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Abbey Community College

Department of Education Attendance Conference 2023

School Profile

- School amalgamation 2015
- Enrolment growth from 580 to 874
- GCSE results from 41% 5+A*-C in 2016 to 95% in 2023
- 5+A*-C inc. Maths & English from 26% in 2016 to 55% in 2023



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Attendance Overview

Poor attendance is directly linked to a range of issues including Mental Ill Health (Egger, Costello and Angold, 2003), Drug and Alcohol Use (Gase et al, 2014), Neglectful Parenting (Gase et al, 2014) and Family Conflict (McShane, Walker and Rey, 2001).

Pre-COVID – 91%

2020/21 – 89%

2021/22 – 85%

2022/23 – 82%

2023/24 – 90% Target



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Attendance Factors

| Post COVID | Research / Practice Examples |
|--|--|
| Emotional based school avoidance | DE/EA currently do not collect data to show exactly how many young people with ASD are refusing to go to school, or how many are avoiding their education because of anxiety, depression, special educational needs, disability, caring reasons, bullying or trauma. NI data illustrates a 10% bigger 'persistent absence' rate compared to England. |
| High levels of anxiety, mental health and wellbeing issues | In context to the study, Northern Ireland, Bunting et al (2020) reported that close to 1 in 2 young people aged 11-19 have experienced at least 1 ACE, with 5.7% having experienced 3 or more. |
| Access to EWS services – industrial action, recruitment challenges | The Education Authority reported 1751 children to be on their waiting list as of March 2023, 40% of all children referred to the service (EA, 2023). |
| High waiting times for services such as CAMHS | 1205 young people waited over the recommended 9 week waiting period to access CAMHS by 30 June 2023, a slight increase from 31 March 2023 with a figure of 1068 (Department of Health, 2023). |
| Access to SEN support – ASD, literacy, numeracy, behaviour support | In Northern Ireland, 1 in 20 children have a diagnosis of Autism (DHSSPS, 2023). In Abbey Community College 14% of our school community have a diagnosis of ASD and a further 8% with a diagnosis of ADHD. |
| Socio-economic disadvantage | The Northern Ireland Consumer Council Expenditure Income Tracker reported in September 2022 that the lowest-earning households in Northern Ireland, earning an average income of £12,200, have been left with £29 per week after paying bills. |

Whole School Interventions

Attendance monitoring strategies

- Parent/Guardian App, School Based Care Team discussions, Home School Visits, Head of Year/Class Tutor intervention, rigorous internal processes including the use of SIMs, Google Drive, C2k and internal school recording systems.

Rewards and Celebration

- Attendance Awards, Recognition Awards

Academic Support

- Academic Tracking, Individual Mentoring, Academic Action Plans, Use of Technology, Google Classroom

Pastoral support

- Class Tutor, Head of Year Support

HWB Interventions – counselling, mentoring

- Counselling, Mentoring, In House Social Worker, Young Carer Support Group, Care Experienced Support Groups, Health and Well-Being, Mental Health and Anti-Bullying Ambassador Programmes.

In Your Corner Programme - MBC

- Partnership Programme with the Monkstown Boxing Club as an innovative approach to education and mentoring.

Engagement with Statutory and Voluntary Organisations

- Education Welfare Service, Family Support Hubs, Start 360, Youth Justice Service, CAMHS, DAISY Project, PSNI, THRIVE Collaboration, Barnardo's Young Carers, VOYPIC, Include Youth, EA Youth Service to name a few.

Parental/Guardian Engagement & Support

- Emphasis on the 'community' including parents/guardians through a person-centred approach to understand what they as a family need to make education successful.

In House Family Support

- Community Corner stocked with hygiene products and household goods including food. Registered to sign Foodbank referrals, community furniture, uniform and school supplies alongside support and assistance to the whole family.

School Social Worker

- ACC responded to the needs of students and families through exploring how to fund and employ a school-based Social Worker
- Professionally qualified and registered via NISCC
- Commenced September 2021
- Part Time role initially which became Full Time due to the level of need



School Social Work in Northern Ireland

- BASW, NISCC, EA have met and discussed school-based social workers being employed by schools in Northern Ireland
- Peer support group established for practicing school-based social workers
- Schools in Northern Ireland currently employing school-based social workers are willing to engage in a pilot
- PhD Research specific to Northern Ireland being conducted with completion in June 2024

Having a school social worker allows schools to provide universal support to students; from those with low-level needs through to crisis intervention. This is a response to the growing level of need amongst young people coupled with the crippling economic situation both families, schools and services find themselves in.

