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17 May 2017



A Scottish Government report has once again confirmed the serious issues facing teacher training in Scotland.

The ITE analysis report commissioned by the Scottish Government revealed a huge variation in the amount of time being set aside to teach literacy on teacher training courses.

It showed that some universities are only dedicating 4 hours respectively to the teaching of numeracy and literacy.

It backs up evidence heard by the education committee last week where several trainee teachers stated that they had only received a week's training on literacy.

The report was published ahead of a Scottish Conservative debate this afternoon that will set out new policies to improve literacy and numeracy in schools – following growing evidence that Scotland's standards are slipping.

Scottish Conservative shadow education secretary Liz Smith said:

“This is yet another damning report into the SNP's record on education.

“Even their own studies show that trainee teachers are not receiving enough training on literacy.

“With literacy rates in our schools plummeting this is simply not good enough, and it's time that the SNP took action.

“Ever since the Donaldson Report was published we've known that this was an issue, but in ten years of SNP government things are going backwards.

“Scots want to see our education system improve, and they want Nicola Sturgeon to ditch her plans for a second referendum and get back to the day job.”

A copy of the report is available [here](#).

Graph 5 on page 23 shows the number of dedicated hours to each key area.

[Ruth: It's time to focus on our schools](#)

17 May 2017



The Scottish Conservatives will today set out fresh ideas to improve literacy and numeracy in schools – following growing evidence that Scotland's standards are slipping.

On a visit to the Enchanted Forest nursery school in East Renfrewshire, Scottish Conservative leader Ruth Davidson warned SNP Ministers that they must put aside their obsession with a second referendum – and focus instead of delivering real reform in schools.

Her visit comes ahead of a Scottish Conservative debate in the Scottish Parliament today, when the party will highlight shocking evidence that teacher trainees are not getting support to improve their literacy and numeracy skills.

The Scottish Conservatives are currently conducting a review into the operation of Curriculum for Excellence. To boost literacy and numeracy skills, the party is calling for:

- Teacher trainees to sit literacy and numeracy tests at the start and end of their course to identify weaknesses and help trainees improve their skills.
- The creation of a new independent Inspectorate to be established to carry out rigorous quality checks on primary and secondary schools.
- Government to set a clear target to ensure all children read well by the age of 11 – as proposed by Save the Children.
- More focus on literacy and numeracy at nursery level – particularly for children from low-income families.

Scottish Conservative leader Ruth Davidson said today:

“While Nicola Sturgeon has pressed ahead with her independence obsession, a generation of school-children has been left behind. People across Scotland have had enough. We need action now.

“When we are training teachers, we need to ensure they know how to pass on good literacy and numeracy skills to children.

“We need to start at nursery – because we know that's when many children from

low income families fall behind.

“And to ensure that school standards improve, it’s time for an independent inspection body to be formed so we can flag up problems early.

“These are the basics you’d expect any government to act upon. Yet the SNP has spent so much of its time on the constitution, it has left the day job behind.

“It’s time to send the SNP a message on June 8th – enough of your divisive referendum, it is time to focus on our schools.”

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15 May 2017



The First Minister has today admitted that education standards are falling under the SNP, the Scottish Conservatives have said.

In an interview on the BBC Andrew Marr show, Nicola Sturgeon said she was “not denying” that levels of literacy and numeracy were on the decline in Scotland.

The SNP leader also said she is holding to her promise to be judged on her record on education, and pledged improvements by the next parliament in 2021.

The latest Scottish Survey for Literacy and Numeracy (SSLN) showed a rise in the percentage of pupils who are functionally illiterate from 7% to 16% in the last four years.

Fewer than half of S2 pupils in Scotland were performing well in writing, down from 64% in 2012.

The figures also showed that Scotland’s attainment gap continues to exist, with pupils from the least deprived areas outperforming those from the most deprived areas at all stages – with the gap similar to that seen in 2012.

Scottish Conservative education spokeswoman Liz Smith MSP said:

“Today’s response from the First Minister that she is ‘not denying’

collapsing standards in literacy and numeracy is a tacit admission of failure.

“The recent SSLN statistics made it clear that the SNP government is not doing enough to address the problems in basic literacy.

“There also remains a persistent gap between pupils from the most deprived areas and the least deprived areas.

