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Date: xx/xx/xxxx

Dear Parent,

As autumn and winter approach, it is likely that there will be increasing numbers of people affected by typical winter illnesses, such as diarrhoea and vomiting, influenza and scarlet fever. This letter provides advice for pupils, parents and staff on how to reduce the risk of catching these common bugs.

**General hygiene**

Handwashing is a highly effective way of preventing many infections from spreading. Pupils and staff should frequently wash their hands with warm water and soap, particularly after using the toilet, after using a tissue to catch a cough or sneeze, and before eating. As they are not effective against some germs which cause gastrointestinal illnesses, hand sanitiser gels are not a suitable substitute for handwashing after using the toilet.

**Knowing when your child is too ill to come to school**

It can sometimes be tricky to know whether to keep your child off school when they are unwell. Further guidance for specific illnesses can be found here: <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/is-my-child-too-ill-for-school/>. It is important that you follow the exclusion advice provided as some infections can spread easily in school. If you are concerned about an illness, you or your child has developed, please contact NHS 111 or your GP or nurse in the usual way for further advice.

**Vaccination**

Vaccination offers the best form of protection from infectious diseases, reducing the risk of severe illness and helping to prevent spread. Please check that your child is up to date with their childhood vaccinations including their pre-school booster to ensure that they are well protected. A checklist of vaccinations can be found here: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/vaccinations/> and you can contact your GP for further advice.

This year’s Autumn flu and COVID-19 vaccine programme will start in September. The flu nasal spray vaccine is free for children in primary schools and in secondary schools up to year 11. You will receive information from the School Age Immunisation Service asking you to give your consent for your child to have their free vaccination at school. Please complete this as soon as possible and contact the service to arrange to attend a mop-up clinic if your child misses the scheduled session in school due to illness. Further information can be found here: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/vaccinations/child-flu-vaccine/>

**School closures**

Schools are not frequently or routinely advised to close when there are increased levels of diarrhoea and vomiting or numbers of cases of other winter illnesses. Closing schools does not usually provide substantial additional protection against catching illnesses which are commonly circulating in the community.

However, schools may need to close for other practical reasons, such as due to high levels of staff absence, or a need to undertake additional cleaning. Any decision about school closures will be taken by the school’s management team, and any queries regarding these should be addressed to the school.