



22 January 2019

Re: Influenza like illness, scarlet fever and chickenpox at St Mary's.

Dear Parent/Guardian,

### **Influenza.**

We are writing to you to let you know that a number of children have been away from school with flu like symptoms.

The majority of people affected have reported a cough, heavy cold symptoms and sore throat. Some people have also had a fever. This is consistent with flu-like illness which we know is circulating elsewhere in the country. Flu is generally not a serious illness and most people who have flu make a quick recovery at home. However, it can cause serious illness in those with other health problems.

In order to reduce spread of infection it is important to keep children with any symptoms of flu-like illness away from school until they have recovered, are free of symptoms and have not had a fever for at least 24 hours. Good hand washing is also important to reduce the risk to others,

**It is important that any children or household contacts (such as grandparents or pregnant women) who fit into any of the “at risk” group list below have taken up their seasonal flu vaccine.** If you believe your child or any household member fits into the list of “at risk” groups below and has not already had their seasonal flu jab, please ensure they visit the GP to get the seasonal flu jab.

**If your child or a household member is in an “at risk” group AND has NOT had their seasonal jab and either develops symptoms of flu or has been exposed to someone who has symptoms,** they should contact their GP to discuss if treatment is necessary to prevent or reduce the severity of the illness. Antiviral medication is most effective if given within 48 hours of onset of symptoms or exposure to flu.

The following are in an “at risk” group and eligible for flu vaccination:

- those aged 65 years and over
- those aged six months to under 65 years with chronic lung, heart, kidney, liver or neurological disease, or those who are immunosuppressed and those with diabetes mellitus
- pregnant women
- those resident long term in care homes
- morbidly obese with BMI >40

Children and fit adults under the age of 65 years who are not in one of the groups mentioned above are not offered the vaccine as part of the national programme.

## Scarlet fever and chickenpox

We have also had a small number of children who have been diagnosed with suspected/confirmed scarlet fever. Although scarlet fever is usually a mild illness, it should be treated with antibiotics to minimise the risk of complications and reduce the spread to others.

The **symptoms** of scarlet fever include a sore throat, headache, fever, nausea and vomiting. This is followed by a fine red rash which typically first appears on the chest and stomach, rapidly spreading to other parts of the body. On more darkly-pigmented skin, the scarlet rash may be harder to spot, but it should feel like 'sandpaper'. The face can be flushed red but pale around the mouth.

If you think you, or your child, have scarlet fever:

See your GP or contact NHS 111 as soon as possible

Make sure that you/your child takes the full course of any antibiotics prescribed by the doctor.

Stay at home, away from nursery, school or work **for at least 24 hours after starting the antibiotic treatment**, to avoid spreading the infection. I have enclosed a fact sheet for your information.

### Complications

Children who have chickenpox or influenza at the same time as scarlet fever are more likely to develop more serious infection so parents should remain vigilant for symptoms such as a persistent high fever, cellulitis (skin infection) and arthritis (joint pain and swelling). If you are concerned for any reason please seek medical assistance immediately.

If your child has an underlying condition which affects their immune system, you should contact your GP or hospital doctor to discuss whether any additional measures are needed.

You can find more information in the attached Frequently Asked Questions and further advice can also be obtained from the Health Protection Team on 0300 303 8162 during office hours.

If you have any questions please either contact your GP or ring the Health Protection Team on: 0300 303 8162 Option 1 (Health Protection) then Option 1

Yours faithfully

Mrs J Woolley

(Headteacher)