

7th December 2022

R.E. Group A Strep Infection Guidance

Dear Parents, Carers and Colleagues

I do very much hope that this letter finds you well and looking forward to the festive season.

As you will undoubtedly be aware, nationally we are seeing a higher number of cases of Group A Strep than usual this year. As with our approach to COVID-19, the Trust will look to minimise the impact of this on our schools by stringently following official guidance. The Department for Education is yet to issue its own advice, but is directing schools to guidance from the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA).

‘Group A Streptococci (GAS) are a type of bacteria. Many people carry these bacteria harmlessly in their throat or on their skin, and have no symptoms of illness. Infection occurs when people with GAS develop symptoms. The most common symptoms of GAS infection are: a mild sore throat, a red rash, flu-like symptoms and muscle tenderness. GAS infection is contagious. In very rare circumstances, these bacteria can get into the bloodstream and cause serious illness – called invasive Group A strep (iGAS). This is still uncommon; however, it is important that parents are on the lookout for symptoms and if you feel that your child seems seriously unwell, you should trust your own judgement and contact NHS 111 or your GP.’

Good hand and respiratory hygiene are important for stopping the spread of many bugs. Our academies will continue to promote appropriate hygiene practices. Good hand hygiene will be enforced for all pupils and staff, including encouraging children to wash their hands at the start of the school day, after using the toilet, after play, before and after eating, and at the end of the school day. Parents can contribute to this effort by ensuring children wash their hands properly with soap for 20 seconds, use a tissue to catch coughs and sneezes, and keep away from others when feeling unwell. This collective approach will enable us all to reduce the risk of children picking up or spreading infections.

Furthermore, where appropriate, windows and doors will continue to be opened to aid adequate ventilation whilst maintaining comfortable working environments for staff and pupils

I hope you have found this information useful. If you require any further advice then please visit [UKHSA update on scarlet fever and invasive Group A strep - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/ukhsa-update-on-scarlet-fever-and-invasive-group-a-strep). This guidance gives information around scarlet fever, a milder illness caused by Group A Strep infection, and iGAS, the more serious illness.



Cases of Scarlet Fever, as with other illnesses should be reported to the school office. To aid the Trust in tracking potential outbreaks, we ask that any diagnosed cases of invasive Group A Strep are reported to the Trust via admin@watertonacademytrust.org or by calling 01924 240767.

As with COVID-19, should there be further guidance issued we will endeavour to keep you informed in a timely fashion.

May I take this opportunity to wish you all the best for a restful and enjoyable Christmas break; we look forward to welcoming you back in 2023.

Yours sincerely

Mr D Dickinson OBE
CEO
Waterton Academy Trust