



Our ref:

Tel: 01302 734911

Email: PHEnquiries@doncaster.gov.uk

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To:

- Head Teachers of all Schools in Doncaster

Dear Head Teacher,

Back-to-school advice for schools and parents/carers

Thank you for continuing to look after the health of our children and young people at your school. I would greatly appreciate if you can also share this letter with parents/carers of children in your school.

Schools and parents are urged to take simple steps to give their children the best start to the new school term and protect their communities following the Christmas break.

As levels of winter illnesses including flu, COVID-19 and norovirus continue to rise, schools and parents/carers are being reminded of 5 simple steps they can take to reduce viruses and other infections spreading in the community – helping their children make a healthy start to the year and minimising the impact of illness on attendance as schools head back and parents return to work.

Teach good hygiene habits

Encouraging good hand-washing habits is one of the most effective ways to stop the spread. Regularly wash hands in soap and warm water for 20 seconds or use hand sanitiser when convenient. Please note that sanitizer doesn't work on Norovirus / stomach germs!

Using a tissue to catch coughs and sneezes, binning it and then washing hands will help prevent infection from spreading.

Measures can be taken to prevent and control airborne spread infections, such as [ventilation](#), to prevent respiratory particles from spreading where there is no close contact between people.

[e-bug](#) resources for all ages can help you to explain and discuss hygiene habits – and why they are important – to your child or teenager.

Stopping the spread of stomach bugs

Along with rising cases of norovirus, there are also increase in other gastrointestinal infections, such as Shiga toxin-producing E.coli.

If you or your child have diarrhoea and vomiting, washing your hands with soap and warm water and using bleach-based products to clean surfaces will help stop infections from spreading. Don't prepare food for others if you have symptoms or for 48 hours after symptoms stop.

If you are unwell, you should avoid visiting people in hospitals and care homes to avoid passing on the infection to those more vulnerable in these settings. Do not return to work, school or nursery until 48 hours after your symptoms have stopped.

Spot the signs of when to keep your child at home

While children are encouraged to stay in education or childcare with symptoms such as a runny nose, sore throat or slight cough (if otherwise well and do not have a high temperature), children should stay home from school or nursery if they're displaying the following symptoms:

- If your child has a fever and is unwell, they should stay home from school or nursery until the fever has passed and they are well enough to attend.
- If your child has diarrhoea and/or vomiting, they should stay off school or nursery for at least 48 hours after their symptoms clear up – this will help stop the spread of stomach bugs.
- At this time of year, other types of illnesses that circulate are scarlet fever and chickenpox, as cases usually peak in late winter and early spring.
- Symptoms of [scarlet fever](#) include sore throat, fever, swollen neck glands, a bumpy rash on the tummy, flushed cheeks and 'strawberry tongue'. If you suspect your child has scarlet fever, contact your local GP; and if diagnosed stay away from nursery or school for 24 hours after the first dose of antibiotics.
- Chickenpox is highly contagious, with the most common symptom being an itchy, spotty rash. If your child has [chickenpox](#), keep them off school until all the spots have crusted over.

Get vaccinated

Vaccination offers the best protection against flu and is given as a quick and painless nasal spray for children. However, vaccine uptake amongst pre-school children is one of the lowest, despite the illness being more serious for this ages group in some cases.

Children eligible for the flu vaccine include:

- children aged 2 to 3 years old on 31 August in 2023
- all primary school-aged children (reception to year 6)
- secondary school-aged children (year 7 to year 11)

- children aged 6 months and older with long-term health conditions

Similar to the flu vaccine, there has been a drop in uptake of routine childhood immunisations, which protect children against diseases such as measles, mumps, rubella, diphtheria and polio. You can take a look at the [childhood vaccination schedule](#) to make sure your child is up to date with all their vaccinations.

Scabies

Schools and parents are reminded to be aware of scabies in their children and young people. [Scabies](#) is a skin infection caused by tiny mites that burrow in the skin. The appearance of the rash varies but most people have tiny pimples and nodules on their skin. The scabies mites are attracted to skin folds such as the webs of the fingers. Burrows may also be seen on the wrists, palms, elbows, genitalia and buttocks.

Spread is most commonly by direct contact with the affected skin. The rash usually spreads across the whole body, apart from the head. Scabies remains infectious until treated.

Exclude affected children from nursery or primary school settings until after the first treatment has been completed. Older children can attend school settings with advice to avoid close skin contact with others until after the first treatment has been completed.

If there are 2 or more cases of scabies within your school contact UK Health Security Agency on **0113 386 0300**.

Use NHS resources

NHS UK provides easily accessible guidance for parents to [help manage winter illness at home](#).

Thank you.



Dr Victor Joseph, MPH, Dip Epid(FPH), FFPH, FRSPH, Dip Management, PhD
Consultant in Public Health