

Greens Urge Covid Caution Ahead of Return to School



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As the World Health Organization (WHO) and UNICEF call on educational settings to be made safer for students and staff [1], the Green Party is demanding the government follow international, scientific advice and ensure effective classroom ventilation, social distancing and, in addition, offer vaccinations to all 12-15 year olds in schools.

Vix Lowthion, Green Party education spokesperson and a secondary school teacher on the Isle of Wight, said:

“The government propaganda machine is being rolled out in an effort to reassure parents that schools are safe. But promising students and families that they can look forward to a more normal year by merely taking regular voluntary COVID-19 lateral flow tests is extremely naive, as teaching unions have rightly highlighted [2].

“The reality is, that in the UK infection rates are highest among those under the age of 30. Back in June, Public Health England demonstrated outbreaks of the Delta variant in schools exceeded those in any other setting, and that cases among secondary school children were the highest across all age groups.

“As students return to educational settings after a 6 week break, we must see proper ventilation, social distancing, face coverings worn in busy areas and the offer of vaccinations for older school children. Yet the best our Education Secretary Gavin Williamson can do is brandish false and hollow reassurances about a return to normality, and put the onus on parents and children to ‘not throw caution to the wind’ [3].”

With Covid-19 cases and deaths climbing in many parts of England, and evidence suggesting protection offered by Covid vaccines may be waning [4], the Green Party is also repeating calls for the mandatory wearing of face coverings on public transport and in shops, and adequate financial support for those who need to self isolate.

Peter Cranie, Green Party Health, Social Care and Public Health spokesperson, said:

“The government has accepted, as a price worth paying, Covid-19 infection rates around 30 times higher than this time last year [5] and an average 100 deaths a day. This compares to just 26 deaths in New Zealand, over the whole course of the pandemic.

“Instead of the childish reluctance of some Tory backbenchers to wear masks and maintain social distance, we need a responsible and compassionate approach from government. That means mandatory wearing of face coverings on

public transport and in shops and adequate financial support for those who need to self isolate.”

“The Covid-19 pandemic is an ongoing health emergency. We must approach this autumn with extreme caution.”

Notes

[1]

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/aug/30/call-for-schools-across-europe-to-stay-open-and-be-made-safer-covid>

[2]

<https://www.theguardian.com/education/2021/aug/26/unions-criticise-english-schools-more-normal-year-campaign-as-naive>

[3]

<https://www.lbc.co.uk/news/gavin-williamson-warns-pupils-not-to-get-carried-away-ahead-of-schools-return/>

[4]

<https://www.msn.com/en-gb/health/medical/coronavirus-vaccine-protection-waning-in-those-first-jabbed-study-suggests/ar-AANIXrN>

[5] <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-58281664>

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