



30/06/2022

HPZ Ref 388399

## Re: Scarlet Fever and Chickenpox at Westfields School

Dear Parent/Guardian and/or Staff,

The South East Health Protection Team have been informed that a small number of children who attend Westfields School have been diagnosed with suspected scarlet fever. We have also been notified of several cases of chickenpox in children attending the school.

### Scarlet fever

Although scarlet fever is usually a mild illness, it should be treated with antibiotics to minimise the risk of complications and reduce the spread to others.

The **symptoms** of scarlet fever include a sore throat, headache, fever, nausea and vomiting. This is followed by a fine red rash which typically first appears on the chest and stomach, rapidly spreading to other parts of the body. On more darkly-pigmented skin, the scarlet rash may be harder to spot, but it will still feel like 'sandpaper'. The face can be flushed red but pale around the mouth.

If you think you, or your child, have scarlet fever:

- see your GP (please remember to take this letter with you) or contact NHS 111 as soon as possible
- make sure that you/your child takes the full course of any antibiotics prescribed by the doctor.
- stay at home, away from school or work for **at least 24 hours after starting the antibiotic treatment**, to avoid spreading the infection.

### **Complications**

Children who have had **chickenpox** or **influenza ('flu')** recently are more likely to develop more serious infection (caused by the bacteria which causes scarlet fever, Group A streptococcus) during an outbreak of scarlet fever and so parents should remain vigilant for symptoms such as a persistent high fever, cellulitis (skin infection) and arthritis (joint pain and swelling). If you are concerned for any reason, please seek medical assistance immediately and take this letter with you.

## Chickenpox

Chickenpox is an acute generalised viral disease, which is highly infectious. It is usually a mild disease, and the child makes a full recovery. If you have already had the infection, then you are immune and won't get it again. If you have not previously had it the disease can rarely be much more serious: notably in adults, particularly pregnant women; in infants, and in any immunosuppressed individuals.

The main **symptom** of chickenpox is a rash in which groups of small, red, itchy and sometimes painful, fluid filled (blister-like) spots appear on many parts of the body. After a few days the spots burst or dry out and then crust over. In addition to the rash, a child may also have a slightly raised temperature, but in general does not appear very ill.

Chickenpox is transmitted directly by personal contact or droplet spread. Children are infectious from 1-2 days prior to the start of the rash and continue to be so until all lesions are crusted (usually about 5 days). Children should therefore be kept away from school **until 5 days after the onset of the rash or until all spots are crusted over if longer than 5 days.**

The virus can remain dormant in the body for many years and may reactivate later in life causing Shingles.

If your child has an underlying condition which affects their immune system, you should contact your GP or hospital doctor to discuss whether any additional measures are needed.

You can find more information on chickenpox and scarlet fever on NHS choices: [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

Yours sincerely,

UKHSA South East Health Protection Team  
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