

From the Local Education Office – June 2009

Dear parent/carer

You may be aware that on the advice of the Health Protection Agency All Hallows Catholic School will be closed from the 30 June 2009 for one week. This is due to a number of pupils who became ill following a school trip to Germany last week. We are not aware that any of them had been in contact with a case of swine flu; but a number of them have since been confirmed as having swine flu. The risk is considerably lower for pupils in other schools and any pupils who develop flu-like symptoms should be treated as outlined below and parents should inform the child's school, so that the situation can be monitored.

The Health Protection Agency has informed the Local Authority that it has become apparent over the last few weeks that swine flu – so far, at least – is no worse than ordinary seasonal flu. There is, therefore, no need to be particularly alarmed about it, or to take any steps that would not normally be taken during the routine, winter, influenza season. We are therefore recommending that we act almost exactly as if seasonal flu were circulating. Our advice is as follows

For pupils who have flu-like symptoms.

If there is no member of an 'at risk group' in the pupil's household (or if the pupil's symptoms started more than 7 days ago).

If neither the pupil, nor any member of their close household contacts is in an 'at risk' group for flu, **they should stay at home, avoid contact with others until 7 days from the onset of symptoms**, and self-medicate with paracetamol as with normal flu-like illness. They do not need to be swabbed, or to contact their doctor, any more than with ordinary seasonal flu, unless they become seriously ill.

If somebody in the pupil's household is in an 'at risk' group.

If a member of the pupil's household is in an 'at risk' group for flu, all the household contacts should be given a preventive dose of antiviral medication (or a treatment dose if they have become ill, and if this can be done within 48 hours of the onset of their symptoms)*.

Similarly, if the pupil's symptoms came on less than 48 hours previously*, they should be started on antiviral treatment.

* The evidence shows that treatment is most effective the sooner it is started, and that there is little benefit if it is started after 48 hours. If a patient's symptoms started more than 48 hours previously, however, and they remain seriously ill, or are deteriorating, antiviral treatment may be considered.

'At risk' groups and background information

For the purpose of this guidance, people 'at risk' are defined as those who have one of more of the following:

- chronic respiratory disease (including asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease)
- chronic heart disease
- chronic renal disease
- chronic liver disease
- chronic neurological conditions
- diabetes mellitus.

For further information contact NHS Direct - www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk telephone: 0845 4647