

Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> December 2022

Dear Parents and Carers,

As you may be aware there have been a number of media reports highlighting the tragic deaths of young children from what is being called 'Strep A infection'. We have been looking carefully at the guidance and, just as we did during the pandemic, wanted to outline key advice, guidance and sources of information in order to keep everyone well informed.

### What is Strep A?

Strep A - Group A streptococcus (GAS) is a common bacteria that can cause infections such as scarlet fever and impetigo – it may also trigger sore throats, high temperature, nausea and aches etc.

During the winter many of us will have a Strep A infection which is basic and commonplace. However, if we feel that the symptoms go beyond the expected we should seek medical advice from the GP or 111 helpline.

If you develop scarlet fever, your GP has a duty to report that to the Health Protection Team (just like during some Covid reporting) and they monitor groups of infections/clusters to look for outbreaks – for us this would be within classes or year groups.

*If you are unsure about a developing infection at any point please do seek further medical advice.*

It is worth noting that cases of scarlet fever are currently higher than during the corresponding period in the last few years, nationally. We are hearing that scarlet fever cases are springing up locally.

**iGAS** – Invasive Group A strep – this is the much more serious and harmful version of Strep A – iGAS is a real concern and we need to be on alert for more severe cases of this type of infection. At this point we do not know of any iGAS cases in school or locally.

### Symptoms of iGAS

- Fever (a high temperature above 38°C)
- Severe muscle aches
- Localised muscle tenderness
- Redness at the site of a wound

**Scarlet fever** – as stated above this is linked to a strep A infection and we need to be looking for:

- Scarlet fever usually follows a sore throat or a skin infection, such as impetigo, caused by particular strains of streptococcus bacteria.
- Initial symptoms usually include a sore throat, headache and a high temperature (38.3C/101F or above), flushed cheeks and a swollen tongue.
- A day or two later the characteristic pinkish rash appears. It usually occurs on the chest and stomach before spreading to other areas of the body, such as the ears and neck.
- The symptoms of scarlet fever usually develop two to five days after infection, although the incubation period (the period between exposure to the infection and symptoms appearing) can be as short as one day or as long as seven days.
- The rash feels like sandpaper to touch and it may be itchy. On darker skin the rash may be more difficult to see although its rough texture should be apparent.

- It can easily be treated with antibiotics.
- Liquid antibiotics, such as penicillin or amoxicillin, are often used to treat children. These must be taken for 10 days, even though most people recover after four to five days
- It's important to be aware that your child will still be infectious for 24 hours after antibiotic treatment has begun, and therefore they shouldn't attend nursery or school during this period.
- Without antibiotic treatment, your child will be infectious for 1-2 weeks after symptoms appear. Pupils can return to school as advised by your GP taking into account the timescales and medication outlined.

Lots of us will pick up a range of infections across the winter months and it is time to revisit lots of the good habits from the pandemic and put them in place again:

- Washing hands very regularly – adults and children
- Continued in day cleaning including touch points, handles, doors/glass, tables, toilet flushes etc
- Considering close proximity groupings across the day
- Daily hoovering of carpets
- End of day wipe down on tables
- Thinking about the cleanliness and hygiene of the most used resources and toys
- Using tissues to catch coughs and sneezes (Using the arm crook if not)

As we move towards Christmas we do need to be even tighter on our routines, use as many preventative strategies as possible and – when there is any doubt– we recommend a GP visit or using 111..

Finally, whilst it is getting colder, remember that good habits around ventilation and fresh air are still advised linked to Covid and other viruses – this is in addition to the advice above which is very much tailored around Strep A and other bacterial infections. We will aim to keep classrooms well ventilated.

#### **Sources**

Guidance from the UK Health Security

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1110540/Guidelines\\_for\\_the\\_public\\_health\\_management\\_of\\_scarlet\\_fever\\_outbreaks.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1110540/Guidelines_for_the_public_health_management_of_scarlet_fever_outbreaks.pdf)

Yours Sincerely



Headteacher