



UK Health
Security
Agency

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Dear Nursery Managers and Childminders,

Preventing winter illnesses and measles

As is usual during winter months, UKHSA are seeing increasing levels of winter illnesses including flu, COVID-19 and other illnesses like whooping cough. Whilst you may have seen media interest about measles in the West Midlands, the South West is currently experiencing very low levels.

We are writing to share simple steps everyone can take to reduce infections, including measles, spreading in the community – helping children make a healthy start to the year and minimising the impact of illness on attendance.

What action is suggested?

1. Please read and take note of the information provided in this letter.
2. Please share the information letter provided with your parents and guardians. You are welcome to co-sign and co-badge the letter before you send it to parents.

Key information regarding measles

There are currently increased levels of measles in the West Midlands affecting the school age population, with some children needing hospitalisation. As measles spreads very easily among those who are unvaccinated, we are likely to see cases in the South West in the coming months.

The UKHSA are working closely with local authorities, Department for Education and the NHS to monitor the situation and prepare for the possible increase in measles cases.

MMR vaccination is the best form of defence against measles and has the added advantage of also preventing rubella and mumps.

It is never too late to catch up. The MMR vaccine is free on the NHS, whatever your age. You can protect your school community, both staff and children, by encouraging uptake of the MMR vaccine which can be accessed via GP surgeries.

You can find out more information about measles and MMR at the following links:

General information: [Measles - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](http://www.nhs.uk)

Information for parents: [What to do if you think your child has measles and when to keep them off school - The Education Hub \(blog.gov.uk\)](http://blog.gov.uk)

Information on MMR: [MMR \(measles, mumps and rubella\) vaccine - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](http://www.nhs.uk)

Other winter illnesses that are currently circulating

At this time of year, other types of illnesses that circulate are respiratory infections (colds, flu, covid), whooping cough, scarlet fever and chickenpox, as cases usually peak in late winter and early spring.

People with [respiratory infections](#) can experience a range of symptoms including a runny nose, high temperature, cough and sore throat. For most individuals, these illnesses will not be serious and they soon recover.

Symptoms of [scarlet fever](#) include sore throat, fever, swollen neck glands, a bumpy rash on the tummy, flushed cheeks and 'strawberry tongue'. Children with scarlet fever should seek medical advice and if diagnosed stay away from nursery or school for 24 hours after the first dose of antibiotics.

Chickenpox is highly contagious, with the most common symptom being an itchy, spotty rash. Children with [chickenpox](#), should stay away from school or nursery until all the spots have crusted over.

[Whooping cough](#) starts with cold like symptoms and progresses to bouts of coughing which may make a 'whoop' sound (a gasp for breath). Children diagnosed with whooping cough should stay away from school or nursery until they have completed 48 hours of appropriate antibiotic treatment

Actions you can take to prevent the spread of infections

What to do if you have a case of measles in your setting

If you are told that a child or staff member has seen their doctor who has diagnosed them with measles please contact us on **0300 303 8162** so that we can give you the appropriate advice and support. Please ensure they are off school/nursery but please do not send out letters to parents without speaking to us. Once we have found out further information about the case, we will provide letters for parents with the appropriate advice if this is necessary.

Teach good hygiene habits

Encouraging good hand-washing habits is one of the most effective ways to stop the spread. Using a tissue to catch coughs and sneezes, binning it and then washing hands will help prevent infection from spreading.

Our [e-bug](#) resources for all ages can help you to explain and discuss hygiene habits – and why they are important – to your child or teenager.

Reinforce messages of when to keep children in school

While children are encouraged to stay in education or childcare with symptoms such as a runny nose, sore throat or slight cough (if otherwise well and do not have a high temperature), children should stay home from school or nursery if they're displaying the following symptoms:

- Children and staff who have a **fever and are unwell** they should stay home from school or nursery until the fever has passed and they are well enough to attend.
- Children and staff who have **diarrhoea and/or vomiting** should stay off school or nursery for at least 48 hours after their symptoms clear up – this will help stop the spread of stomach bugs.

Get vaccinated

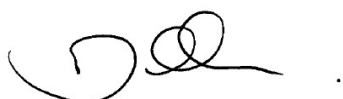
Vaccination offers the best protection against many infections, including flu, measles and whooping cough.

Being up to date with vaccinations, especially MMR and whooping cough, is also important for parents or staff who are pregnant. Staff and parents can take a look at the [childhood vaccination schedule](#) to make sure that vaccinations are up to date.

Some useful resources

- A whole host of advice and resources on infections can be found at [UKHSA Infection Protection and Winter Readiness and Control Toolkit for Early Years and Education Settings - South West Councils \(swcouncils.gov.uk\)](#)
- NHS UK provides easily accessible guidance for parents to [help manage winter illness at home](#).
- e-bug teaches children and young people about infections and infection prevention [Home \(e-bug.eu\)](#)
- A parent friendly website where you can learn about vaccines [Home | Vaccine Knowledge Project \(ox.ac.uk\)](#)

Yours faithfully,



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