

# 19108 Why are students striking for the climate and will it have an impact?

By Matt McGrath BBC News 15 February 2019

Many thousands of schoolchildren in Belgium, Germany and other locations have cut classes and taken to the streets to call on governments to take urgent action on climate change. Now young people in the UK are due to join them, determined to affect change on the issue that they feel is most germane to their future - the impacts of rising temperatures on an ever more crowded planet.

One student explained : "We are doing this because we feel that climate action really needs to happen. We've been told we have to take serious action and have just 12 years to cut our carbon emissions in half. As young people are going to be most affected by the fact that no-one is taking any action on climate change - this is our entire future."

"We can't vote yet and this is one of the most effective ways of making our voices heard."

What are the students hoping to achieve by striking?

According to the UK Student Climate Network, there are four key demands.

They want the government "to declare a climate emergency"

And inform the public about its seriousness.

They also want the national curriculum reformed to include "the ecological crisis as an educational priority".

To fully include young people in decision-making, especially about issues related to climate change, they are calling on the government to lower the age of voting to 16.

These goals are being supported by a group of around 200 UK academics, who have written to a national newspaper to say they stand in solidarity with the strikers.

"With the dilution of citizenship education in recent years, this is an important opportunity for schools, colleges and universities to support active citizenship and political engagement," said a professor of green economics, at the University of Roehampton.

"These strikes demonstrate that many young people do care passionately about our planet and the welfare of our neighbours across the world. Our politicians should pay attention and deliver policies that will safeguard future generations."

So will it have an impact?

"If the government wants to win over the next generation of voters, they need to heed their most pressing concerns," said the student mentioned above : "But more importantly they are sparking a national debate, they are forcing teachers, parents and politicians to re-evaluate the issue of climate breakdown and, what is most important, lifting our gaze beyond just immediate short-term national concerns."

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