“After ten years of SNP control over Scottish education, it is simply not good enough for Nicola Sturgeon to say that improvements will be made by 2021.

“Scottish children cannot afford to wait until the next parliament for things to get better.

“It is time for the SNP to put its obsession with independence to one side and get on with tackling its supposed top priority of improving education.”

[Scottish Conservatives back free prescriptions](#)

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14 May 2017



The Scottish Conservatives are to support free prescriptions in Scotland as part of a major review into the use of drugs in the NHS.

In its manifesto ahead of the General Election, the party will support the current policy of providing prescriptions free of charge – because drugs are playing an increasing role in out-of-hospital care.

At the same time, the party’s new Health Advisory Board – to be set up in the coming weeks – will carry out an assessment of the role of drugs, prescriptions and pharmacy services within the NHS.

The board will also examine the current use of so-called “low value prescriptions” such as over-the-counter drugs currently available from GPs.

The latest statistics show that the NHS is currently spending £10m on paracetamol, £2.9m on aspirin, £1.6m on sun cream and £1.8m on shampoo.

It was also study whether increasing the use of generic drugs and cutting down on wastage can save more money for the NHS.

The current NHS Scotland bill for drugs is £1.5 billion.

Scottish Conservative health spokesman Donald Cameron said:

“There is no doubt at all that people in Scotland value the idea of free prescriptions. We have listened to them and changed our policy.

“This really about the future of the NHS. Medical technology is making leaps and bounds. Drugs are becoming ever more sophisticated. Pharmacy services have the potential to help reduce the pressure on GPs and hospitals.

“However, we need to assess this issue thoughtfully. It means thinking about when prescriptions are the right answer and they they’re not. It can’t be right that the NHS spends £10m a year on over-the-counter drugs like paracetamol.

“So we need a comprehensive review of how drugs, medicine and prescriptions fit into the future of care. Our Health Advisory Board will carry out that work and will report back will in advance of the next Holyrood elections.”

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11 May 2017



The Scottish Government has spent more time debating the constitution than key devolved issues like education, health and justice combined, it has been revealed.

At First Minister’s Questions today, Scottish Conservative leader Ruth Davidson attacked the SNP’s record on education after it emerged this week more than 16 per cent of S2 pupils can’t write properly.

She also pointed to evidence at this week’s education committee showing trainee teachers receive just one week of tuition on teaching literacy.

And it’s the SNP’s obsession with independence which is contributing to a drop in standards across Scotland’s classrooms, Ruth said, despite claims

from Nicola Sturgeon that it's her "priority".

Since the summer, the Scottish Government has spent more than 45 hours debating the constitution at Holyrood.

That's four times more than education, and compares to around six hours on health, eight hours on justice, and just three hours on transport.

Ruth also criticised the SNP for presiding over a fall in inspections, adding those tasked with checking standards in the class-room had been instead focusing on delivering the controversial Curriculum for Excellence.

Scottish Conservative leader Ruth Davidson said:

"We liked to pride ourselves in Scotland that our education system was one of the best in the world.

"But after 10 years of an SNP government, we can do so no longer.

"Too many of our children can't read or write properly and the situation is only getting worse.

"In addition, we don't have enough people entering teacher training.

"Those trainee teachers who are in place are now telling us they aren't equipped to educate pupils to a reasonable standard.

"That is a shameful record, and it's one of an SNP government which has spent more time debating the constitution than anything else.

"I was glad to hear Nicola Sturgeon pours over Scottish Conservative press releases.

"Perhaps if she wants us to stop mentioning independence, she could send one of her own taking the threat of another referendum off the table."

Below is a range of topics initiated by the Scottish Government since June, broken down by hours. For a more comprehensive breakdown, contact the Scottish Conservative press office.

Constitution – 45.25 hours

Education – 10.25 hours

Health – 6.25 hours

Justice – 7.75 hours

Transport – 3.5 hours

On Tuesday, damning figures revealed the state of Scottish education:

<http://www.scottishconservatives.com/2017/05/figures-show-snps-shameful-performance-on-education/>

And yesterday, trainee teachers revealed the lack of training on literacy and

numeracy they receive:

<http://www.scottishconservatives.com/2017/05/trainees-expose-the-gaps-in-scotland-teacher-training-programme-2/>