

[Swinney's lack of leadership risking Sturgeon's 'number one priority'](#)

- [Home](#)
- [Posts](#)
- [All News](#)
- Swinney's lack of leadership risking Sturgeon's 'number one priority'

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The lack of leadership being shown by the education secretary is risking the repeated pledge made by Nicola Sturgeon that education is her top priority, the Scottish Conservatives have said.

John Swinney yesterday again delayed giving parents a guarantee that schools would return in full on August 11.

It means they – along with pupils and teachers – will need to wait another week before knowing for sure about when education can go back to normal.

Now shadow education secretary Jamie Greene has said a failure to deliver on the resumption pledge would jeopardise the promise made by the First Minister that she wants to be judged on her performance on education.

Scottish Conservative shadow education secretary Jamie Greene said:

“From the moment she took office as First Minister, Nicola Sturgeon said education would be her number one priority.

“At her own request, she staked her very reputation on that claim.

“Now a lack of leadership from her deputy is jeopardising that ambition.

“John Swinney has completely left children, parents and teachers in the dark and, less than three weeks until schools are meant to return, there's no clarity at all.

“The plan a for pupils' return has been a shambles from the outset, and even this late in the day no-one is quite sure what's going to happen.

“Everyone involved in the schools system deserves so much more from this incompetent SNP government.”