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1 November 2020

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The Green Party is calling for secondary schools, colleges and universities to be added to the list of closures from Thursday after a month-long lockdown in England was announced by the Government.

Co-leader Jonathan Bartley is demanding this afternoon that common sense prevail, following the release of figures by Independent SAGE showing that a lockdown with schools remaining open will be significantly less effective than if they were closed.

“The government is fond of saying they are following the science, but this is an example of them doing the exact opposite,” says Bartley.

“The figures are clear, a lockdown with schools open would need to be three times longer than if they were closed, to have the same impact. This lockdown is going to negatively affect huge numbers of people, so it has to be worth it.

“Of course there are going to be exceptions – young people with special educational needs for instance should still be able to attend schools in person. But in general, this is the time to shut secondaries and universities, move to remote learning, give the support needed to curb the rates of infection where that can be done, fix the test and trace system which is still woefully underperforming. Use the time to make this lockdown worthwhile.”

Green Party Education spokesperson Vix Lowthion said: “The government produced their own guidelines back in August which clearly stated that secondary schools must be on a remote learning rota or closed when the threat of the virus increases. Surely, that’s where we are now?

“University teaching can move online during this heightened period and school teachers can focus on online learning plans whilst appropriate home-school rotas are put in place. Yes, it’s a huge challenge for our schools but so is working in a frankly unsafe environment where you’re not being given the back-up you need to keep yourself and your pupils out of harms’ way.

“Along with this there needs to be thought put into safeguarding for children at home, their physical and mental health and making sure they have everything they need to learn – the tech equipment and the support.

“The vast majority of children in secondary schools and young adults in higher education are able to learn from home with supervision from teachers. In the medium term this ‘blended learning’ will disrupt the economy less than a full shutdown including primary schools as in most cases older children have less need for intensive childcare provision.”

ENDS

Independent Sage weekly briefing

30.10: <https://www.independentsage.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/WeeklySlides30Oct.pdf>

August contingency planning guidance for

schools: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/all-possible-measures-to-be-taken-before-schools-and-colleges-close>

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