

[Swinney's STEM money should support science teaching in primaries](#)

- [Home](#)
- [All News](#)
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Bursary money to boost teachers in STEM subjects should also be used to encourage more dedicated science teachers to work in primary schools, the Scottish Conservatives have said.

The Scottish Government outlined its strategy for improving science, technology, engineering and maths education in Holyrood today.

It follows an announcement by education secretary John Swinney that £20,000 bursaries would be offered to people looking to change career to become STEM teachers.

As part of today's debate, shadow education secretary Liz Smith said some of the money set aside should be used to allow pupils in primaries four to seven to be taught dedicated science lessons.

A similar call was made two years ago by the Royal Society of Chemistry, on the basis that was the prime age to capture pupils' imagination, rather than waiting for secondary school.

The SNP rejected this at the time on the basis it didn't have the money.

Scottish Conservative shadow education secretary Liz Smith said:

"Now that John Swinney has found the money to offer these bursaries, some of this support should be aimed at getting dedicated science teachers into primary schools.

"As the experts have already said, it's at this age where the imagination of children can be best captured.

"That would improve education standards and address the issue of fewer youngsters succeeding in key STEM subjects.

"The money is there, the Scottish Government has confirmed that much.

"Now we have to see it used in the correct fashion."

Education secretary John Swinney announced his £20,000 STEM bursaries at the SNP conference earlier this month:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-scotland-politics-41545499>