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The SNP has reduced the number of additional support teachers in Scotland – even though the proportion of children who need extra help in the classroom has risen to nearly one in four.

Figures will be presented to MSPs tomorrow which show 170,329 youngsters are deemed to require additional support for learning, 24.9 per cent of all school pupils.

That's a huge increase from 2015, when 153,000 needed ASL, roughly 22.5 per cent of pupils.

And in 2010, just 10.3 per cent were considered suitable for ASL, around 70,000 children.

Despite that, Holyrood's education committee will be given statistics revealing there are just 2990 teachers with ASL as their main subject, compared to 3038 the previous year.

It's also a drop of 15 per cent from 2010, despite the clear trend of more pupils needing help in the classroom.

The Scottish Conservatives have repeatedly called for ministers to take more action to help ASL pupils, yet the position appears to be getting worse under the SNP.

It's the latest set of statistics exposing the teacher recruitment crisis, with some schools even being forced to ask parents to help out.

Scottish Conservative early years spokeswoman Michelle Ballantyne said:

"These figures very clearly show that those pupils who need help the most are being badly let down.

"This will do nothing to close the attainment gap, nor boost opportunities for those young people who need help in the classroom.

“Of course much of the increase in pupils with additional learning needs will be down to a better identification of those requiring assistance.

“But that’s no good if the teachers aren’t there to provide that help.

“This is a clear trend, and one the SNP has to explain as matter of urgency.

“The nationalists keep saying education is their priority, yet these figures suggest that is anything but the case.”