

Dear Headteacher

### **Student Strike for Climate Change**

We are writing to you as members of groups from across North Somerset that work to help our societies transition to become more sustainable. A key part of that sustainability is to drastically reduce our dependency on fossil fuels and hence achieve a step-change drop in anthropogenic carbon emissions. As the last 12 months have made abundantly clear to all but the most committed climate-change denialists, the world is currently on track to a level of climate change that would lead to catastrophe for the great majority of the world's population. A major global change that is achieved within the next decade is vital if this fate is to be avoided.

When this situation is set in a context of other massive problems – soil degradation and loss, huge reductions in bio-diversity, plastic pollution of our oceans and the over-exploitation of pretty much everything – it is clear that the future for our young people is immensely bleak, and the most aware and well-informed of them have become fully cognisant of that. These young people – inevitably self-selected from the ablest and most committed of their generation – also see that their elders have failed them in the most serious way imaginable: that is by failing to ensure a world that will be habitable for the majority of their potential lives. Since the world at large recognised the severity of the problem at the Rio Conference in 1992 governments internationally have contrived to pay no more than lip-service to tackling it. They have continued to subsidise fossil fuel exploitation, failed to invest properly in renewable energy systems or to take remotely adequate steps to reduce energy use. The consequence is that far from going down, global carbon emissions have risen from about 22 billion tons in 1992 (carbon dioxide equivalent) to a provisional total of 38 billion tons in 2018.

Some signs of serious change are at last appearing – for example the declarations of 'climate emergencies' by a significant number of councils in many countries, including in Britain London, Manchester, Bristol and, very recently, North Somerset. Despite this our government, like many others, continues to pay only lip service to the most serious problem humanity has ever faced.

In these circumstances, students have both a right and arguably a duty, to take unusual steps to draw attention to their plight. They are showing an understanding of the position that appears still to escape the majority of adults and demanding deep and systemic change. You, as a headteacher, are given the tremendous responsibility of overseeing the system of support and guidance that should prepare young people for their futures and enable them to play a meaningful part in the societies they will live in. It follows that, given the totality of the situation, you have a clear duty to support and facilitate their campaign as some of your colleagues up and down the UK have done already.

Most of the signatories to this letter are parents, many are grandparents. We are united with the striking students in working to achieve the changes that are so urgently needed and urge you to join them and us. As a practical first step you might begin by meeting those students who intend to strike and perhaps their parents to discuss how their campaign can continue with maximum impact and to enable them to minimise the disruption to their other education.

Yours sincerely