

Healthy Child Programme (Locala School Nurse) vs Attendance & Pupil Support Service

St. John's C.E. (C) Infant School had historically received support for monitoring attendance from Kirklees Attendance and Pupil Support Service (APSS).

During an Attendance review in 2016 it was found the Reception year group had a considerable lower attendance percentage rate compared to the rest of the school (93.54% vs 95.14%). Absences were largely granted as they were due to illness. Upon further investigation it was found parents/carers of Reception children would often keep them at home for ailments such as coughs, colds, etc. when the children could be in school.

In a review meeting with the Attendance & Pupil Support Officer (APSO) it came to light that the service could not enforce attendance for Reception children as they are not of compulsory school age. This led to the realisation that the annual £1,553 cost for the service was in fact for just two year groups and did not seem to meet the best value criteria outlined in the Kirklees Finance Handbook.

Decisions were made to terminate the contract with Kirklees APSS and trial Locala School Nurse under the Healthy Child Programme. The cost of this was £2,531 per annum and covered all three year groups. The School Nurse was on site one morning per week and children who had taken 3 episodes of absence due to illness were referred to her. She also operated a drop in service for parents/carers who had concerns over health and wellbeing within the family of a whole.

This whole family approach proved to be exceptionally successful with paediatrician appointments chased up, dentists signposted, healthcare plans reviewed and general advice on a whole host of other areas such as potty training, etc. given. The School Nurse would also host advice sessions for parents on managing behaviour, routines, etc. Reception's attendance increased from 93.54% to 95.07% within the first year and up to 95.84% the following year. Continual feedback from parents and carers on the service referred to it as being 'invaluable.'

Unfortunately, due to dwindling pupil numbers and budget cuts St. John's are no longer in a position to purchase the Healthy Child Programme from Locala and have terminated the contract. It is difficult to analyse what impact this has had on attendance due to Covid restrictions but it is fair to say we have removed an integral part of our school ethos which is centred around caring for and supporting the family as a whole.