

UK pupils to join global strike over climate change crisis

Thousands of pupils to walk out of lessons amid growing concern over global warming

'I feel very angry': the 13-year-old on strike for climate action

Matthew Taylor

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Students protest for climate action during a 'Fridays for Future' school strike in Magdeburg, Germany. Photograph: Klaus-Dietmar Gabbert/AP

The school climate strikes that have led to tens of thousands of young people taking to the streets around the world over recent months are poised to arrive in the UK next Friday.

Thousands of pupils are expected to walk out of lessons at schools and colleges across the country amid growing concern about the escalating climate crisis.

The movement started in August when the 16-year-old schoolgirl **Greta Thunberg held a solo protest** outside Sweden's parliament. Now, up to 70,000 schoolchildren each week are taking part in 270 towns and cities worldwide.

Individual protests have been held in the UK, but next week **a coordinated day of action** is expected to result in walkouts in more than 30 towns and cities – from Lancaster to Truro, and Ullapool to Leeds.

Jake Woodier, of the UK Youth Climate Coalition, which is helping to coordinate the strikes, said Greta's message about the need for radical, urgent change had struck a chord with hundreds of thousand of young people in the UK.

"The images of what Greta did and then the huge strikes by schoolchildren in other countries have been widely shared by young people on social media and have really inspired people."

He said young people were becoming increasingly radicalised by the environmental crisis and understood the need for urgent political action.

"Young people see what is happening – especially **since the IPCC report last year**, which spelled out that we only have 12 years left to avoid catastrophic climate change ... they realise that politicians are nowhere near where they need to be on this and want to do something to change that."

There has been some pushback against the strikes by climate deniers and politicians. Last week, Belgian's environment minister **was forced to resign** after falsely claiming the country's intelligence services held evidence that the tens of thousands of children skipping school were being directed by unnamed powers.

So far those planning to protest in the UK say they have had broad support.

Zoe Bonnett, 14, is organising a strike in Bristol next week.

"People seem to think this is an issue that can be solved another time, but there is no other time," she said. "I know this is a drastic action, this is quite a big step that I am taking, but I do feel strongly that we have to solve it now ... I have to do something."

Bonnett, who heard about the movement after seeing a video of Greta online, said young people had a special stake in the unfolding crisis.

“At the moment I am having to make my choices for GCSEs, and I realised that if there is going to be a bad future ahead those sort of choices are not really that important unless we do something urgent now.”

Bonnett’s mother, Joanna, said she supported her daughter’s decision to walk out of school.

“I was a bit reticent at first because I am more of a rule-keeper than a rule-breaker but as she became more enthusiastic and learned more about it and decided to set up her own strike we became very supportive.”

Bonnett said she was planning to write to the headteacher of her school to outline her plan and offer to discuss the strike.

The UK walkouts are being billed as a chance to build towards a global day of school strikes on 15 March.

Greta has already confronted world leaders with the movement’s demand for radical climate action, first at a [climate meeting in Poland in December](#) where she accused them of acting like irresponsible children; then in Davos for the World Economic Forum when she [told the gathered global elite](#) that the climate crisis was real, adding: “I want you to panic.”

Belgium climate protests: Children skip school to demonstrate

5 hours ago



For a fourth week, tens of thousands of children have skipped school in Belgium to join protests demanding tougher action against climate change.

Ahead of the marches in Brussels, Liège and Leuven, dozens of children protested outside the home of Belgium's environment minister.

New impetus came in an open letter from 3,450 Belgian scientists saying "the activists are absolutely right".

Youth demonstrations have also taken place in Germany and Switzerland.

More than 30,000 students and others turned out in three Belgian cities, slightly down on last week.

The biggest number, according to police, was in the eastern city of Liège (Luik in Flemish) where 15,000 people marched to the city hall. Protesters clapped and chanted "to arms" and "everyone together", said local journalist Benjamin Hermann.

