

Greens support union's campaign to make schools safe



8 January 2021

Green Party leader Jonathan Bartley has welcomed calls from the National Education Union to invest more in school staff to cut class sizes and ensure Covid safety.

Bartley said:

“The government should be doing everything it can to reduce class sizes, both in the immediate threat of this pandemic but also for the future. This means a nationwide campaign backed up by the necessary government investment to mobilise all teaching assistants and agency staff, some of whom are furloughed and others who are unemployed.

“The pandemic has also revealed the inadequate amount of space in our school buildings. We need schools to have immediate access to more community buildings to allow more social distancing. And longer term, we should reverse the decade of under investment spending cuts, enabling schools to have adequate space for safe and effective learning.”

Data from the Institute for Fiscal Studies show that 83% of schools in England will have less money this year compared with 2015 while overall, schools in England will be £2bn poorer in 2020 than in 2015.[1]

“It was the issue of over-crowded schools that first brought me into politics, when I had to battle to get my wheelchair-using son into our local school. The limitations on space were damaging then and they are shown to be unsafe today. We have heard much about the importance of education in recent months but this rings rather hollow and needs to be backed up with investment in school staff and buildings.

“I am also calling on the health secretary to show support for our brave school staff by prioritising them for vaccination.”

ENDS

Notes

1

<https://schoolcuts.org.uk/story/funding-crisis-explained/>

2

The Green Party are supporting the National Education Union's campaign for a better education

system:<https://twitter.com/NEUnion/status/1347146081893818374>

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[Greens call on government to vaccinate all frontline workers](#)



7 January 2021

Petition launched today asks the JCVI to recognise frontline workers as a priority for receiving the coronavirus vaccine

The Green Party has [launched an online petition](#) today calling on the government and the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) to propel all frontline workers up the coronavirus vaccination priority list.

Green Party Co-Leader Jonathan Bartley said: "We have heard from frontline workers themselves about the experiences they have gone through in the past year – and are still going through – in relation to the pandemic. The nature of their roles means that social workers, teachers, police officers, delivery drivers and huge numbers of others, are vulnerable, and they feel that every day when out there doing their jobs.

"Being unable to work from home means they are running the risk of catching a virus which has mutated into a more transmissible and therefore more dangerous threat. So not only are they risking becoming unwell themselves but also potentially infecting loved ones at home.

"We want to see as many people as possible sign this petition to force the government's hand on prioritising vaccination for all frontline workers, who are so critical in our fight against this virus."

Green Party health spokesperson Larry Sanders wrote to Nadhim Zahawi MP at the beginning of December calling for this prioritisation.

ENDS

Larry Sanders' letter dated from December can be read here:

<https://www.greenparty.org.uk/assets/files/letters/Letter-to-Nadhim-Zahawi-02122020.pdf>

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[Green Party responds to Donald Trump attempted coup](#)



7 January 2021

Green Party co-leader Sian Berry: “Democracy demands defence and renewal”

In response to the violent scenes in Washington yesterday, the Green Party has called for a renewed commitment to democracy from all citizens, wherever they are in the world.

Co-leader Sian Berry said: “For the past five years Donald Trump has shown nothing but contempt for democracy. He has flouted democratic norms and institutions, and worse, he has incited violence on the streets and online. Yet in spite of this a large number of influential British politicians and journalists have supported him and sought his approval.

“Politicians, including the majority of the current Cabinet, enabled him and failed to challenge his clear attacks on democratic standards. Far right politicians epitomised by Nigel Farage, explicitly nurtured Trump’s conspiracy theories and propaganda. Some journalists, now expressing shock, facilitated this attack on democracy and made hay from headlines and clickbait.

“The UK and USA consider ourselves global leaders of democracy but we have failed to renew and update our own political systems. The events of yesterday indicate the urgent need for serious constitutional review and reform of political systems on both sides of the Atlantic.

“This morning we should all remember that eternal vigilance is the price of freedom. We cannot afford to take democracy for granted.”

