

“We do not consent for the government to use our children as lab rats!”

UK parents, educators and WSWS readers support global school strike

Our reporters
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The *World Socialist Web Site* (WSWS) has received further messages of support from parents, educators and students for today’s global school strike against the spread of COVID-19 among children. The action was called by UK parent Lisa Diaz.

James, a teacher in England, wrote, “I fully support the action being called for Friday. As a teacher and parent, I have seen that cases have risen significantly. Many children and teachers in my schools have been infected and have been absent. Classes are being decimated with pupil absence, and this is continuing to spread. One in 14 pupils now have the virus and it just shows the criminal policy of the government at play.

“I have been off work with COVID which I caught quite clearly from school. This was when there were no mitigations in place and despite making a choice to wear a mask I was not working in a safe environment. As a result, my entire family caught the virus despite trying to stop it spreading. Thankfully the effect has not been too bad, but some have not been as lucky. The government is just allowing the virus to rip through schools and it is only a matter of time before more children and educators die. Bringing back mitigations is not enough, it will not halt unnecessary deaths, only eradication can do that, so I fully support Lisa’s call.”

Emmy Kelly is the founder of Twitter group Fighting 4 Vulnerable Lives. The group was founded in response to the end of shielding and the removal of Clinically Vulnerable (CV) and Clinically Extremely Vulnerable (CEV) status.

Emmy said she supported the school strike as “Our CEV/CV school staff are in an impossible position. We have supported school staff and teachers in mental health crises, pregnant teachers terrified for their lives and their unborn babies.

“How can this government continue to be allowed to normalise the very real reality of causing illness and disability in previously perfectly healthy children, of endangering our CEV/CV to further medical complications, further loss of ability or shortening already short lives? Our CEV/CV are treated as the minority in this pandemic but given we account for over 60 percent of deaths to COVID, we are the majority.

“We are living in exceptional times. Normal rules cannot apply. We are far from the end of this pandemic, and we cannot allow this dangerous normalisation of infecting children in the name of unachievable herd immunity.

“The very fact that grassroots, parent led groups and organisations are organising and calling for a school strike clearly shows our education system is in crisis... Action is needed now, we cannot have continued persecution of CEV/CV families, teachers and school staff. We cannot continue to knowingly expose and infect our children and school communities with this novel virus.”

Amy, a parent in England, said, “We do not consent for the government to use our children as lab rats! Every day our children are forced into unsafe schools, they are #SittingDucks waiting for their turn to be infected and made to bear the psychological burden of passing it to family and friends. We can’t consent for our children to be deliberately infected with a novel virus we still don’t know enough about. Even those with mild cases can develop #LongCovid who suffer long-term symptoms and disability, and it is a scandal that there have been 95 child deaths so far in the UK.

“The vigil organised [on Thursday October 14] by @hivetosurvive, a collaborative network which includes @SafeEdForAll_UK, @ShieldUs1 & @hazardscampaign, is to remember their loss, and to remind us that we must do everything in our power to prevent more deaths & long-term illness.”

Amy continued, “The popularity and international reach of the first #SchoolStrike2021 on 1st October 2021 is a measure of the state of despair we are all in. We will continue to strike until a clear strategy of mitigations is implemented in schools, every Friday until we can effect change. We urge everyone to join the strike on 15th October in any way you can. We have tried all other channels of communication with the government, school leaders, and Local Authorities, but no action has been taken to safeguard children, families, and communities. It is time to strike, #WeDeserveBetter!”

Parent and former teacher **Sascha Woods** told us, “I support the call for the October 15 school strike. My whole family recently caught COVID for a second time, as my husband is a teacher and had COVID-positive children in his tutor group which he then unknowingly brought home to us. COVID is spreading around my children’s school at an ever-increasing speed. No measures are in place to stop the spread in primary schools, and little is being done to protect staff and their families from a potentially deadly virus.

“The government have knowingly placed our children into a dangerous environment where the most basic need of learning in a safe environment is not being met. Decades of criminal underfunding and austerity have left schools without the correct tools to deal with such a pandemic, and class sizes of 30-plus only continue to further agitate the situation.

“As an ex-teacher myself, I can say with authority that the needs of children have not been met for a long time. The current COVID crisis in schools exacerbates an already explosive situation for school leaders. I call on all parents, teachers and school leaders to join the parent strike on October 15 and to support Lisa Diaz’s call for SafeEdforAll.”

WSWS reader **Jude Jackson** posted a video noting that Education Secretary Nadhim Zahawi said recently at a head teachers’ union

conference that a “key priority for me will be getting to the root of what is causing children to be persistently absent and then tackling it head on.” Jude continued, “This comment comes after the number of pupils in England absent for COVID related illnesses rose by two third in a fortnight.

“Far from listening to what Lisa and concerned parents are demanding, that their children must not be threatened with serious ill-health or worse from COVID by going to school, Nadhim Zahawi responds on a war footing. Parents and educators must unite in their common interests to defend their own and their children’s lives... Let’s build a movement to eradicate COVID all over the world.”

