



Bridget Phillipson MP  
Secretary of State for Education  
House of Commons  
SW1A 0AA

01/12/2024

Dear Bridget Phillipson,

The first and most important duty of any Government, is to keep citizens safe and to take reasonable steps to do so. It follows that one of the most important duties of an Education Secretary, who has also held the role of Shadow Education Secretary, would be to ensure that children are safe in education. By any measure, on evidence that has been sent to you on numerous occasions, as a consequence of our Safer Schools campaign, you have failed in that duty.

Being made aware on a number of occasions since 2019, first as an MP and then as Shadow Education Secretary, of alleged failings within the Department for Education (DfE), that on the evidence, had led to the harm, deaths and suicides of children, due to bullying and violence in UK schools, you failed to act to ensure any investigation of the issues. Even after being informed by way of letter in April 2022 that a separate High Court hearing had found, that previous alleged failures to act on the part of ministers, demonstrated “tremendous incompetence” and left unanswered questions regarding a deliberate cover up of the issues by the DfE, you failed to take any steps to ensure any investigation took place. Your failure to act, occurred after being informed that up to 4 children were potentially losing their lives to suicide weekly and others likely to suffer the same fate and many more likely to be harmed, as a result of any further failure.

As Shadow Education Secretary, once aware of these allegations you should have taken immediate steps to ensure children could be better protected by way of any possible immediate interventions that might be needed, while ensuring that steps were taken to ensure some form of investigation took place but failed to do so. Plainly put, you not only chose to allow millions of children to be left at risk of harm but to allow many to continue to take their own lives indefinitely, with no intention of ever intervening.

Importantly, having received those allegations of potential serious criminal misconduct related to the deaths of children, you did nothing whatsoever to investigate matters further. Ultimately, since 2019 right up until the present date, no adequate steps have been taken to investigate whatsoever. All these points leave the question of a deliberate cover up, of potentially an extremely serious crime by a previous Shadow Education Secretary and now current Education Secretary, unanswered.

In all of this, not once have you directly expressed any message of condolence, sadness or compassion for the children and their families, or expressed any concern whatsoever in relation to the tragic cases that have been brought to your attention. In contrast, the case has now been raised with leaders of more than 100 countries across the world, a number of whom have sent messages of support for the campaign and the children.

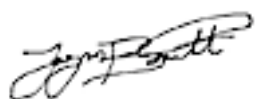
Significantly, the issues and alleged failures to take action have been identified by Ingrid Bellander Todino, the European Commission's Head of Human rights, as potential human rights violations by the UK Government. Ms Todino herself has taken the time to offer her condolences and support, as well as to express her sadness at what she describes in her own words as "the terrible circumstances of this case".

Such has been the extreme levels of alleged failure in this case, it is now actively being reviewed by the United Nations Special Procedures, as a direct consequence of the alleged failures to take action to protect millions of UK schoolchildren from the risk of harm and death. Your failure to act is alleged to be a serious breach of the human rights of millions of children under articles 2 and 3 of the Human Act 1998, something you have been informed of on a number of occasions, in an effort to prompt action and an appropriate response from you, to no avail.

In light of all of the above, it is inconceivable that you should remain as Education Secretary and in such a position of trust and authority, when your competence and willingness to take appropriate action and make right decisions, in order to ensure the well being and safety of millions of children is clearly in question. If you were to continue in your role, then millions of parents and carers would be expected to allow you to continue to make decisions regarding the welfare and best interests of their children, when on the evidence you at best, have allowed children to be harmed through incompetence and at worst, through potential criminal misconduct. It is inconceivable that any parent or carer would find this to be an acceptable situation and for your position to be considered as anything other than untenable. I am therefore writing on behalf of the Safer schools campaign and many parents and carers across the country, to ask you for your resignation as Education Secretary, with immediate effect.

Just to note, I will immediately be making this letter publicly available and will seek to take further steps to ensure your tenure as Education Secretary is ended as a matter of urgency, should a decision to resign not be forthcoming soon after.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jason Barnett', written in a cursive style.

Jason Barnett  
Safer Schools Campaign Lead