

Teach the Future!

Jodie Bailey-Ho is fighting for the right to climate education



Teach the Future at Westminster in early 2020

Photo credit: TeachtheFuture

You've definitely heard of climate change. You might even know a bit about it, depending on your age, your profession and your interests. You might know more than a bit, but do you know enough, and how much did you have to find out independently? Should climate education be a learning entitlement? Teach the Future is a youth-led campaign which aims to rapidly reorientate the education system around the severity of the climate breakdown so that no student is unaware of the impacts they will face in their future.

The climate movement has exploded in the past few years since the then 15-year-old Greta Thunberg kickstarted the youth strikes. Despite this, and the more than one million students worldwide who attended them, the climate crisis is still not recognised by many as the global catastrophe it is.

This is partly due to the lack of education both students and adults receive on the topic. Youth strikes are student-led but, shockingly, only 4% of students feel they know a lot about

climate change, despite the 68% who want to learn more¹. But the education system that we are currently brought up in does not equip us with the tools we need to live sustainably, nor does it show us how to limit the progression of climate breakdown at all.

Students deserve climate education

Some would argue that we have adequate knowledge of the subject and that climate change already has its place in the curriculum. I'm about to bust some myths for you: the climate crisis is only mentioned briefly in two subjects – geography and chemistry. Geography is optional, so students who do not take this subject do not get this module of teaching. In GCSE combined science, climate change takes up just four bullet points on chemistry in the 43-page combined science specification (that's less than 1% of the science subject content) and still, many teachers skip over this for lower-achieving students. Even if you were to argue that teachers

¹ Research by Students Organising for Sustainability <https://sustainability.nus.org.uk>

may include more on the climate if they wish, 75% of teachers themselves feel they haven't received adequate training to educate students about the climate crisis. On top of that, the strict time and curriculum pressures that they face mean they would be unable to do so anyway.

The youth voice tells us loud and clear that **students deserve climate education**. We deserve to know about the irrefutable damage to the Earth being caused by systems currently in place, we deserve to know what our future holds, and we deserve to know how we can save it. Climate education isn't something we should have to ask for, it's something that should have already been freely and willingly given to us.

Teach the Future



Talking to Marsha de Cordova, MP, at Westminster Photo credit: TeachtheFuture

Teach the Future wants to do precisely as its name says. By empowering young people to lead, and lobby the government themselves, the youth-led campaign has quickly become more than just another project. Since being founded in Autumn 2019 by then 17-year-old Joe Brindle, we now have a team of over 50 student volunteers and staff members all working towards getting learning to reflect the severity of the climate crisis.

Our campaign has grown, and people have started to take notice. A year ago we held a Parliamentary Reception – attended by over 70 parliamentarians – where we unveiled our Bill: the first Bill ever to be written by students about their own education. As part of our plans for a Green Recovery for Education, we wrote an open letter to Rishi Sunak (the Chancellor of the Exchequer) which gained over 1,100 student signatures in less than a week, and was followed by the announcement of £1bn in fiscal stimulus for school retrofits.

2 Oxfam yougov survey: *Teachers and Climate Change* May 2019



Speech at Parliamentary Reception

Photo credit: TeachtheFuture

Supporting Us

We have already done so much and come so far from the one person campaign team we had in 2019, but the truth is, we have so much further to go. We want a sustainable education in sustainable buildings, and have four asks which are designed to get us there: a review into our current education system, changes to teacher training, priority for sustainability in school inspections and a new Climate Emergency Education Bill. If you want to help, things like signing up to our mailing list, reading our blog, following and sharing our social media and looking at our website seem so small, but they are some of the best actions you can take to support us. The more we can increase public knowledge of our campaign, the more traction we can gain.

For me, being part of Teach the Future is one of the things I am proudest of. I could not ask for a better group of people to (eventually) change the world with, and the friends I have made are some of the best and most sound in spirit that I have. There is absolutely no doubt in my mind that we are empowered and can create change for the better. God works in ways which I could never pretend to understand, but I know that I am right where I am supposed to be.

In the words of punk band Sham 69, "If the kids are united, then we'll never be divided". For me, these are the words that sum up youth activism, and I believe there is no better place where this is exhibited than at Teach the Future.

www.teachthefuture.uk/ ■



Teenager, Jodie Bailey-Ho is a student volunteer and activist from the Hertfordshire/Essex border. She has been working with the UK Student Climate Network since September 2019 and has participated in various projects, including the UKSCN podcast for the planet and the Teach the Future campaign. She hopes to radically reform the education system for the betterment of her peers.