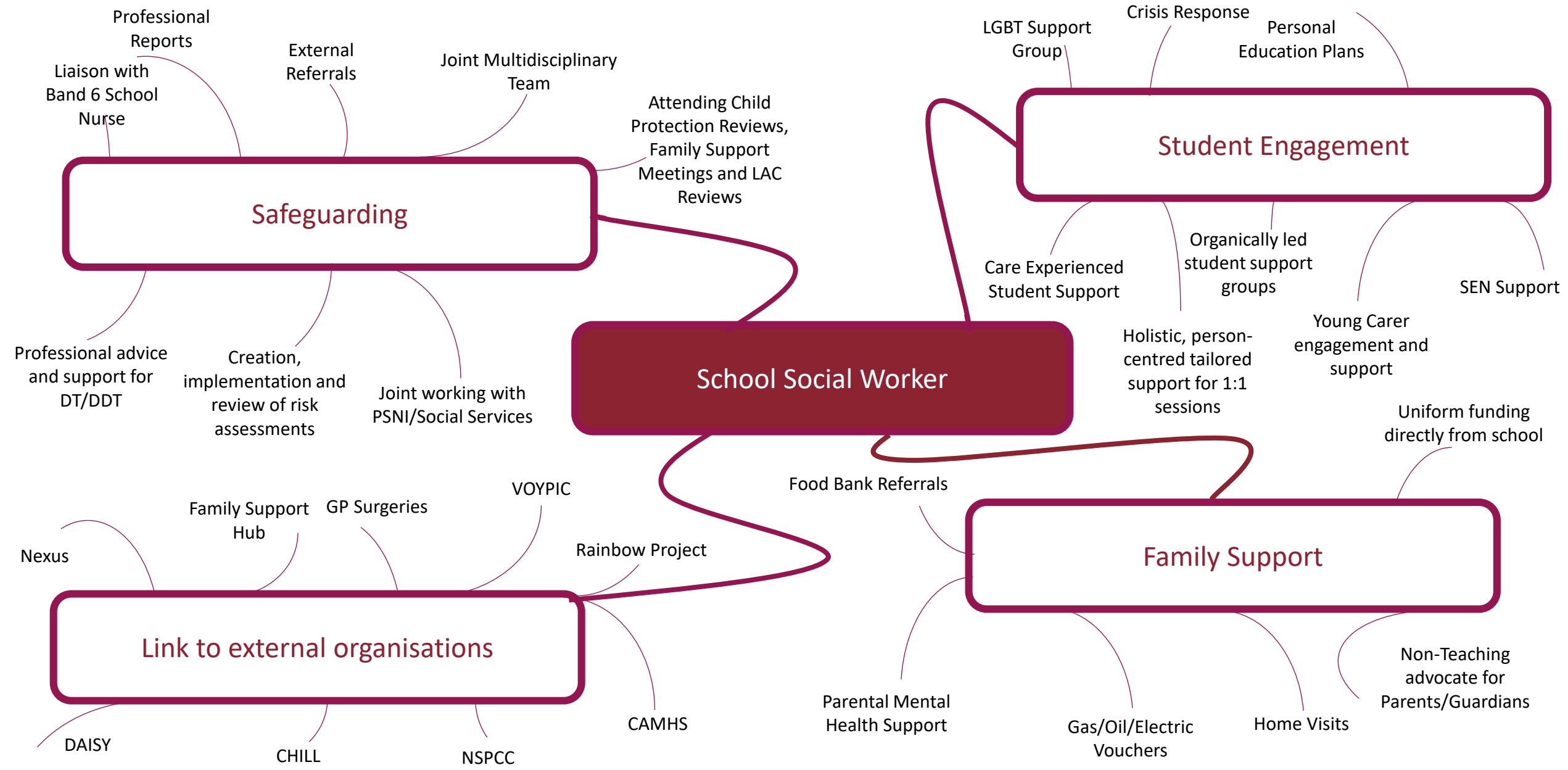
- Clinical Director, providing School Counselling Services

There were positive examples of promoting the child's best interests and need for protection was met through co-location of services, enabling professionals to work together. These included Social Work professionals working within schools, in General Practitioners (GPs) clinics and within policing, for example, in the Police Service CRU, in its Public Protection Branch and in tackling Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE), and School Nursing services within schools provided a key role in promoting a child-centred health approach.

A Pilot Joint Inspection of Child Protection Arrangements In
The Southern Health and Social Care Trust Area – June 2023



Key Duties / Responsibilities



Attendance Interventions



- **Immigration Case** – Student was in Turkey due to their visa expiring and was unable to leave. Contacted Children’s Law Centre to avail of legal advice and information of the case and passed to immigration solicitors for pro bono case. Contacted Mother to inform her of findings and offer guidance. The Safeguarding Team linked with sibling’s primary school and initiated Foodbank accessibility for the family.



- **Placed-Based Initiative** - Having Social Workers placed directly in schools allows young people and practitioners to focus on relationship-based practice. Young People have reported through conversations that they enjoy having a School Social Worker in the school as it reassures them, they can access support as and when needed. A noted impact we have observed at Abbey Community College is students who are now referring students to the School Social Worker, thus developing a culture of support without stigma.