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[Green Party backs lockdown but warns more support is needed for families](#)



4 January 2021

- **Sian Berry: “The government must now use this time to make schools safe and meanwhile provide a package of support for parents and children to help them get through this next difficult period”**

The Green Party has backed the government’s decision to follow the science and impose a third national lockdown.

England has followed Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland by announcing national measures to combat the latest wave. The UK recorded over 50,000 positive cases for the seventh consecutive day today [Monday] and many hospitals across the country have reached an emergency situation.

Sian Berry, Green Party co-leader and Mayor of London candidate, said:

“This is an extremely difficult moment for everyone, and many of us will be facing another lockdown, and the hardship and isolation it brings, with worry and concern.

“Until we have wide vaccination, and facing this steep rise in infections and a new variant spreading out of control, another nationwide lockdown is the only real tool available. I am glad the government has seen sense and listened to the science.

“But they did wait too long. The situation has escalated fast in recent weeks and, once again, the Prime Minister has failed to take timely and decisive action.

“It has taken the unions and local authorities, including Brighton and Hove City Council led by Greens, to show leadership, take the issue in hand and do what matters. [1]

“The government must now use this time to make schools safe and meanwhile provide a package of support for parents and children to help them get through this next difficult period.

“Gavin Williamson has had almost a year to ensure all children are properly supported for online learning, and must do more now to reduce the disruption to many children’s education that the gaps in support will cause.

“Once again, it is low-income families who risk losing out most because of this government’s delays. A Universal Basic Income is needed now more than ever. People who may lose work under these new lockdown measures, need

guaranteed support and more certainty in this time of anguish and worry.”

ENDS

Notes

1

On Saturday, Brighton and Hove City Council advised primary schools in the city to move to remote learning until Monday 18 January

<https://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/news/2021/brighton-hove-city-council-advises-primary-schools-city-move-remote-learning-until-monday>

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[Green Party backs teachers' urgent call to close schools and move learning online](#)



2 January 2021

- **Support comes as Green-led Brighton & Hove City Council advises primary schools to move to remote learning until Monday 18 January**

The Green Party has backed calls from teaching unions to take steps to protect the safety of staff and students by moving to online learning from Monday in order to reduce the spread of infection of the new coronavirus variant. [1]

The move comes as Green Party-led Brighton & Hove City Council has written to primary schools in the city to advise them to move to remote learning until Monday 18 January. [2]

Green Party education spokesperson Vix Lowthion, a secondary school teacher on the Isle of Wight, said:

“It is right that schools should only reopen when it is safe to do so and that cannot be the case with new-variant Covid spreading out of control. We fully support those unions who wish to remind staff of their legal rights not to work in an unsafe environment. Gavin Williamson needs to change his

position on the reopening of primary schools urgently.

“If the government had provided disadvantaged students with what they needed in terms of laptops and connectivity earlier in the year, it would have made it much easier for all concerned to carry out learning from home now. This oversight must be rectified as soon as possible so that access to education is maintained to the best possible standards while ensuring safety for all.

“This is an extremely difficult time for parents, teachers and children and young people and so the government must listen carefully to the experts and trust teachers when they say it is not safe. This crisis is not going away any time soon. Teachers must be supported to deliver planned, high quality and sustainable learning within an environment which prioritises the health of the community.

“For once, we hope the government will stick to its own mantra and actually follow the science to protect communities and families across the country.”

The Green Party has also repeated its call for all frontline workers, including teachers, to be prioritised for vaccination. [3]

ENDS

Notes

1

The [National Education Union](#) and the [NAHT](#) have both called for schools not to reopen and move instead to home learning

2

<https://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/news/2021/brighton-hove-city-council-advises-primary-schools-city-move-remote-learning-until-monday>

3

<https://www.greenparty.org.uk/news/2020/12/02/greens-call-for-all-frontline-workers-to-be-prioritised-for-vaccine/>

For more information or to arrange an interview please contact:
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