

24 September 2009

Dear Parent/Carer

As you will be aware, nationally there is a influenza pandemic; this letter is to keep you informed of the situation occurring here at Darton High School. A small number of people at the school have been diagnosed as having the Influenza A/H1N1 virus or 'swine flu'.

The latest expert scientific advice is that individual school and nursery closures to stop the spread of disease are of limited benefit, as swine flu is now circulating more freely in the local community. National guidance has been updated so that school and nursery closures are likely now only in exceptional circumstances or if safe staffing levels are not possible due to illness and we are not in this situation.

The most important advice is that children who have symptoms of flu-like illness should stay away from school as far as possible and not mix with others until they have recovered and are free of symptoms. This is to avoid spreading the infection as much as possible.

Sources of advice and support

If you think your child has swine flu you can contact the National Pandemic Flu Service on 0800 15 13 100 or at www.pandemicflu.direct.gov.uk. They will check symptoms and may suggest a course of anti-viral drug treatment. This is designed to reduce the symptoms and help a quicker recovery. Those who come into contact with infected children who do not have symptoms, including brothers and sisters, can still come to school as usual.

Certain groups are advised to contact their doctor if they think they have swine flu, rather than contacting the National Pandemic Flu Service. These are: adults and children with serious underlying health conditions, pregnant women, children under one year of age, adults and children whose condition suddenly gets worse, or those whose condition is still getting worse after 5 days (if a child; 7 days for an adult).

Anti-viral medication is now being used for the treatment of people with symptoms of flu-like illness, and not to prevent the spread of infection. Therefore, anti-viral drugs are no longer being routinely given to children who are contacts of cases but otherwise well. If you have been advised that your child needs anti-viral treatment, **please let the school know as soon as possible**. Now we are in the treatment phase of swine flu, anti-viral drugs are no longer being used for widespread prophylaxis.

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It is important to point out that most people who have swine flu make a quick recovery at home usually within 5 to 7 days. However, you should do what you can to prevent the infection from being spread to others by ensuring your family take some simple precautions:

- Covering your nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing, using a tissue when possible.
- Disposing of dirty tissues promptly and carefully.
- Washing your hands frequently with soap and water to reduce the spread of the virus from your hands to your face or to other people.
- Cleaning hard surfaces (such as door handles and phones/mobiles) frequently using a normal cleaning product.
- Making sure your children follow this advice.

Advice is that when the symptoms have gone, there is little risk of passing on the infection to others.

If you would like further advice please contact either NHS Direct on 0845 4647 or visit the HPA website (<http://www.hpa.org.uk>), which includes advice for parents and carers of children: http://www.hpa.org.uk/web/HPAweb&HPAwebStandard/HPAweb_C/1247816586652.

If you want further information on who will be offered swine flu vaccination, please visit the Department of Health website <http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publichealth/Flu/Swineflu/InformationandGuidance/Vaccinationprogramme/index.htm>

Yours sincerely,

Mr Simon Hill
Headteacher