# Hundreds march in London to oppose Children’s Wellbeing and Schools Bill over freedom fears



Protesters gathered in central London on Sunday to voice their opposition to the controversial Children’s Wellbeing and Schools Bill, described by many as “insane.” The demonstration saw hundreds of teachers, parents, and children marching from Whitehall to Parliament Square, brandishing signs with messages like “Two, four, six, eight, educate not legislate” and “Hey, hey, ho, ho, this stupid Bill has got to go.” This legislation, currently under consideration in the House of Lords, proposes to limit the number of branded uniform items and impose stricter regulations on home education, igniting widespread concern about its implications.

At the forefront of the protest was Katharine Birbalsingh, headteacher of Michaela Community School, often referred to as Britain’s strictest head. Birbalsingh condemned the proposed law as “completely insane,” arguing it threatens to roll back substantial advancements made in education over the past 15 years. “We just want to show the Government that we are unhappy about the Schools Bill and that school leaders believe they are removing our freedoms,” she stated, emphasising the need for the Government to engage with educational professionals and consider their perspectives seriously.

The march brought together various voices from the education sector and the broader community. Joe Butterfield, a teacher from London, expressed his belief that the Bill would be damaging to the pupils he instructs. Similarly, Sarah, an assistant headteacher from Essex, highlighted why it's crucial for schools to attract talent by promoting innovation rather than stifling it with rigid regulations. She argued, “If you’re just a robot in the front of the classroom delivering a national curriculum to the letter, you’re not going to attract people that want to make a difference.”

Speakers from diverse backgrounds, including representatives from home education groups, religious organisations, and children’s charities, addressed the crowd in Parliament Square. Birbalsingh's comments about Education Secretary Bridget Phillipson garnered significant cheers, with attendees feeling that prominent political figures are out of touch with the realities facing children and educators. “The children matter, schools matter, parents matter, and our freedom matters,” she asserted.

Concerns around the Children’s Wellbeing and Schools Bill extend beyond the protest in London. In Westminster, members of the Charedi community have also rallied against the legislation, labelling it as “anti-religious persecution.” Their primary grievance focuses on the Bill’s mandate for local authorities to register home-schooled children, which they fear could lead to unwelcome state interference in their traditional educational practices. Strictly Orthodox leaders contend that their educational philosophy not only adheres to but exceeds national standards, voicing a collective concern that the proposed changes threaten their ability to impart their values and customs.

Additional protests across the country have similarly highlighted concerns that the Bill constitutes an overreach by the government, compromising parental rights and educational choice. Key provisions aimed at enhancing child welfare, such as free breakfast clubs and greater oversight of children's services, face criticism for potentially undermining the autonomy of families and home educators. According to civil liberties advocates, the measures could expand state control over family life dramatically.

Moreover, child protection organisations are urging lawmakers to reconsider the Bill’s language, highlighting clauses they believe may infringe on children's and families’ rights. The coalition includes notable groups such as the Victoria Climbié Foundation and various others pursuing better child protection practices.

As the debate around the Children’s Wellbeing and Schools Bill continues in Parliament, the volume of dissenting voices raises significant questions about the balance between child welfare and parental rights. The Government’s proposal has ignited a crucial conversation about educational freedom and the role of state oversight in childcare and education, and the ongoing protests are a testament to the fervently held beliefs of those who feel passionately about the future of education in the UK.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://m.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/uk/protesters-rally-against-governments-insane-schools-bill/a951863597.html> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.thejc.com/family-and-education/charedi-campaigners-hold-westminster-protest-against-new-schools-bill-a58hckyb> - On January 8, 2025, approximately 200 men and boys from the Charedi community gathered in Westminster to protest against the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill. Demonstrators prayed and held banners labeling the bill as 'anti-religious persecution.' A key concern was the bill's requirement for local authorities to maintain registers of children who are home-schooled or taught outside traditional school settings, which Charedi campaigners fear could lead to state interference in traditional yeshivot and force them to teach secular subjects.
3. <https://www.jewishnews.co.uk/charedi-leaders-step-up-protests-against-schools-bill-ahead-of-commons-debate/> - Strictly Orthodox leaders have written a letter to the Education Secretary claiming a Bill that would make it compulsory for local authorities to maintain registers of home-schooled children is 'specifically designed to hinder religious practice.' The letter to Bridget Phillipson adds: 'Our system of education not only meets but far exceeds the so-called standard objectives. Our children’s exemplary behaviour and good moral grounding are models to follow, not stifle.'
4. <https://www.frometimes.co.uk/frome-parents-rally-for-childrens-rights-in-face-of-new-parliamentary-bill/> - In March 2025, home-educating families in Frome participated in a nationwide protest against the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill. The bill, introduced in late 2024 following the death of 10-year-old Sara Sharif, aims to close gaps in child welfare services and ensure all children receive a 'quality' education. Key changes include free breakfast clubs, limits on branded uniform items, and enhanced oversight of children’s social care providers. However, it has raised concerns that it also represents a significant overreach by the government.
5. <https://researchingreform.net/2025/04/30/child-protection-groups-head-to-downing-street-to-oppose-childrens-wellbeing-schools-bill/> - Several high-profile organizations representing parents and advocating for better child protection practices inside the family court system have come together to raise awareness about what they are calling deeply concerning clauses inside the Children’s Wellbeing & Schools Bill. The groups, including the Victoria Climbié Foundation, Reclaim Rights for Children, Legal Action for Women, Support not Separation, and the Disabled Mothers’ Rights Campaign, are hoping to raise their concerns in Parliament so that MPs and Lords debating the legislation are fully aware of the impact of the bill on children’s and families’ rights.
6. <https://www.londondaily.news/parents-rally-against-the-childrens-wellbeing-and-schools-bill-defending-home-education-and-parental-rights/> - The Children’s Wellbeing and Schools Bill (CWSB) is being presented as a measure to improve child welfare and educational standards. However, it has raised serious concerns among parents, home educators, and civil liberties advocates, who argue that it represents a significant overreach by the government. Critics fear that it undermines parental rights, restricts educational choice, and expands state control over family life. Parents are set to gather from 11 am on the 8th March in Parliament Square, London, and other major cities across England, including Leeds, Liverpool, Manchester, Exeter, and Birmingham. This coordinated rally aims to protest the proposed Bill.
7. <https://supportnotseparation.blog/2025/03/05/campaign-against-the-childrens-wellbeing-schools-bill-sat-8-march/> - Support Not Separation is urging individuals to join in opposing the Children’s Wellbeing & Schools Bill (CWS Bill) currently going through Parliament. The Bill is seen as further undermining mothers and children and their right to be together. The first public protests against the Bill are taking place on the weekend around International Women’s Day in six cities, including London. The London event is scheduled in Parliament Square from 11 am to 2 pm.