

**Speech by Scarlett Westbrook (15) at our parliamentary reception on 26 February 2020**

Hello everybody, my name is Scarlett Westbrook and I am a 15 year old member of UKSCN, and one of the developers of Teach the Future, as well as our political advisor.

Now, politics by definition, is the process by which conflict is resolved and the climate crisis is the biggest problem we have ever encountered. When there is a question of scarcity of resources and our citizens lives, it becomes a question of politics, and that is why we’re joining you all here today. Part of the solution to the climate crisis is ensuring that the next generation are equipped with the knowledge idiosyncratic to understanding what the climate crisis means, and what the possible solutions are, so that we can build a resilient society that can deal with the now inevitable effects of climate change. Climate change will affect everyone in this room and across the world, whether you are a pharmacist or a farmer in Flint or Fair Isle, and this must be reflected in our education system.

Although I am only 15, I have experienced all levels of mandatory education, from nursery, right up to A levels. At 13, I became the youngest person in the world to have an A level in Government And Politics which I self-taught, and this also gives me a unique insight into how our education system works.

My experience of climate education is incredibly limited, and I am one of the lucky few people who got to study the Environmental Legislation unit of a level politics before it was scrapped. Despite taking all subjects that have the faintest mention of climate change - geography, chemistry and physics - I, as well as all students in England, have not once been taught about the social and economic repercussions that this catastrophe will induce or what the possible solutions look like. We also aren’t taught about how we will be affected in a more personal capacity. From what we have been taught in schools it is easy to believe that climate change is a far-off issue of the global south, when we know that’s not the case - a pressing example being the recent climate change induced floods last week.

The limited provision of climate education is rather shocking, and the fact that we are removing the climate crisis from the curriculum rather than increase its presence in it is disconcerting. In research carried out by Teach the Future, we found that only 4% of students surveyed felt that they had adequate knowledge about the climate crisis.

This gap in our system is also noted by teachers. In just 48 hours, we’ve had over 140 signatures from teaching professionals asking for the government to adopt our asks, showing the widespread support our asks have.

What we are asking for is systematic reform; not just curriculum change. We need to ensure climate education is no longer exclusive to those who take optional subjects where it is briefly glazed over, but centred in all subjects as the climate crisis is interdependent to the subject matter itself. Systematic reformation also means that academies and independent schools will receive the provisions we are proposing so that all young people receive the idiosyncratic education needed to understand our current social, environmental and economic climate.

This is why, we, as largely disenfranchised people are trying to change things. We don’t control the composition of the legislature so don’t have a democratic influence in that sense, but we are demonstrating democracy, power of the people, through this campaign. We truly believe that the government should adopt our values, so that we can create a better world for all those who live with it, and that starts with education, for education is how we secure the future. Thank you