# Swinney's refusal to lower school leaving age exposes SNP's education failings



John Swinney, Scotland’s Deputy First Minister, has once again failed to address the urgent needs of students by rejecting proposals to lower the school leaving age to 14. This refusal highlights the ongoing dysfunction within the education system overseen by the Scottish National Party (SNP), especially in light of the recent general election which revealed a disenchanted electorate seeking real change.

Scottish Conservative leader Russell Findlay did not hold back during First Minister’s Questions, asserting that the current educational framework is a dismal failure for far too many students. He passionately argued for a system that would allow those who would thrive better in a college or apprenticeship setting to leave school early, emphasizing that the SNP's 18-year reign has left a generation of young people stranded in a system ill-equipped to meet their needs.

In a feeble attempt to deflect criticism, Swinney highlighted alleged positive trends, claiming recent initiatives to engage students have raised the numbers transitioning to further education, training, or employment. He proclaimed, “I don’t agree with these proposals. We’ve spent a great deal of time and effort on trying to encourage young people to maximise their engagement with education,” a statement that rings hollow amidst damning statistics.

Findlay rightly pointed out alarming figures showing that one in seven pupils leave school without any qualifications. He cited a shocking survey revealing that 80 per cent of teachers perceive an increase in violent and abusive behaviour in schools, making it evident that the SNP's approach is more about maintaining the status quo than responding to the stark realities faced by students and educators alike. Instead of focusing on outdated policies, he called for a system that prioritizes creating opportunities and aspirations for young people left to fend for themselves.

Further highlighting the inadequacies of the SNP administration, Swinney tried to defend his government’s initiatives surrounding education reforms and apprenticeships. However, tellingly, he admitted that not all students benefit from the traditional schooling environment. Yet, this acknowledgment does little to counter the reality that the SNP continues to placate a failing system with half-hearted reforms, rather than placing students first.

Swinnney faced additional scrutiny regarding the state of the Scottish National Health Service (NHS), a sector that has seen deteriorating standards under the SNP’s watch. Scottish Labour leader Anas Sarwar exposed the harrowing reality that countless Scots, like a health worker forced to deplete her life savings for a private hip operation due to extensive waiting times, are being left behind. This is a telling symptom of the SNP's neglect of essential services that should be accessible to all.

Sarwar presented shocking statistics reflecting the trend towards private healthcare, revealing over 36,500 private procedures conducted in just the past nine months, costing taxpayers millions. Most disturbingly, he highlighted that Scots have been compelled to pay out-of-pocket for 700 rounds of chemotherapy, casting serious doubt on the adequacy of the current NHS provisions which appear increasingly strained under government mismanagement.

While Swinney acknowledged the need to address NHS waiting times, he remained vague on concrete commitments, reiterating only the government’s intention to address these critical challenges. The ongoing discussions surrounding education and healthcare in Scotland underscore a desperate call for a political overhaul. With the recent election results shining a spotlight on public dissatisfaction, it's clear that a more decisive and accountable opposition is not just needed but demanded as the SNP continues to fail its constituents, leaving them yearning for a pathway forward.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.scotsman.com/education/plumbing-trade-body-slams-reckless-scottish-tory-proposals-to-allow-pupils-to-leave-school-at-14-5020167> - This article supports the claim that Scottish Conservative leader Russell Findlay proposed lowering the school leaving age to 14 or 15, which was met with criticism from various bodies. It highlights the concerns about the feasibility and safety of such a policy.
* <https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/politics/john-swinney-rejects-calls-lower-34808479> - This article corroborates John Swinney's rejection of the proposal to lower the school leaving age and provides context on the ongoing debate about Scotland's education system.
* <https://www.gov.uk/know-when-you-can-leave-school> - This UK government webpage explains the current school leaving ages across different regions, including Scotland, where the minimum age is 16. It supports the context of the current legal framework regarding school leaving ages.
* <https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/scottish-news/scottish-nhs-crisis-what-you-need-know-34810683> - Although not directly linked, this article provides insight into the broader dissatisfaction with the SNP's management of essential services, including healthcare, which aligns with the narrative of public dissatisfaction and calls for change.
* <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-64813161> - This article would typically cover recent political developments in Scotland, including debates on education and healthcare, providing context for the dissatisfaction with the SNP's policies.