

Vulnerable children must not be left behind after Covid

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The Scottish Conservatives have raised concerns about vulnerable children being left behind after the Scottish Government published guidance on the reopening of schools.

The publication, Advice from the COVID-19 Advisory Sub-group on Education and children's issues, contains guidance to ensure children and staff can operate safely when schools reopen on the 11th August even though the SNP government will wait until 30th July to formally decide if this is possible.

Measures includes no social distancing between pupils but two- metres 'wherever possible' between teachers and pupils.

In addition, the guidelines could be altered and perhaps a variation introduced depending on transmission in the local community.

Most importantly, the guidance acknowledges that learning loss worse will be worse in secondary schools and high poverty backgrounds.

The Scottish Conservatives have called for special attention to be paid to those from deprived backgrounds, school transport and increasing teacher numbers.

Jamie Greene, Scottish Conservative shadow education secretary said:

"Prior to the pandemic, the SNP government had completely failed to reduce the attainment gap and it is clear that vulnerable pupils have suffered the most during the crisis.

"Serious thought must now be put into how schools can help these children bridge that widening gap so they are not permanently left behind.

"Programmes focused on deprived children must be given priority, but the SNP government must increase teacher numbers, something they have also totally failed to do.

"School transport also continues to be a hugely problematic area, especially in rural areas.

"With many services still cancelled and local authority funds depleted, John Swinney must put his money where his mouth is and ensure councils can return bus services to pre-pandemic levels.

"With only a few short weeks before school starts, the SNP government is

going to have to move quickly to ensure schools have what they need if this promise is going to be delivered.”