

SNP must commit to full time education as worried parents voice concerns

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The Scottish Conservatives have demanded that the SNP government, today, formally commits to reopening schools full time next term.

The Scottish Government has stated that they will only make this decision on the 30th July – only 11 days in advance of the 11th August term start date.

This move has already been criticised by a member of the Scottish Government's own Education Recovery Group, Cllr Stephen McCabe who confirmed that 11 days was not enough time to prepare and that some councils were looking at returning with a part time, or blended, approach as a result.

This is already in direct contrast to the explicit commitment made by the SNP Deputy First Minister who promised parents that the re-opening of schools full time was the current plan that all councils were working to.

The Education Secretary, John Swinney, is due to give a statement to the Scottish Parliament on the reopening of schools today.

Jamie Greene, Scottish Conservative shadow education secretary has demanded that during the statement Mr Swinney formally commits to the return to full time education for all school children, so that schools, parents and children have time to prepare.

The call comes as the Scottish Conservatives also reveal almost 200 pages of correspondence to the First Minister and Education Secretary from parents outlining their anger and worry over the future of Scottish education.

The letters and emails spanning 187 pages, published as a Freedom of Information response, detail feedback from parents received by the SNP government between 8th – 17th June this year.

This is just before the SNP government announced their monumental u-turn to abandon blended learning.

Many parents wrote of the damage blended learning would do to their children's ongoing mental wellbeing and educational progress, while others wrote of the difficulties of getting back to work without children in full time education.

On blended learning, one parent wrote to the First Minister, "I believe these measures to be disproportionate and harmful."

And another said; "So what are we to do in August? How on earth are things going to work out. I do not expect schools to child mind my children but at the same time how can I work and rebuild my business and create employment for others and pay taxes if I cannot work full time? How is my child to cope mentally if [their] childhood is being robbed from [them]?"

While another parent wrote, "We are getting to a crisis point. It does not seem that children are being considered in this at all... Nothing about this approach is about the best interests of our children"

Jamie Greene, Scottish Conservative shadow education secretary said:

"The SNP's plans for schools have been in tatters for some weeks already.

"This SNP government must now finally listen to parents and commit today to reopen schools full time next term, as was promised.

"Schools and families need to know now if they are going back to school or not – the 30th July is simply too late and logistically impossible to deliver for many.

"This correspondence is just a snapshot of the deep worry and anger of parents over the future of Scottish education under the SNP government.

"Even supporters of the First Minister wrote in to complain about the government's failure to consider the best interests of children.

"The time for ambiguity and dither quite simply is over, Mr Swinney must now direct all of Scotland's councils to re-open schools full time on August 11th as he promised he would do.

"Anything less will be a betrayal of parents trust and one which will have a damning effect on education and our economy."