

Dear Headteacher,

### **Winter readiness / flu**

I am writing to you to thank you for all you do to help keep our communities protected from several contagious and potentially serious diseases.

For the upcoming winter season, it is particularly important to protect our children and the wider community from influenza (flu) as COVID-19 is still circulating. Vaccination (immunisations) builds children's immunity to protect against such illness.

Pupils and staff in schools are susceptible to infections which increase over the winter months, such as the flu and tummy bugs (e.g. norovirus). These can be very infectious and cause outbreaks in school settings due to the close contact amongst pupils and staff. The spread of these illnesses can be limited by improving infection control practices within the school.

Immunisations are the safest and most effective way of protecting children from vaccine-preventable diseases. Some of these serious diseases such as measles and flu are deadly or can cause lasting damage to a person's health.

I understand that for religious reasons your school policy is not to allow the school-aged immunisation service to deliver vaccines in school. I would be very grateful if you could send my letter to all your parents/carers and post it on your website or wherever appropriate so that, if they wish, they can take their child to be immunised at one of the clinics the school-aged immunisation service offers.

[letters-for-parents-avanti-schools-2021 \(harrow.gov.uk\)](https://www.harrow.gov.uk/letters-for-parents-avanti-schools-2021)

The nasal vaccine contains a processed form of gelatine (porcine gelatine), which is used in a range of essential medicines. The gelatine helps to keep the vaccine stable, so that the vaccine can provide the best protection against flu. If a child is at high risk from flu because of one or more medical conditions or treatments and cannot have the nasal flu vaccine, they should have the injected flu vaccine. If their parents/carers do not accept the use of porcine gelatine in medical products, they should discuss their options with their nurse or doctor.

Please read the latest guidance from Public Health England on flu vaccination this winter for headteachers:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1006320/PHE\\_12053\\_flu\\_vaccination\\_programme\\_briefing\\_for\\_headteachers\\_2021\\_2022.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1006320/PHE_12053_flu_vaccination_programme_briefing_for_headteachers_2021_2022.pdf)

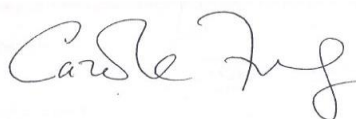
### **Guidance for infection control in your settings:**

1. If two or more children or staff members have symptoms of flu or norovirus linked by time and place, contact the PHE NWL Health Protection team promptly: 020 3326 1658. They are available 7 days a week and welcome this important information.

2. Encourage your children and staff to be immunised against flu. Pre-school children aged 2 and 3 will be offered the flu vaccination every year by their GP. This year, all children in Reception to Year 11 will be offered the flu vaccination by the immunisation team.
3. Please note that all London general practices have adapted their delivery of vaccinations to ensure that they are safely vaccinating children in COVID-19 secure venues with social distancing, Personal Protective Equipment and infection control measures in place.
4. If possible, have an isolation room for children who have symptoms and make sure staff have access to personal protective equipment (PPE) if they are providing close personal care to an ill child.
5. Maintain an up-to-date list of children at risk (this can help you remind those children/parents and also help in the response if there is an outbreak).
6. Encourage your children and staff to be immunised against measles, mumps and rubella infection (MMR) and get the booster injection from the age of 3 years and 4 months. If adults are not sure if they are fully immunised, they should check with their GP. Remember it is never too late to get the MMR vaccine.
7. Regularly remind parents/carers to keep their child away from setting if they have symptoms of flu-like illness, COVID-19 or diarrhoea and/or vomiting or any other infectious disease.
8. Publicise good hygiene around the setting with these posters and leaflets:
  - a. Catch it, bin it, kill it: <https://www.england.nhs.uk/south/wp-content/uploads/sites/6/2017/09/catch-bin-kill.pdf> and
  - b. Hand-washing poster: <https://www.england.nhs.uk/south/wp-content/uploads/sites/6/2017/09/hand-hygiene-poster.jpg>
  - c. Protecting your child against flu leaflet: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/999276/PHE\\_protecting\\_your\\_child\\_against\\_flu\\_leaflet\\_information\\_for\\_parents.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/999276/PHE_protecting_your_child_against_flu_leaflet_information_for_parents.pdf)
  - d. Flu vaccine who should have it and why leaflet: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1005123/PHE\\_12053\\_flu\\_vaccination\\_2021\\_2022\\_leaflet.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1005123/PHE_12053_flu_vaccination_2021_2022_leaflet.pdf)

Thank you for your support.

Yours faithfully



Carole Furlong

Director of Public Health