

Department for Education
20 Great Smith Street
Westminster
London
SW1P 3BT.

To the Ministers and Employees of the Department for Education,

The IPCC has told us that we have 11 years to make far reaching changes to every aspect of society if we are to avoid the catastrophic consequences of climate and ecological breakdown. The warnings are no longer predictions for the future: we are already witnessing record temperatures, unprecedented droughts, floods, hurricanes, wildfires, sea level rise, melting ice that will trigger more rapid warming and the collapse of species and ecosystems. This is 1 degree of global warming: it takes several decades for the warming effects of CO₂ to kick in and we have doubled global emissions in the last 30 years. Despite decades of warnings, policy makers have achieved nothing but empty promises. Every year global emissions rise and an area of forest the size of the UK is slashed and burned for industrial agriculture. The UK government boasts of emissions reductions while we outsource manufacturing to coal-powered factories in China and India, while continuing to subsidise fossil fuel extraction and sanctioning a third runway at Heathrow.

The general public are, for the most part, unaware of the gravity of the situation. Students demanding action from policy makers did not learn about climate breakdown from their textbooks. We, as educators, demand appropriate support to teach the reality of this crisis and to properly prepare young people for their future. How will history judge us if we do not?

Every adult in the world who has any power to affect change is now being taught a lesson by school students whose voices, in their millions, are rising around the world. Shame on us. They are telling us that by ignoring our collective responsibilities we have created an ugly and bleak reality. We are, and should be, ashamed of what we have let happen. Our current education system reflects this. In the national curriculum climate change is mentioned in passing now and then, a bullet point in a subtopic of the discrete curricula for Science and Geography. Despite the commitment to 'enhance climate change education' in the 2015 Paris Agreement, teachers and lecturers receive no training on how to talk about, let alone teach, the reality of climate breakdown. There is no systematic reference to sustainability nor to careers in a sustainable future. Students learn the *economic* language of success and failure; the constant hysteria of assessment and exam preparation leave no time for considerations of *ecology* or our conditional existence on a living planet. There is no

systematic reference to the tragic injustice of climate breakdown: why are we unable to teach the difficult lesson that our actions and inactions can have terrible consequences, inevitably felt first and hardest by the most vulnerable? All of these failings are, in fact, addressed by educators every day, but despite the system in which we work, not because of it.

As educators we see the necessity of the government meeting Extinction Rebellion's three demands with particular relevance to our work:

1. We must be supported to tell and teach the truth of climate and ecological breakdown.
2. We must teach (and learn) why net zero emissions by 2025, as well as a complete halt to biodiversity loss, is both necessary and achievable.
3. Policy must be informed and instructed by ordinary people via a Citizens' Assembly and we must hear the voices of young people whose future now hangs in the balance.

In order to achieve these aims the Department for Education must play its part. We therefore give our full support to the Teach the Future campaign (UKSCN and NUS) and its demands:

1. A government commissioned review into climate emergency education entitlement
2. Inclusion of climate and ecological crisis in teacher standards
3. A national climate emergency education act
4. A national climate emergency youth voice grant
5. A Youth climate endowment fund
6. All new state-funded educational buildings should be net-zero by 2020; all existing state-funded educational buildings net-zero by 2030

We await your response to this most urgent of matters.

Yours faithfully,

XR Educators

A group of educators taking action in this climate and ecological crisis as part of Extinction Rebellion.

learningrebellion.earth / rebellion.earth

[@xrlearningrebel](https://twitter.com/xrlearningrebel)

[fb.com/XRLearningRebellion](https://www.facebook.com/XRLearningRebellion)