

Dear Parents / Carers

Due to recent increases of Strep A infections among children, we are writing to you to advise of key symptoms to monitor with your child, steps to follow, should you have concerns and the steps we are taking to support infection control. Scarlet fever is a common childhood infection caused by *Streptococcus pyogenes* (also known as group A *Streptococcus* [GAS]). These bacteria may be found on the skin, throat and other sites where they can live without causing problems. Under some circumstances GAS can cause non-invasive infections such as pharyngitis, impetigo, and scarlet fever.

Signs and Symptoms

The symptoms of scarlet fever can be non-specific in early illness, but parents and carers should keep monitor the following:

- Parents/carers and academy staff should look out for early symptoms of scarlet fever in children which include sore throats, headaches, fever, nausea and vomiting.
- After 12 to 48 hours the characteristic red, pinhead rash develops, typically first appearing on the chest and stomach and then rapidly spreading to other parts of the body giving the skin a sandpaper-like texture.
- The scarlet rash may be harder to spot on darker skin, although the 'sandpaper' feel should be present.
- Children will also typically have flushed cheeks and pallor around the mouth, which may be accompanied by a 'strawberry tongue'.
- During convalescence, peeling of the skin may occur at the tips of fingers and toes and less often over wide areas of the trunk and limbs.

Managing Infection control

GAS and associated infections are spread by close contact with an infected person and can be passed on through coughs and sneezes or via a wound. To mitigate the spread of infection we are increasing the strength of cleaning products and re-introducing elements of touch point cleaning. To assist with infection control children should be encouraged to do the following:

- Wash their hands properly with soap and warm water for 20 seconds.
- Use a tissue to catch coughs and sneezes and ensure these are placed in a bin to stop the spread of infection.
- If feeling unwell, children should not attend the academy until symptoms subside
- Any children with suspected scarlet fever should stay at home until at least 24 hours after the start of antibiotic treatment to avoid spreading the infection to others.

If you have concerns about symptoms or suspect your child may have scarlet fever, please contact NHS 111 online, call NHS 111 or contact your GP as early treatment with antibiotics is important to reduce the risk of complications, such as pneumonia or a blood stream infection.

We do not wish to alarm anyone or cause concern at this stage as we are monitoring the situation closely in our setting, maintaining contact with the UK Health and Security Agency (UKHSA) to ensure we implement control measures as required and will update you if anything changes.

Yours sincerely

Miss E. Phillips

Principal