

John Swinney's reputation damaged beyond repair

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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.”