

Scottish Conservatives force 'screeching' SNP school u-turn

23 Jun 2020



The Scottish Conservatives have forced the SNP government to perform a 'screeching u-turn' on its plans for blended learning and part-time schooling.

Scottish Education Secretary John Swinney today announced that the SNP government will not be implementing a blended education model in August and 50% targets for face to face learning, but will now aim to return children to full time education.

This is in stark contrast to previous directions given by Mr Swinney to local authorities to focus only on providing blended education – where children could attend classrooms for as little as one day a week.

In a statement to the Scottish Parliament this afternoon, Mr Swinney said that due to the progress made in suppressing the Covid virus the Government "believes that we should prepare for children to be able to return to school full time in August."

In addition, Mr Swinney confirmed that the Scottish Government will review their approach to physical distancing in schools and equivalent measures in early learning and childcare but stopped short of confirming that all learning will take place in classrooms and that there will now be no social distancing in place in August.

Jamie Greene, Scottish Conservative shadow education secretary said:

"This screeching u-turn from the SNP government will be music to the ears of parents right across the country who were outraged by the lack of ambition shown to date.

"The sad truth is that events of recent weeks have exposed a leadership vacuum in how these plans were put together and communicated.

"The fact that the SNP government were the last people to realise that their part time plans were simply no good, sums up their ignorance of the public mood on this issue.

"Up until now local authorities were working towards part time schooling plans as commanded by Mr Swinney, the question remains how thrilled Cosla will be with this dramatic 180 about turn.

"Warm words must now be followed by real actions, today's statement leaves councils with more questions than answers.

“The SNP must now deliver on its new found promise of full time schooling by August, through whichever means necessary, if it stands any chance of rebuilding the trust of parents.”

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Nicola Sturgeon risks holding Scotland back “socially and economically” if she continues a “go-slow” approach while other parts of the UK reduce social distancing to one metre.

Today, the Prime Minister confirmed a number of changes to help restart the economy and allow people more freedom in their everyday lives.

That includes allowing pubs and restaurants to reopen and for people to stay overnight at another household.

However, the First Minister is sticking by her strategy of maintaining a two-metre social distancing rule, which is hampering thousands of businesses from reopening.

Now the Scottish Conservatives have urged the SNP government to urgently review the situation to halt the economic decline and improve the mental health of the nation.

Scottish Conservative leader Jackson Carlaw said:

“There’s no doubt that elsewhere in the UK things are really beginning to happen.

“The risk now is that Scotland is left behind socially and economically.

“It will be very difficult for people here to look on as England, and indeed the rest of Europe, begins a return to normal.

“It will also be very costly for businesses, industries like tourism and hospitality, and the mental health of the nation.

“The people of Scotland will not accept a go-slow approach from Nicola Sturgeon much longer.”

Scotland nears half a million missed Covid-19 tests

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Scotland is on course to hit half a million unused coronavirus tests within days, new analysis has shown.

As of last night, 452,081 tests had been made available through combined UK and Scottish Government facilities, but hadn't made their way to health workers or the general public.

Capacity north of the border has risen steadily, and now sits at 15,500 a day.

But barely a third of that is generally used, with the most recent figures revealing just 3416 took place on Sunday.

That's despite an SNP pledge to test every member of staff in care homes routinely, and a commitment for frontline health workers to be offered regular testing.

Now shadow health secretary Miles Briggs said the SNP's "chaotic" approach to testing would also jeopardise Scotland's exit from lockdown, the return to schools and economic recovery.

The World Health Organisation has also made it repeatedly clear that testing is a critical factor in fighting the pandemic.

Scottish Conservative shadow health secretary Miles Briggs said:

“There's no problem with testing capacity in Scotland, but the SNP is failing miserably at getting these tests to those who need them.

“The nationalists said every care worker would be routinely tested for coronavirus, yet these figures show this clearly isn't happening.

“This isn't a few missed tests here and there – we're now in a chaotic situation where nearly half a million of these have gone unused.

“That’s obviously creating problems for those most vulnerable to Covid-19 and the dedicated staff who look after them.

“But it will also jeopardise economic recovery and the resumption of schooling.

“Everything which takes us out of lockdown will be predicated on a comprehensive and agile testing system.

“But so far the SNP has proved completely incapable of operating one.”

[Scottish Conservatives force emergency Swinney statement](#)

22 Jun 2020



John Swinney is to make a statement this week to Holyrood on the SNP education crisis following pressure from the Scottish Conservatives.

Yesterday, the party demanded the SNP government addressed MSPs on the widely-criticised plans for blended learning before leaving for summer recess.

And today, First Minister Nicola Sturgeon confirmed her education secretary would make the statement in the Scottish Parliament tomorrow.

Shadow education secretary Jamie Greene welcomed the move, pointing out pupils, parents and teachers were all keen to hear an update from ministers.

Since unveiling proposals for some children to attend school just once a week from August, the SNP government has been blasted by experts, parents, opposition parties and even some of its own MSPs.

Scottish Conservative shadow education secretary Jamie Greene said:

“It should not have taken opposition parties to drag John Swinney and this SNP government to parliament to explain themselves.

“The furore surrounding the SNP’s plans for re-opening schools is symptomatic of its decade-long shambolic stewardship of Scotland’s education system.

“Parents are fuming and want answers from this SNP government.

“If it wasn’t for the Scottish Conservatives harnessing the anger of those parents and demanding this statement, Mr Swinney would be nowhere to be seen.

“The time for passing the buck is up, and we must get clarity from the SNP this week before its ministers swan off on holiday.”

Years of SNP economic incompetence coming back to haunt Scotland

22 Jun 2020



Economic incompetence from the SNP spanning more than a decade will hamper Scotland's recovery from coronavirus, the Scottish Conservatives have warned.

The Scottish Government set out an economy recovery plan today as businesses across the country face a major downturn.

And while some measures were welcome, shadow economy secretary Maurice Golden said companies and workers needed action now.

Scottish Conservative shadow economy secretary Maurice Golden said:

“More than a decade of economic incompetence from the SNP is now coming back to haunt the country.

“Of course no-one could have foreseen coronavirus or the devastating impact it would have world-wide.

“But all the indications show Scotland's economy was lagging behind before this, and now it seems the impact will be harder here than elsewhere.

“The SNP needs to accept responsibility for that and take action now.

“Instead, all businesses are getting is far-off promises – which will be far too late for many – and another nationalist attempt at stoking up constitutional division.”