IMPORTANT INFORMATION - Scarlet Fever

Dear Parent / Carer,

There has been a case of suspected Scarlet fever reported to us.

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.

What is scarlet fever?
Scarlet fever is a common childhood infection caused by the bacteria Streptococcus pyogenes. The symptoms are non-specific in early illness and may include sore throat, headache, fever, nausea and vomiting. After 12 to 48 hours the characteristic red rash develops, typically first appearing on the chest and stomach, and rapidly spreading to other parts of the body, giving the skin a sandpaper-like texture. Most children have flushed cheeks and a swollen red tongue.

How do you get it?
Scarlet fever is highly contagious, and the bacteria are present in the mouth, throat and nose of an affected person. The disease is spread by coughing and sneezing, and by contact with things such as tables, cups or pens which have been contaminated with saliva or nasal secretions of an affected person. It takes 2-5 days to develop symptoms after being infected.

What are the complications?
Although scarlet fever is usually a mild illness, there is a small risk of developing complications such as an ear infection, throat abscess, pneumonia, sinusitis or meningitis in the early stages of infection. On rare occasions, at a later stage, the disease may lead to bone or joint problems, liver, kidney or heart complications.

What is the treatment?
Antibiotic treatment is recommended for cases of scarlet fever.

How can you prevent scarlet fever?
Although scarlet fever is highly contagious, you can help to reduce the spread of infection by encouraging handwashing at the appropriate times, and by not sharing eating utensils or towels with an infected person. All contaminated tissues should be disposed of immediately, followed by handwashing.
Who should be kept away from school?

Any child that is unwell should be excluded from school. Children with scarlet fever can return to school 24 hours after starting antibiotics if they are well enough. The parents of any child with a rash illness should be advised to consult their General Practitioner.

Should siblings of children with scarlet fever be kept away from school?

No, children who are well may attend school as usual.

Are any precautions required for pregnant parents / members of staff?

No. There is no evidence that scarlet fever in pregnancy poses a risk to the baby.

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

- See your GP 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 for at least 24 hours after starting the antibiotic treatment, to avoid spreading the infection

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 by contacting South East Wales Health Protection 029 20402478 or online at http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/Scarlet-fever/Pages/Introduction.aspx

If your child does have a GP confirmed case of Scarlet Fever, please let us know at the school.

Steve Rees
5.12.14