

7th July 2009

Dear Parents/Guardian,

Your local Primary Care Trusts and the local Health Protection Agency (Cheshire & Merseyside Health Protection Unit) have reviewed the situation regarding swine flu in schools. We have recognised that there is a level of concern emerging amongst parents of school children in our area. The following advice applies to all schools without suspected cases and those with suspected or clinically confirmed cases.

- **School closure: Not recommended.**
 - Schools should not be closed as this would fail to reduce spread within the community or to those attending school.
- **Suspected / confirmed case. Should not attend school.**
 - It is strongly recommended that any pupil / staff with influenza like illness do not attend school as this increases the risk of spreading the illness within the school (see below).
- **Anti-viral drugs for contacts: Not recommended.**
 - Antiviral drugs are not recommended for contacts of suspected swine flu cases who have no symptoms, including for at risk groups (attached), as there is no evidence that it will protect children from infection.
 - Early identification of influenza like symptoms, clinical confirmation and treatment are the key public health measures for preventing spread.
- **Exclusion of pupils/staff without symptoms. Not recommended.**
 - Household and other close contacts of suspected / possible cases of swine flu including those from at risk groups should not be excluded from school, as the risk of exposure in schools is the same as in the community.
- **Confirmation of cases. Laboratory testing not recommended.**
 - At present, we are not testing for swine flu and the diagnosis is made on the basis having symptoms for influenza like illness (see attached).

Management of an increase in the number of cases / outbreak of swine flu in any school will be led by the local Health Protection Unit in collaboration with the local PCT and LA. These agencies are currently working with schools to monitor influenza like illness related absenteeism rates in schools.

We want to reassure parents that all appropriate measures are being taken to reduce the spread of swine flu within schools.

If you or your child develops symptoms of flu-like illness the advice of the Health Protection Agency is to stay at home and contact NHS Direct by phone (0845 46 47) or via the website www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk and follow the swine flu symptom checker, and then phone your GP for telephone advice. Each case will be assessed and, if necessary, treatment will be provided. More general information about swine flu can be obtained from the Department of Health public information line on 0800 1 513 513 or from the HPA website at www.hpa.org.uk.

We will be reviewing this advice regularly and will write to you if there are any changes.

Yours sincerely

Headteacher

**SYMPTOMS OF FLU
HOW TO PROTECT AGAINST INFECTION
HIGH RISK GROUPS FOR SWINE FLU**

What are the symptoms of swine flu?

The symptoms of swine influenza in people are similar to the symptoms of seasonal flu that is seen traditionally in people during the winter months and can include fever, fatigue, lack of appetite, coughing and sore throat. Some people with swine flu have also reported vomiting and diarrhoea.

What measures can I take to protect against infection? Remember Catch it, Bin it and Kill it

- General infection control practices and good respiratory hand hygiene can help to reduce transmission of all viruses, including the human swine flu. This includes: covering your nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing, using a tissue when possible
- Disposing of dirty tissues promptly and carefully
- Maintaining good basic hygiene, for example washing hands frequently with soap and water to reduce the spread of the virus from your hands to face or to other people
- Cleaning hard surfaces (e.g. door handles) frequently using a normal household cleaning product
- Making sure your children follow this advice.

Who are the “high risk” groups for swine flu?

Some people will be at greater risk of becoming more seriously ill from swine flu than others. **It is important that anyone from the following high risk groups (see below) identifies their flu symptoms and seeks medical advice early to ensure anti-viral treatment is started quickly.**

- People with:
 - Chronic lung disease
 - Chronic heart disease
 - Chronic kidney disease
 - Chronic liver disease
 - Chronic neurological disease
 - Immunosuppression (whether caused by disease or treatment)
 - Diabetes mellitus
- Patients who have had drug treatment for their asthma within the past three years
- Pregnant women
- People aged 65 years and older
- Young children under 5 years old.