



Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Committee

House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA

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Rt Hon Gavin Williamson CBE MP
Secretary of State for Education
Department for Education
Sanctuary Buildings
Great Smith Street
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12 July 2021

Dear Gavin

RE: Climate change in education

Thank you for your letter dated 14 June regarding the Department's approach to climate education. Whilst I appreciate your response to my letter of 29 April, I was surprised by the paucity of information provided, particularly given the delayed reply. I assume that some of my questions must have been overlooked in error, and so I am writing back to ask you to revisit the questions below.

In my initial letter, I highlighted concerns that much of climate education in schools is focussed on the scientific and technical aspects of the subject. I am pleased that climate change topics are included in the science and geography curricula. However, it is not clear how the Government is preparing young people for the future impacts of climate change in other subject areas, such as the social or economic implications of the net zero transition. The Government's teacher training provisions to develop teachers' scientific abilities are welcome, but again it is not clear how these address climate change specifically, including expected socioeconomic impacts. Your letter mentioned that the National Curriculum had been reviewed to ensure it delivers high quality education, but to the best of my knowledge the last large-scale review of the National Curriculum took place between 2011-2014, and the geography and science curricula available online have not been updated since 2013 and 2015 respectively. Knowledge of climate change and its impacts have grown substantially in the time since these updates, which is why there have been calls for a specific review into how climate change fits into the National Curriculum.

It is welcome that you plan to work with the COP26 Organising Committee on "ways of engaging and representing young people in the lead up to COP26". However, COP26 is now less than five months away, leaving little time to initiate, develop and deliver plans for youth engagement with the Summit. I am pleased also to hear that you "warmly welcome a dialogue with [youth campaign] Teach the Future". The group have already made 18 requests to discuss climate education in schools with you, without receiving a response, so it would appear that your invitation has not been communicated to Teach the Future themselves. After so many requests, the onus is on your officials to initiate this dialogue.

Whilst education is a devolved matter, I would hope that there is communication on this issue between the different nations. I would therefore be grateful for information about your coordination and engagement with the devolved administrations on climate change education.

I would be grateful if you could provide answers to the following questions by the 26th July.

1. What progress have you made on initiating a dialogue with Teach the Future, and by what date do you expect to meet with them?
2. Does the Government have plans to review how climate change is incorporated into the UK's formal education system? If so, what are the planned scope and timeframes for this activity?
3. What is your Department doing to prepare young people for future impacts of climate change and the transition to net zero? How will you coordinate with the devolved administrations on any such activity?
4. How will the Government ensure that any changes to better incorporate climate change in the curriculum are developed in consultation with young people themselves? How will the Government ensure these changes are supported by additional training provision for teachers on climate change in all subject areas?
5. The Action for Climate Empowerment (ACE) dialogues at COP26 will include discussions around education and training on climate change. How is the Department for Education engaging with the Cabinet Office COP26 Unit to support this activity? Would you support a move to increase international reporting requirements on climate education and training as part of the UNFCCC process?

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Darren Jones". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with large, connected letters.

DARREN JONES MP
CHAIR, BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY COMMITTEE