



15<sup>th</sup> of December  
2022

Dear parent / guardian,

### Re: Recent illness in St Joseph's Catholic Primary School

We have been informed that a small number of children who attend St Joseph's Catholic Primary School have recently reported a number of different common childhood illnesses/symptoms. This letter offers some further information and advice about these, which you may find useful.

#### Scarlet fever

Scarlet fever is caused by bacteria and although 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
- stay at home, away from nursery, school or work for **at least 24 hours** after starting the antibiotic treatment, to avoid spreading the infection
- make sure that you/your child takes the full course of any antibiotics prescribed by the doctor

You can find more information at [www.nhs.uk/conditions/Scarlet-fever/](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/Scarlet-fever/)

#### Chickenpox

Chickenpox is usually a mild illness and children usually get better by themselves. Children with chickenpox should stay off school for **five days** from onset of rash and until all the lesions have crusted over.

Children who have had chickenpox recently may develop complications if they also catch scarlet fever. Parents should remain vigilant for symptoms in children who have had chickenpox such as:

- a persistent high fever
- the skin around chickenpox blisters becoming red, hot or painful (signs of infection)
- joint pain and swelling
- your child's symptoms not improving or getting worse.

If you are concerned about the symptoms above please seek medical assistance promptly. 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 at <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/chickenpox/>

### **Viral gastrointestinal illnesses**

Viruses which cause vomiting and diarrhoea to circulate among children (for example norovirus, also known as the 'winter vomiting bug') are common and usually self-limiting. If your child develops vomiting or diarrhoea, it is very important that they stay off school until **48 hours after** they last vomited or passed diarrhoea. As always, please contact your GP or NHS 111 if you are concerned or need further advice on how to manage an illness.

If you are concerned about the symptoms above, please seek medical assistance promptly. 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.

Further information can be found at: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/diarrhoea-and-vomiting/>

### **Respiratory infections including coronavirus (COVID-19)**

Children and young people who are unwell and have a high temperature should stay at home and avoid contact with other people. They can go back to childcare, school or college when they no longer have a high temperature, and they are well enough to attend.

Children and young people who have a positive test result for COVID-19 should not attend the setting for **3 days** after the day of the test.

Do not exclude individuals with mild symptoms such as a runny nose, sore throat, or mild cough, who are otherwise well.

For further information and advice please visit:  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/health-protection-in-schools-and-other-childcare-facilities>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-vaccination-resources-for-children-aged-5-to-11-years>

## General hygiene advice

The spread of most infectious illnesses is reduced through good hand hygiene. Please help your child to wash their hands frequently with warm water and soap, particularly after using the toilet, after using a tissue to catch a cough or sneeze, and before eating. Particular care should be taken when handling nappies or tissues.

Any soiled clothes, bedding and towels should be washed on the hot cycle of a washing machine and where possible cups, utensils, towels and bedding should not be shared.

## Medical advice

Most of the common viruses that affect children do not cause serious illness. However, if you are worried about the condition of your child, because, for example they have:

- A rash
- An unremitting fever
- Profuse diarrhoea and vomiting
- Bloody diarrhoea
- Appear drowsy
- Display difficulty breathing

Please take them for urgent medical assessment.

If you are concerned about any of the information in this letter or would like to discuss it further, please contact the team on 0300 303 8596.

Yours sincerely,  
**North East Health Protection Team**