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The number of school leavers ending up in “positive destinations” has fallen for the first time in five years.

Figures released today show 8.6 per cent of young people are deemed to have become unemployed on leaving school, instead of going on to work, training or further education.

That compares to eight per cent last year, and is the first decline of that trend since 2011.

The Scottish Government report also showed little change in the closing of the attainment gap when it comes to positive destinations, with the gap actually widening slightly from last year.

While 96.2 per cent of those from the least deprived backgrounds ended up in positive destinations in 2015/16, just 85 per cent of those from the poorest did – a gap of 11.2 percentage points.

The gap in 2014/15 was 10 points, although was as high as 13.4 in 2011/12.

Scottish Conservative shadow education secretary Liz Smith said:

“This is another indicator on education which has gone down on Nicola Sturgeon’s watch.

“The number of young people going on to positive destinations is one of the First Minister’s go-to statistics when she is under pressure.

“Now she can’t even say that is increasing.

“What’s more, the likelihood of a school-leaver ending up at university, college, training or work is still far too dependent on their background.

“No real improvement has been made on that front either, and the SNP is running out of excuses about why that is.”

To see the full report, visit:

<http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2017/06/9699>