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6 Jan 2019



Scotland's schools are currently experiencing a 'lost generation', as teachers between the ages of 43 and 60 are leaving the profession in droves, removing significant experience from schools and classrooms.

Figures collated by the Scottish Conservatives show that between 2004 and 2018 the number of teachers has fallen by almost 4,000.

However, while there are increases among most of the other age groups, the 43 to 60 year old age range has decreased by 12,896 over the same period, highlighting a dramatic loss of experience in schools.

This week the Scottish Conservatives will be focusing on the problems that continue to face Scottish schools, despite the SNP's claim that education is their 'number one priority.'

The statistics show that the number of 20-30 year old teachers have increased by over 3,000, and the number of 30 – 40 year old teachers have increased by 4848, since 2004.

Over the same period, the number of 51 year olds within the system has reduced by 1438.

The Scottish Conservatives are concerned that this exodus is removing significant teaching experience from the classroom and from other, newer teachers. It also highlights a profound retention issue.

Scottish Conservative shadow education secretary Liz Smith said;

"These statistics are deeply worrying in terms of the numbers of the most experienced teachers leaving the profession and leaving it early.

"Most worrying are the high numbers leaving in their early fifties when, in previous generations, there was a much higher rate of retention.

"It is this retention issue which is as much a concern as the fall in the number of teachers in our schools which has taken place while the SNP has been in power.

"There are some encouraging signs of increased recruitment in the younger

years but that does not compensate for the huge loss of older and more experienced teachers.

“This loss ties in with the difficulties of recruiting heads and deputy heads – something that is worrying both local authorities and the teaching unions.

“There is a clear need for the SNP to investigate why older teachers are leaving the profession, and taking with them much needed experience, and tackle this growing problem.

“So much for Nicola Sturgeon’s top priority.

“The SNP must reduce the burdens on teachers and focus on retaining more of these teachers which would in itself tackle the current teacher deficit.”