

As Parliament debates repealing the Climate Change Act 2008 on Wednesday and considers the grave security threats of biodiversity loss and ecosystem collapse on Thursday, playing politics with climate protections ignores the reality on the ground. Extreme heat is already shutting down UK classrooms and harming children's health. Action on climate adaptation in our schools cannot wait.

Extreme heat disruption in schools and the need for resilient infrastructure

Teach the Future Briefing | August 2026 | www.teachthefuture.uk

As summer temperatures rise, few people in public life need to be reminded of how difficult it is to work effectively in an overheated office. In classrooms across the UK, students face that exact challenge too.

Extreme heat events are an escalating threat to the national education system. High summer temperatures directly disrupt learning, impact student health, and compromise exam performance across UK classrooms. Longer term, without implementing any adaptation measures, students could lose up to 12 days of learning per year on average due to warmer temperatures¹.

This briefing outlines the urgent need to reframe extreme heat as an educational disruption. It presents key asks for climate resilient school infrastructure, increased support for schools to prepare for and respond to climate change impacts, and enhanced climate and green skills education.

Climate data and hot weather trends

- Record warming: The last 4 years have all been in the top five warmest in the UK records – this is a statistic that would be virtually impossible without climate change.
- Fastest warming region: Europe is warming faster than any other continent – at more than twice the global average.
- Localised extremes: The average hottest day of the year has warmed by at least 3C for almost all of England, except the south-west, Cumbria and Northumberland, compared with the 1961–1990 average.
- Broader system stress: Escalating heat causes severe drought, dried vegetation, increased wildfire risk, and strain on energy, transport and agricultural systems.
- Health hazard: The red extreme heat warning in June 2026 posed significant health risks to millions, and A&E demand hit record highs from May–June with multiple heatwaves². This extreme heat is a particular risk to babies, young children, those with underlying health conditions, people working outside, older adults and other vulnerable groups.
- The UK's own Climate Change Committee say the UK is not prepared to deal with the impacts of climate change ([A Well Adapted UK – May 2026](#))

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<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/impact-of-uk-climate-change-risk-on-the-delivery-of-education/summary-of-findings-in-relation-to-3-climate-risks-overheating-flooding-and-water-scarcity>

² <https://www.england.nhs.uk/2026/08/nhs-keeps-its-cool-as-temperatures-and-demand-soar/>

“From mid-May onwards it was so much more difficult for me to study at college. There were so few spaces with appropriate climate control, resulting in them being extremely busy, which left anywhere else out of the question. When the heat and humidity is inescapable like that, it becomes so much harder to work.” – Eli, age 17

Direct disruption to education

- Impact on learning: Schools close or operate with reduced hours during heatwaves; high temperatures severely diminish student focus, health and well-being, and academic performance³.
- Systemic vulnerability: UK school buildings, particularly older building stock and urban heat island schools, lack basic passive and active cooling, shading and effective insulation.
- Exam and school disruption: heatwaves interrupt high-stakes educational periods, including exam preparations and key summer terms. Pupils sitting exams at 32°C are around 10% less likely to pass them than those sitting tests at 22°C.⁴

What needs to happen

Teach the Future is calling on you to deliver four key interventions:

1. Expand the Renewal and Retrofit programme: Increase the funding for this new programme to reach more schools and broaden the scope to include climate resilience measures which will make schools cooler in extreme heat, whilst decarbonising their heating systems: this should include active cooling (e.g. air-to-air pumps) and passive cooling methods (e.g. shading, playground shading and planting, building insulation and natural ventilation) which also keeps learning spaces safe and workable.
2. Allow an approved Purchase Power Agreements (PPA) for solar PV systems for all types of school to be able to be used by any interested supplier in the market.
3. Greater support for education settings on their climate action plans (CAPs): despite the Department for Education's requirement since 2025 for settings to have CAPs, many still don't and the funding for the Climate Ambassador Programme that supports educational settings to develop these is due to end in September 2027. Funding and support must continue to help settings create bespoke CAPs that prepare for and respond to climate change impacts, alongside co-benefits such as saving money on their energy bills.
4. Comprehensive curriculum integration: embed climate change, sustainability, and solutions-focused climate education across the curriculum, alongside dedicated teacher training for classroom heat management and solutions-based teaching. This should include the integration of green skills and environmental competency into vocational and technical courses.

For more information, contact Teach the Future: hello@teachthefuture.uk

³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/impact-of-uk-climate-change-risk-on-the-delivery-of-education>

⁴ <https://www.theccc.org.uk/publication/a-well-adapted-uk>