



Protecting and improving the nation's health

Schools, preschools and nurseries
South West England

21st September 2016

Dear Head Teacher or Manager,

Measles

You may be aware that measles is circulating in many areas across the country; there continue to be cases in many parts of the South West. Transmission is occurring most in areas with a lower uptake of MMR vaccine; in particular parts of Devon, Somerset and Dorset. The majority of cases are of secondary school age but people of all ages are being affected. Following an outbreak in South Devon in the summer we continue to see the majority of our cases in Devon.

Measles is a highly infectious viral illness spread through coughing and sneezing and close personal contact. Most people feel very unwell but do recover completely from measles, however, on rare occasions there can be serious complications.

The first stage of measles includes a runny nose, conjunctivitis (red eyes), a cough and an increasing fever that comes and goes. A rash appears on day 3 or 4 while the individual is still feverish and miserable.

Anyone with suspected measles should be excluded from school or work until five days after the rash first appears.

This is an opportunity to remind people that the MMR vaccine offers a high level of protection against measles. The first dose should be given at 12 months of age and the second with the pre-school booster, but if these have been missed it is never too late to have them. Two doses are required to provide a high level of protection. This is important for the protection of the individual and also to protect those who cannot be immunised because of age, pregnancy or an underlying medical condition causing immunosuppression. For these vulnerable people, measles can be a particularly serious disease.

If parents are unsure if their child/children have been fully immunised, they can check with their GP surgery and make an appointment to receive any doses of MMR vaccine they may have missed to ensure they have the 2 doses to provide protection against measles and also rubella and mumps.

Unless advised otherwise, parents should follow the recommended NHS vaccination schedule;
<http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/vaccinations/pages/vaccination-schedule-age-checklist.aspx>

MMR is also beneficial if given within 72 hours of exposure to the virus.

If parents or carers do report that their children have signs or symptoms of measles, please ask them to contact their GP to seek medical advice. Please ask them to telephone the GP surgery before visiting and tell the receptionist that the person may have measles so that the surgery can ensure that arrangements are made to avoid exposing other patients to a potential infection.

It would also be helpful if you could ask for their permission for you to pass on the child's details to the Health Protection Team (0300 303 8162).

You may wish to use the following message for parents.

Further information is available from NHS Choices:

<http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/measles/Pages/Introduction.aspx>

Information about the MMR vaccine can be found by visiting

<http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/vaccinations/pages/mmr-vaccine.aspx>

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sarah Harrison', written in a cursive style.

Dr Sarah Harrison, Consultant in Health Protection

Message for parents

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