



Ref: KM/207471

Date 18th March 2019

To Parents / Guardians and Staff,

**Re: Suspected scarlet fever and chickenpox outbreak at Fort Pitt Grammar School,
Rochester, Chatham ME4 6TJ**

We have been informed that a small number of children who attend the above school have been diagnosed with suspected / confirmed scarlet fever and / 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 for at least five days after the rash first appears or until fully crusted.

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

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 your child has scarlet fever, you should:

- consult your GP. Please remember to take this letter with you
- make sure that you/your child takes the full course of any antibiotics prescribed by the doctor;
- stay at home, away from nursery, school or work for **at least 24 hours after starting the antibiotic treatment**, to avoid spreading the infection

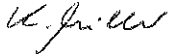
Complications

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.

You can find more information on chickenpox and scarlet fever on **NHS choices**: www.nhs.uk
Further advice can also be obtained from the **Health Protection Team** on 0344 225 7968 during office hours.

Yours sincerely,



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