and 1-in 35 secondary school age children across the country currently has COVID."

The figures cited show a marked increase from data released last week by the Department of Education covering the day of September 16, which showed that by then one in 100 secondary school children were infected. Lisa asks in the video, "And what is the government doing to protect our children... It's bringing back masks in corridors only and in secondary schools only. Somehow classrooms aren't communal areas but corridors are... And the other thing it is doing is more PCR tests to prevent COVID. How is that going to prevent anyone from getting COVID? It's going to tell us that we've got COVID and it's kind of like shutting the gate after the horse has already bolted.

"So given that the government is not doing anything to protect our children, we've got to take matters into her own hands... we need collective action, we need to work together because our government doesn't care."

Last week, England's Chief Medical Officer Chris Whitty and his deputy Jonathan Van-Tam said half of 15-17-year-olds have already been infected with the virus and that it is a "near certainty" the rest will be. On September 21, England's Children's

Commissioner, Dame Rachel de Souza said, "I never want to see schools closed again."

The UK's 88 child Covid fatalities are just collateral damage to the Johnson government, as they demand schools stay open so that their parents can go to work and create profits for the corporations. According to parent advocacy group SafeEdForAll (Safe Education For All), which Lisa is a member of, 11,000 children are suffering Long COVID fully 12 months after infection. The long-term consequences of this complex disease can be impaired cognitive function, heart and pulmonary damage.

Of the one in 150 child cases ending up in hospital, 60 percent have no underlying condition. Another frightening result of infection can be life threatening Paediatric Inflammatory Multisystem Syndrome, which up to February resulted in 720 hospitalisations.

Around 34 percent of new cases in England are among 10-19-year-olds and almost 12.5 percent are in 0-9-year-olds. Professor Colin Davis, citing Public Health England (PHE) data, tweeted September 24 that "the rate among 10-14s has now gone over 1000 per 100k. this is out of control—cases are now doubling every 7 days in this age group".

On Monday, the *Independent* newspaper predicted in relation to the more than 100,000 children absent from school September 16 that "If the current growth rate in cases continues, it will only be a matter of weeks before the same number of children are out of school with Covid as during the summer term, when the "bubble" system forced some 1.1 million youngsters into isolation." It noted, "The 80 per cent week-on-week rise in child infections has also fuelled an increase in cases among people aged 30 to 49, which now stand at 286 per 100,000."

There were at least 295 school outbreaks in Britain in

the week ending September 20, according to data compiled by Daniella Modos-Cutter, a parent and one of the founders of SafeEdForAll.

On September 16, 122,000 pupils were absent from school for COVID related reasons. This is despite the government loosening the criteria determining when staff and pupils should self-isolate. Under-18s in contact with a positive case no longer have to self-isolate and are only advised to take a PCR test.

Speaking anonymously to the *i* newspaper, one headteacher said, “We have found the PCR turnaround to be slow, and schools haven’t been told to ask pupils to self-isolate whilst waiting for a test result. This has meant that we have had Covid case pupils in school, which has led to more infections ... we’ve introduced our own test and trace system, where we identify close contacts of positive cases, and ask those pupils to remain at home... until they receive confirmation of a negative PCR test.”

In Wales, out of 19,916 cases in under 10s since the pandemic began, 5,639 were in September. Early in the month, a Cradoc Primary school closed after 40 percent of pupils and 50 percent of staff tested positive. Between September 1-19, 570 schoolchildren tested positive in 77 Flintshire schools. Neighbouring Denbighshire had similar figures.

The situation is equally dire in England. To cite only a few examples from local media:

Cumbria County Council issued new guidance to their schools, after 12-18-year-olds accounted for the highest number of cases, followed by the 5-11 age group. Siblings of positive cases were told to self-isolate and take a PCR test. In Worcestershire, Bewdly Primary closed due to a combination of COVID cases, diarrhoea and vomiting. Year 4 and 6 pupils resumed online learning until September 30. In Cambridgeshire, more than 521 children tested positive across 133 settings last week. In Warwickshire, 700 cases were reported among children, an increase of over 200 in a week.

The desperate situation in one school was described in this tweet on SafeEdForAll: “182 positive pcr confirmed. 79 additional lft’s [lateral flow tests] waiting for pcr results. School has 700 pupils. 8 staff off. HT [Head teacher] told by PHE & DEF [Department for Education] can’t close irrespective of pupil numbers off but closed as not enough staff to

teach. Not reported in media.”

Another tweet read, “This is why we need a #SchoolStrike2021. To protect NHS services and to stop this happening. School spread means community spread means sick people waiting in hospital car parks. This could be your child, and no doctor and no bed available to treat them. It’s not acceptable.”

On Saturday, Socialist Equality Party members distributed the WSWs statement: “The Eradication of COVID-19 is the only way to stop the pandemic” and “UK parent Lisa Diaz calls for a school strike on October 1” outside Manchester Central Library.

Isabel from Brazil, who has worked in Britain for three years, said, “I support the school strike, but the government needs to give financial support so parents can be at home with children. Parents need to have a way to support families. My company is making everyone go back to work, something we could do at home.”

Referring to the barbaric experiment being carried out by the Brazilian government with “Covid-19 drug kits” which have killed hundreds, she said, “[Jair] Bolsonaro was condemned by the media apart from the ones paid by him [for] trying to prove you can have pre-treatment to prevent Covid.

“In Brazil the situation is very bad. In Europe vaccination is very advanced, in other countries people are not vaccinated so the virus creates new variants. If we keep creating new variants it will reach us. We need to guarantee that everyone in the world is vaccinated, not just those who can afford it.

“This is only the beginning. They used to say the virus only affected older people, but the new variant is affecting younger people more.”



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