

John Swinney's reputation damaged beyond repair

13 Aug 2020



The Scottish Conservatives have said that John Swinney's reputation has been damaged irreparably by refusing to resign over the SQA exams fiasco.

Education secretary John Swinney survived the vote of no confidence this afternoon after receiving the support of the Greens.

John Swinney has now survived more than ten education scandals, including:

- The latest SQA exams fiasco.
- The blended learning u-turn.
- Years of falling PISA standards.
- The Named Persons u-turn.
- Ongoing subject choice limitations.
- The P1 testing debacle.
- Dropping the Education Bill.
- Widespread multi-level teaching.
- Failing to reduce the attainment gap.
- Hundreds of teacher vacancies every single year.

Scottish Conservative Holyrood leader, Ruth Davidson, said: "John Swinney has been a huge contributor to this parliament – but he should have been removed today. For parliamentary responsibility to work, the sanction must fit the scale of the failure and this was the biggest exams failure in the history of devolution.

"When faced with the thousands of students whose dreams were dashed, he dug in and defended the system over the pupils.

"When presented with clear analysis showing children from the most deprived areas were hit hardest, he went on the nightly television news to deny it – saying the 'data does not bear that out' – when that's exactly what the data did do.

"As high a regard as people cross this chamber may hold John Swinney, the timeline of a threat of no confidence and the total U-turn that transpired,

opens the education secretary to accusations he cared more about his own job than our children's futures.

"The scale of this failure is to such a degree that it prompts the question – if this isn't a resignation matter, then what is?"

"John Swinney survived today because of a last-minute pact with the Greens. But the principle of parliamentary responsibility is forever damaged by his clinging on.

"Scottish education desperately needs new leadership and damaged, discredited John Swinney simply isn't able to deliver it."

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Jamie Greene MSP – Shadow Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills

Liam Kerr MSP – Shadow Cabinet Secretary for Justice

Donald Cameron MSP – Shadow Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport

Murdo Fraser MSP – Shadow Cabinet Secretary for Finance

Liz Smith MSP – Shadow Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform

Oliver Mundell MSP – Shadow Cabinet Secretary for Rural Economy and Tourism

Dean Lockhart MSP – Shadow Cabinet Secretary for the Constitution, Europe and External Affairs

Annie Wells MSP – Shadow Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Local Government

Maurice Golden MSP – Shadow Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Fair Work and Culture

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[Douglas Ross: give pupils every chance to succeed](#)

6 Aug 2020



Scottish Conservative party leader Douglas Ross MP has said that the SNP Government should give pupils every chance to succeed and change the rules on grades this year.

Douglas has said pupils this year should be allowed to choose to take their existing result, or sit exams this coming autumn or receive their prelim grade.

He added that students waiting for clarity on exam results to take up university offers should be prioritised so they are not held back any longer.

In his first statement as leader yesterday, Douglas already called for the Scottish Government to “ensure the appeals process is accelerated.”

Scottish Conservative leader Douglas Ross said: “Pupils, parents and teachers have contacted me to say they feel let down by what has happened and the lack of solutions that have been proposed.

"In light of the exceptional circumstances of the last academic year, it is only fair that pupils are given every single chance to succeed.

"We should allow pupils far more flexibility and give all pupils – no matter their background – every opportunity to get the grades they deserve.

"Pupils have already earned their prelim grades and if they are determined enough to want to sit the exam later this year, they should be encouraged to do so in order to give themselves the best possible future, with those waiting on university places receiving first priority.

"The futures of an entire year group of young Scots are in the balance. It's not just their exam results that have been downgraded, but their life chances. That cannot be allowed to stand."

Scottish Conservative education spokesperson, Jamie Greene, said: "John Swinney's full focus must be on urgently fixing this mess.

"The Aberdeen lockdown clearly requires the SNP Government's attention but that cannot come at the expense of pupils who have been so badly failed.

"The education secretary must get on top of this and leave the management of the local lockdown in Aberdeen to his colleagues."