



Private and confidential

8.12.22

Dear Parents/Carers,

We have been informed that a number of children who attend Westfield Primary School have been diagnosed with suspected or confirmed **scarlet fever and / or influenza (flu)**. Where both diseases are circulating at the same time there is a slight increased risk of more serious infection.

Influenza

Most children will have a mild illness and will recover at home without needing treatment. However, if your child has a complex medical history, which potentially increases their risk of severe disease (such as asthma or immunosuppression), it is important that your GP promptly assesses your child to see if they require prompt antiviral prophylaxis. If they develop any of the following symptoms: fever (38°C or greater) and flu-like symptoms (cough, sore throat, runny nose, limb/joint pain or headache), they will then advise whether your child should receive antiviral treatment.

Children with flu-like symptoms should stay off school until they are free of symptoms.

Scarlet fever

Scarlet fever is also a mild childhood illness but unlike influenza, it requires antibiotic treatment. Symptoms include a sore throat, headache, fever, nausea and vomiting, 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. As the rash fades the skin on the fingertips, toes and groin area can peel.

If you think your child has scarlet fever, you should:

- consult your GP (please remember to take this letter with you) 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.

Complications

Children who have had **influenza (flu)** or **chickenpox** recently are more likely to develop more serious infection during an outbreak of scarlet fever and so parents should remain vigilant for symptoms such as a persistent high fever, cellulitis (skin infection) and arthritis (joint redness, pain or 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 on influenza and scarlet fever on **NHS choices**: www.nhs.uk Further advice can also be obtained from the **Health Protection Team** on 0344 225 3861 or SE.AcuteResponse@phe.gov.uk.

Yours sincerely,

The South East Health Protection Team
UK Health Security Agency South East