



Protecting and improving the nation's health

Ref: HPZ 218731

3 February 2020

Dear Parents and Guardians,

Whooping Cough (Pertussis) at Calton Primary School

I am writing to inform you that we have been notified of some confirmed and suspected cases of Whooping Cough (Pertussis) at the school.

The purpose of this letter is to give you information about the disease, how it spreads and how it can be prevented. Further information is also provided in the leaflet enclosed.

The early symptoms of whooping cough are similar to a common cold with a runny nose, low fever, sneezing and mild occasional coughing, progressing to fits of coughing ending in the characteristic intake of breath (whoop) or vomiting.

However, particularly in immunised or older children and adults, whooping cough may cause milder symptoms and may not always cause the typical symptoms of whoop or vomiting after each coughing bout. The cough may last for several weeks and is sometimes known as the "100-day cough".

Whooping cough is generally treated with antibiotics – whilst they are unlikely to change the symptoms unless taken very early in the disease, they can help to reduce the likelihood of passing the infection on to others.

Antibiotics are only recommended for the *prevention* of infection in children and adults if they are particularly vulnerable (unimmunised or partially immunised infants or babies or pregnant mothers) or there is an ongoing risk of transmission to people in specific at-risk groups (e.g. healthcare or nursery workers).

If you think your child has whooping cough, then you should seek advice from your family doctor (please do not let people with suspected whooping cough sit in the waiting room).

Infectious period

People are infectious with whooping cough, from the time the symptoms begin to **three weeks after the onset of symptoms** if no antibiotics are taken, or **until they have taken 2 days of the appropriate antibiotics**.

During the infectious period (see paragraph above), they should stay away from school if it is term time, and stay away from others particularly unimmunised infants, young babies, pregnant mothers, or people who work with any of these groups.

Vaccination

This is a good opportunity to make sure your child and the rest of your family are up to date with your vaccinations. **If you are not sure whether your child is up to date with all doses of the vaccine, please check with your GP surgery.**

I would also like to remind pregnant mums that it is recommended that they are vaccinated against whooping cough (pertussis), preferably between weeks 20-32 of pregnancy, in order to protect their newborn baby.

Further information is available at:

<http://www.nhs.uk/Planners/vaccinations/Pages/Vaccinationchecklist.aspx>

If you have any questions please contact the South West Health Protection Team on 0300 303 8162 (select option 1, then option 1).

Yours sincerely

Sarah King
Senior Health Protection Practitioner