

25 June 2009

Dear Parents, Guardians and Staff,

As you may be aware, cases of Swine Flu are increasing around the country and a number of schools have seen pupils and staff off sick with flu.

In the early stages of the outbreak when cases were limited and confined to small areas the Health Protection Agency did advise a number of schools to close and/or give antiviral to non-symptomatic pupils in an effort to slow the spread of the virus. The HPA will continue to give school specific advice if there are flu cases but the general approach is changing for a number of reasons.

- **Community spread**

The flu is now spreading in all parts of the community in Hammersmith and Fulham and many parts of London - so closing schools is unlikely to stop the spread.

- **Strength of the virus**

The vast majority of people who have caught swine flu have experienced relatively mild symptoms (similar to seasonal flu). Many people are recovering with no medical treatment and others are responding well to antiviral drugs.

- **Antivirals & side effects**

Taking Tamiflu is not a cure for flu. It can lessen the symptoms and reduce the length of the illness by about a day. However, it can cause unpleasant side effects including nausea. Given the mildness of the virus the NHS and HPA do not believe there is a need to give antiviral to large numbers of people as a preventative measure. Individual GPs are now considering the clinical need for close household contacts to be given antiviral as prevention if there are additional risk factors.

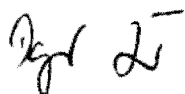
The general message is that if people are not ill there is no need for the flu to impact on their daily routine. Prolonged or short but repeated closures of schools would be hugely inconvenient to both pupils and parents – but have limited impact in stopping the spread of the flu. If your child is well there is no need to keep them off school. Equally school staff who are pregnant or in high risk groups do not need to be excluded from schools as the virus is now circulating in the community as well as schools.

**What to do if you or your child does catch flu:**

- If you or a child develops flu symptoms **stay at home and telephone your GP.**
- GPs will do a telephone assessment and if antiviral is needed someone without flu symptoms will be asked to collect it from a local centre.
- Please do not take children with flu symptoms to GP surgeries, walk-in centres etc. If antiviral medicine is required it comes in capsule form which you collect then take at home.
- Children with flu symptoms should be kept off school until they fully recover.

The attached leaflet from the Health Protection Agency gives more information on swine flu and schools. For further information you can call the Swine Flu Information Line on 0800 1513 513. For general information visit NHS Choices at [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk) For local information visit [www.hf.nhs.uk/flu](http://www.hf.nhs.uk/flu)

Yours faithfully,



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