Skip Twitter post by @BenjaHermann

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Benjamin Hermann
@BenjaHermann

[#Liège](#): 15000 jeunes dans les rues pour le climat, des chants, des claps, des "Aux Armes", des "Tous ensemble, tous ensemble"... La Ville a vibré aujourd'hui [#YouthforClimate](#)

10
2:20 AM - Feb 1, 2019

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Report

End of Twitter post by @BenjaHermann

Another 12,500 children turned out in Brussels and a further 3,500 in Leuven (Louvain in French). In Brussels primary and secondary schoolchildren were marching through the city centre from north to south, and they were joined by groups of grandparents.

Skip Twitter post by @maxhofmann



Maximilian Hofmann



@maxhofmann

I'm in the middle of something here. Students marching for the planet once again in Brussels.

Many were inspired by last weeks demonstration. This week's early estimates are 35,000 students in the streets. [#Youth4Climate](#)

96

11:44 PM - Jan 31, 2019 · Brussels, Belgium

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End of Twitter post by @maxhofmann

Report

Why are young people marching in Belgium?



KOEN VLASSENROOT
Isidore Vlassenroot participates in a march with friends

Isidore Vlassenroot, 12, at school in Ghent: "I am marching because I believe we should make our voice heard as young people. It is very special to be part of such a huge crowd. We all have the same goal: a better planet. So many children wanting a better planet is something very unique. We have four ministers and no climate policy, which is very sad."

Koen Vlassenroot, Isidore's father: "This is a unique moment in Belgian history and I'm glad my son is part of it. We as parents have the moral duty to support them; they show the courage our generation lacked, and now stand up to protect their future and demand [politicians] act more responsibly. I agree that he is missing school, but being part of such a movement is very educational. I want my son to be conscious about challenges such as climate change."

Luka De Wever, 17, sister of protest organiser Anuna De Wever: "All over the country, people are gathering to march and get the attention of the politicians to change their policy. I am very proud of what my sister has done together with Kyra [Gantois, another protest organiser], Greta [Thunberg, Swedish climate-change protester] and many others. Either we act now or there will be no more time to. I believe we will be able to make a difference, not only in Belgium, but all over the world."

Students have also been mobilising on Fridays in Germany and Switzerland, under the hashtag **#FridaysForFuture**

Children's climate rallies gain momentum in Europe

Sit-in protest hits Scottish Parliament

At the weekend, tens of thousands of adult protesters marched in cities across France as well as Belgium with the aim of holding monthly events.

But each country has different issues.

Germany has committed itself to phasing out nuclear power by 2022, and at the weekend its coal commission recommended shutting down all coal-fired power stations by 2038.

Belgium has ageing nuclear power stations at two sites near Antwerp and Liège and has increased its reliance on imported energy.

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Report

End of Instagram post by phatebe

Skip Twitter post by @BrunildaPali





Brunilda Pali

@BrunildaPali

Little children on the main square of Leuven today for the [#climate](#), [#Youth4Climate](#), including my two sons who make me always proud. Demand: save the penguins! Question: 2080, what are ice bears?

12

11:27 PM - Jan 31, 2019

[See Brunilda Pali's other Tweets](#)

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End of Twitter post by @BrunildaPali

Report

In their open letter, the Belgian scientists said they wanted to provide facts, accusing opponents of disrupting the debate.

What is in the Paris climate agreement?

Big rise in CO2 expected in 2019

Why people in Davos are dining in the dark

Leading Flemish politician Bart De Wever reacted to last Thursday's march in Brussels which attracted 35,000 people, urging children "not to believe in the apocalypse" but to have "confidence in the future and in the power of innovation".

The scientists said that technology to cut carbon dioxide emissions already existed but there was a need for political courage to take the necessary structural measures.

The young activists want world leaders and corporate bosses to stick to the ambitious goals agreed in Paris in 2015.

The school strikes were the brainchild of 16-year-old climate-change protester Greta Thunberg, who attracted widespread coverage for an appearance at the World Economic Forum at Davos in Switzerland last week.

"My message was that most emissions are caused by a few people, the very rich people, who are here in Davos," she told the BBC.