

## SUTTON CE (VC) PRIMARY SCHOOL

16 March 2016

Dear Parent/Carer

We have been informed that a small number of children who attend Sutton CE (VC) Primary School have been diagnosed with confirmed scarlet fever, slapped cheek or chickenpox.

### Chickenpox

Chickenpox is a mild and common childhood illness that most children catch at some point. It causes a rash of red, itchy spots that turn into fluid-filled blisters. They then crust over to form scabs, which eventually drop off. To prevent spreading the infection, keep children off school until all the spots have crusted over.

For most children, chickenpox is a mild illness that gets better on its own. But some children can become more seriously ill and need to see a doctor. Contact your GP straight away if your child develops any abnormal symptoms, for example:

- if the blisters on their skin become infected
- if your child has a pain in their chest or has difficulty breathing.

We would also like to take this opportunity to remind you of the signs, symptoms and actions to be taken if you become aware of an outbreak of scarlet fever following the recent increase in national levels.

### Scarlet fever

Scarlet fever is also a mild childhood illness but unlike chickenpox, it requires antibiotic treatment. Symptoms include a sore throat, headache, fever, nausea and vomiting, 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 should feel like 'sandpaper'. The face can be flushed red but pale around the mouth. As the rash fades the skin on the fingertips, toes and groin area can peel.

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

- See your GP 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 recently are more likely to develop more serious infection 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. If you are concerned for any reason please seek medical assistance immediately.

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.

## Slapped Cheek syndrome

Children with slapped cheek syndrome won't notice any early symptoms, but most children will have the following symptoms for a few days:

- a slightly high temperature (fever) of around 38C (100.4F)
- a runny nose
- a sore throat
- a headache
- an upset stomach
- feeling generally unwell.

The infection is most contagious during this initial period.

After a few days, a distinctive bright red rash on both cheeks (the so-called "slapped cheeks") normally appears.

By the time this rash develops, the condition is no longer contagious.

After another few days, a light pink rash may also appear on the chest, stomach, arms and thighs. This often has a raised, lace-like appearance and may be itchy.

The rashes will normally fade within a week or two, although occasionally the body rash may come and go for a few weeks after the infection has passed. This can be triggered by exercise, heat, anxiety or stress.

If your child is feeling unwell, you can try the following to ease the symptoms:

- rest and drink plenty of fluids
- for a fever, headaches or joint pain, you can take painkillers, such as paracetamol or ibuprofen
- to reduce itchiness, you can take antihistamines or use an emollient (moisturising lotion).

Unless your child is feeling unwell, there's no need to stay away from school once the rash has developed, as the infection is no longer contagious by this point.

It's a good idea to notify the school office about the infection, so children who develop early symptoms can be spotted quickly and vulnerable people can be made aware that they may need to get medical advice.

You can find more information on chickenpox, slapped cheek and scarlet fever on **NHS choices**: [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk) Further advice can also be obtained from the **Health Protection Team** on 0844 225 3546 during office hours.

Yours sincerely

Cill Gilbert  
Headteacher