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Nicola Sturgeon must tackle the “culture of fear and secrecy” which has developed under the SNP in schools across Scotland, the Scottish Conservatives have said.

It follows an open letter which appeared in today’s press from a primary teacher who said she wanted to speak out about problems in the classroom, but was frightened to do so for fear of “repercussions”.

At First Minister’s Questions, Ruth Davidson asked why the teacher’s colleague had been told to pull out of a planned meeting with education secretary John Swinney after being “warned” of consequences by their manager.

In her letter, the SNP-voting teacher said: “The most concerning thing that has happened so far is that one of my colleagues arranged to meet with yourself to discuss issues that were of great concern to them. However, this person was ‘warned’ by their manager that if they went ahead with this meeting they would be disciplined.”

Ruth said the Scottish Government should work harder to encourage a culture of accountability and scrutiny, rather than “stamping on” public servants who want to improve things in their place of work.

Earlier this week, the Scottish Conservatives outlined their plans for a more open approach to government ahead of the 2021 elections.

Scottish Conservative leader Ruth Davidson said:

“Under the SNP, we now appear to have a situation where public servants with experience and knowledge of their area are being strong-armed into keeping their mouths shut.

“That’s no way to run a government, and it has to change.

“This teacher makes it abundantly clear that she wanted to speak out about a range of concerns with the state of Scotland’s schools, but was afraid to do so for fear of ramifications.

“Instead of telling teachers to stay quiet, this SNP government should be opening up government to ensure a culture of transparency and scrutiny.”