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Head Teacher: Mr. P. Craig

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Dear Parents/Carers,

### Information for Parents on Group A Streptococcal Infections

You will have seen coverage on the news about Group A Streptococcal infections over recent days. Please be assured that severe group A streptococcal infections are exceptionally rare. This information is intended to give some background advice which you may find helpful.

#### Mild Group A Streptococcal infections

Infections caused by Group A streptococcal infections are very common and are usually mild. These include mild skin infections and sore throats, including tonsillitis. These often require no treatment; antibiotics are not necessarily required. There is generally no need for any exclusion from school in connection with, for example, a sore throat, even if this is suspected or confirmed to have been caused by Group A strep, if the child feels well enough to attend school.

#### Scarlet fever

Scarlet fever is usually a mild illness, though it typically needs to be treated with a course of antibiotics to minimise the risk of complications and reduce the spread to others. Scarlet fever is characterised by a fine red rash which typically appears first on the chest and stomach, rapidly spreading to other parts of the body. The skin can feel a bit like sandpaper, and the face can be flushed red while remaining pale around the mouth. The rash often appears after or along with symptoms such as a sore throat, headache, fever, nausea and vomiting.

Children who have recently had chickenpox are at high risk of a more severe course of illness if they catch scarlet fever. If you think you or your child has scarlet fever, please seek prompt medical assessment via NHS 111, or your GP or nurse. Any child or staff member who develops scarlet fever should stay off school until 24 hours after their first dose of antibiotics.

There is more information on scarlet fever at [nhs.uk/conditions/scarlet-fever](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/scarlet-fever)

#### Severe Group A streptococcal infections

Severe Group A streptococcal infections (also known as 'invasive Group A strep infections' or 'iGAS') are very rare, and especially so in otherwise healthy school-aged children. Severe infections are usually diagnosed following hospital admission. Current national advice for parents concerned if their child seems seriously unwell is to:

#### **Contact NHS 111 or their GP if:**

- the child is getting worse
- the child is feeding or eating much less than normal
- the child has had a dry nappy for 12 hours or more or shows other signs of dehydration
- the baby is under 3 months and has a temperature of 38C, or is older than 3 months and has a temperature of 39C or higher
- the baby feels hotter than usual when you touch their back or chest, or feels sweaty
- the child is very tired or irritable

**Call 999 or go to A&E if:**

- the child is having difficulty breathing – you may notice grunting noises or their tummy sucking under their ribs
- there are pauses when your child breathes
- the child's skin, tongue or lips are blue
- the child is floppy and will not wake up or stay awake

**Preventing infection disease**

Handwashing is a highly effective way of preventing many infections from spreading. Adults and children should frequently wash their hands with warm water and soap, particularly after using the toilet, after using a tissue to catch a cough or sneeze, and before eating. Hand sanitiser gels are not a suitable substitute for handwashing after using the toilet as they are not effective against some germs which cause vomiting and diarrhoea.

**School closures**

The Health Protection Team does not frequently or routinely advise that schools close when there are increased levels of diarrhoea and vomiting or increased numbers of cases of other winter illnesses. Closing schools does not usually provide substantial additional protection against catching illnesses which are commonly circulating in the community.

However, schools may need to close for other practical reasons, such as due to high levels of staff absence, or a need to facilitate additional cleaning. Any decision about school closures will be taken by the school's management team, and any queries regarding these should be addressed to the school.

Yours sincerely



Mr P Craig  
Headteacher

