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Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire  
Dáil Eireann  
Leinster House  
Kildare Street  
Dublin 2

**PQ 43838/20: To ask the Minister for Health the average age at which children had their first appointment under the school dental service in each of the past 15 years**

Dear Deputy Ó Laoghaire

I refer to the above Parliamentary Questions which have been referred by the Minister for Health to the Health Service Executive for direct response. I would advise the Deputy that the system does not hold data to give the average age at which children had their first appointment under the school dental service in each of the past 15 years as requested in your question.

The HSE Routine Dental Services are provided on the basis of need, with a strong emphasis on prevention. This is delivered through targeted screening and prevention for school children at certain dental developmental milestones and for special needs groups. This approach involves identifying children with the greatest needs, and the highest risks of dental disease.

As set out below, while many children have their first appointment in a planned way, there are significant numbers of children that first present for dental treatment due to symptoms such as pain/or infection. Many of these children are pre-school age, or in infant classes. Often their treatment needs involve dental extractions under General Anaesthesia.

The 1994 Dental Health Action Plan states that *'Children in specific classes, usually 2<sup>nd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> classes are targeted for preventative measure under the school based approach'*. Children in the targeted age groups are typically seen in 1st/2nd Class (7-8 year olds) and 6th Class (11-13 year olds), with some 4th Class (10 year olds) children being seen in some parts of the country.

I trust this information is of assistance to you, but if you require further clarification please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours Sincerely,

**Joseph Green**  
AND, National Oral Health Lead - Operations