

I recently received the following message from our school principal:

"You may be aware that a School Strike 4 Climate Action rally is to take place on Friday, 15 October 2021 during school hours, and that some students may plan to be absent from school to attend.

The Department of Education has advised that students attending the rally will be marked absent and the usual procedures for student absence will apply. While the Department supports young people taking an active interest in issues in the world around them, students attending political rallies during school hours cannot be endorsed, encouraged or facilitated by Department staff.

In addition, I need to make you aware that attendance at rallies may involve a risk of injury to students if criminal activity ensues from the actions of some people or groups that may attend."

I am disturbed that the Department of Education seemed to feel it was necessary to send this. As far as I'm aware, we haven't received similar messages related to any other event. The fact that the principal went out of her way to claim that students might be at risk of injury because of "criminal activity" also seems utterly ridiculous, especially given the effort that the School Strike organisers have put into creating as safe a space as possible.