11/5/16

Dear Parents,

We have been informed in the last 24 hours that we have a few reported cases of ‘Slapped Cheek’ syndrome and a case of Scarlet Fever in school. Both are relatively common childhood illnesses but there are some key points contained below that we would like to bring to your attention.

**Symptoms of slapped cheek syndrome**

The symptoms of slapped cheek syndrome usually begin in the first couple of weeks after your child is exposed to the parvovirus B19 virus. The symptoms tend to follow three distinct stages.

**First stage**

The first stage is usually characterised by mild flu-like symptoms, such as:

- a high temperature (fever) of 38°C (100.4°F), although your child’s temperature will not usually rise above 38.5°C (101°F)
- sore throat
- headache
- upset stomach
- feeling tired
- itchy skin

In many cases these symptoms do not occur, or are so mild as to be barely noticeable. During the first stage of symptoms, your child will be most contagious. PLEASE DO NOT SEND YOUR CHILD TO SCHOOL.

**Second stage**

Between three to seven days after the symptoms start, your child will develop a bright red rash on both cheeks (the so-called “slapped cheeks”). The rash may be particularly noticeable in bright sunlight.

**Third stage**

The third stage of symptoms usually begins one to four days after the appearance of the “slapped cheek” rash.

During this stage, the rash will usually spread to your child’s chest, stomach, arms and thighs. The rash usually has a raised, lace-like appearance and may cause discomfort and itching.
The rash is usually more noticeable after exercise, or if your child is hot, anxious or stressed.

**By this time, your child should no longer be contagious and they will be able to return to nursery or school without the risk of passing the infection onto others.**

The rash should then pass after a few days. In rare cases it can last up to four or five weeks.

**If you are pregnant and may have come into contact with a child with “Slapped Cheeks” you should contact your doctor for further advice. Please feel free to communicate with school if you need any further information.**

**Signs and symptoms of scarlet fever**

Scarlet fever is a common childhood infection caused by Streptococcus pyogenes, or group A streptococcus (GAS). The early symptoms of scarlet fever include sore throat, headache, fever, nausea and vomiting.

After 12 to 48 hours the characteristic red, pinhead rash develops, typically first appearing on the chest and stomach, then rapidly spreading to other parts of the body, and giving the skin a sandpaper-like texture. The scarlet rash may be harder to spot on the skin of some Black and Asian people, although the 'sandpaper' feel should be present. Patients typically have flushed cheeks and pallor around the mouth. This may be accompanied by a ‘strawberry tongue’.

**Infection control advice**

In schools and nurseries it is recognised that infections can be spread through direct physical contact between children and staff and through shared contact with surfaces such as table tops, taps, toys and handles. As per national Guidance on Infection Control in Schools and other Child Care Settings, **children and adults with suspected scarlet fever should be excluded from nursery / school / work for 24 hours after the commencement of appropriate antibiotic treatment.** Good hygiene practice such as hand washing remains the most important step in preventing and controlling spread of infection.

Many thanks for your continued support,

Tim Sutcliffe
Executive Head