Brian, a former teacher from Merseyside, wrote, “I would like to give my support to the school strike proposed for this Friday. Since just last week, we have seen cases of COVID-19 increase and daily deaths have once again topped 100 per day.

“Our children have been put into unsafe schools, purely so parents can continue working and this action is having a devastating impact. 94 children have died during the pandemic, with 10 of these avoidable deaths coming during September, when schools reopened in England. 40 school-aged children are admitted to hospital each day which can only lead to an increase in the amount of child deaths.

“There has been no coverage of this tragedy in the media, with parents persistently fed the lies that children don’t suffer serious consequences from infection with COVID-19 as well as being told there is no alternative to the policy of ‘learning to live with the virus.’

“The action taken by Lisa Diaz and highlighted by the WSWs will serve to shine a light on the criminal, homicidal actions of the UK government. It is important to support the school strike and show solidarity with parents, workers and children internationally.”

Sharon, a parent from Christchurch in England, said, “I am writing in support for Lisa Diaz’s global school strike. I watched the news of the pandemic unfolding in China and remember the news of the passengers on the cruise ships who were quarantined, of whom some sadly died. I couldn’t understand the lack of government urgency in closing boarders and locking down and I removed my children from school before the government closed the schools in the first lockdown.

“My daughters returned to school until safety mitigations were removed and the school took part in a trial of not isolating close contacts. I wrote many times to the headmistress about the high risk of spread of the virus amongst the children, teachers and wider community, but she [the headmistress] was so pleased that children could attend school without any unnecessary disruption with absolutely no regard to the enhanced spread into the community. I did not return my Year 9 daughter to school again and after being threatened of a fine I deregistered her and signed up to an online school. I agreed that my Year 13 daughter would attend lessons and exams in a mask and she would leave the premises as soon as her lesson was finished to keep her risk as low as possible.

“My other daughter’s college was initially extremely good and all children was expected to wear masks at all times with a lot of their work completed at home. Unfortunately, they now have a new college head and they have also removed all safety measures, although my daughter can leave the premises when not in lesson and is wearing a mask and sitting next to an open window. She is only in three days per week with remote learning which does keep her risk slightly lower, although yesterday she was informed of a positive LFT test in her class. She has taken a PCR test which is thankfully negative.

“Unbelievably, nothing was done over the summer to install CO2 monitors and all other safety measures have been removed. I have been reading of warnings from other countries for months of COVID causing increased hospitalisation and deaths of children, yet the UK government have done nothing to protect children and seem to have actively encouraged the infection of COVID, completely ignoring the risks of

Long COVID and deaths.

“The government misinformation and media blackout have enabled the government’s herd immunity policy, which has been proven to be impossible [to achieve] due to reinfections and new variants. Many parents are completely ignorant of the risks to their children.

“The government are putting economy before health and I am so glad that parents and teachers are striking to get their voices heard. Nobody yet knows the full extent of the virus on the body and with all major organs affected I believe children should be protected as much as possible against contracting this virus and living their whole lives in ill health.”

A student at Mersin University in Turkey told us, “As schools are reopening as part of the herd immunity and death policy of the ruling class that put profits before lives, some universities in Turkey announced a hybrid system that combines remote education and face-to-face education. But the hypocritical character of this system has emerged.

“In this system, some courses are given remotely, while others are given face-to-face. As for which courses will be given through remote education and which will be given through face-to-face education, it is not based on the suitability of the courses for remote education, but according to the workload of the department. While a student attends one of the theoretical courses face-to-face, he/she attends another remotely. In other words, among courses that are planned to be given through face-to-face education, there are courses also suitable for remote education.

“On the other hand, in practice, there is no remote education. Students must come to campus for all classes. Because at my university, there are 10-minute intervals between face-to-face and remote classes. Students can neither go from home to school nor return home from school in these very short intervals. Thus, they have to attend remote education courses from within the campus or very close proximity of the campus.

“There is no vaccine mandate to enter classrooms. In the event of a positive case, the measures to be taken are not clear. Course exams, whether given remote or face-to-face, will be held in the faculty building, and it is accepted that students will stay in a closed environment for a prolonged time with very crowded numbers. Despite the increasing number of cases, there is no tangible practice that prevents individuals from being in public environments.

“The only realistic way to stop the spread of the COVID-19 virus in schools and save lives is; the transition of education to a completely remote education, allocating financial resources for the continuation of remote education, improving the infrastructure of remote education, providing all the tools and equipment they need to university staff and students.

“The ruling class, which sees profits above lives, is imposing a policy of herd immunity and death. The eradication of the pandemic and the saving of lives can only be achieved through the international intervention of the working class. For this, as all teachers, parents and students, we must strongly support the global school strike on October 15.”

We urge the widest support for the school strike. Follow Lisa Diaz on Twitter: @Sandyboots2020. Send messages of support for Friday’s strike to the WSWs here. Messages of solidarity on Twitter should be sent using the hashtag #SchoolStrike2021 and should tag the World Socialist Web Site (@WSWS_Updates).

All those participating in the school strike should attend the October 24 webinar “How to end the Pandemic: The case for Eradication” called by the World Socialist Web Site and the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees.

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Socialist Equality Party visit:



wsws.org/contact