

Cork Kerry Community Healthcare  
Office of Head of Primary Care  
HSE Community Services Building  
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Co. Kerry  
V92 YA25

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Margaret Murphy O'Mahony, TD  
Dáil Éireann,  
Dublin 2

**PQ ref 51600/19**

**“To ask the Minister for Health the status of dental treatments offered to primary school children in circumstances in which children in sixth class in schools in areas of south-west County Cork have never been seen by a dentist and many are called after they leave primary education; and if he will make a statement on the matter.”**

Dear Deputy Murphy O'Mahony,

I refer to your recent representation regarding the lack of school dentists in West Cork which has been passed to me for attention.

The Primary Care Dental services team provides Dental treatment services to eligible children, medical card holders, special needs clients and others in the care of the HSE at various locations throughout Co. Cork. Children under 16 years of age are treated in HSE dental clinics and adults are treated by private dental practitioners contracted to the Health Services under the Dental Treatment Services Scheme (DTSS). Cork Kerry Primary Care Dental Service provides a school screening dental service which targets pupils in 2<sup>nd</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> classes. Within the current available staffing resource, it is not always possible to see children in their second or sixth class academic year, however, these children are offered appointments throughout their school holidays or in the next academic year. In the West Cork area, the sixth class screening programme for the academic year 2018 – 2019 was completed and the sixth class screening programme for the current academic year 2019 – 2020 has commenced.

There are various reasons why a small percentage of pupils will not take up the offer of HSE dental services and/or do not return the screening form, for example, children may prefer to attend their own private dentist or there may be a change of address for the family resulting in the appointment being sent to the wrong address. Any child who was missed, or did not attend, their sixth class dental check-up is given an appointment if/when they contact their local HSE dental clinic.

There have been a number of retirements, statutory leave and transfers of staff in Cork Dental Services in recent times. This has unfortunately had an impact on the delivery of frontline services, particularly in the West Cork area. However, the process of recruiting 3 Dental Surgeon Posts (2WTE) for the West Cork area is currently underway by the HSE's national recruitment services. In the interim a Cork city based dentist is providing a limited service in Skibbereen.

If I can be of any further assistance please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,



**Teresa O'Donovan**  
**Head of Service - Primary Care,**  
**Cork Kerry Community Healthcare**