

What to do if my child is ill?

And how long should I keep them off school for?

Wyborn Primary Illness Guidelines

To Parents/Carers of Children at Wyborn Community Primary School,

Hello! And welcome to this quick guide on what to do when your children are ill! In a survey performed in November 2024, it was found that parents/carers knew when to keep their child off school, but were more unfamiliar with when was the right time to send them back. This simple guide will detail how long a child should be kept off school for when they have an illness, when's the right time to send them back, and what YOU can do at home to help them recover as fast as possible.

This guide is based on NHS and UK government guidance and can be used when assessing pupil attendance.

The aim of this guide is to make sure

- 1. Pupils miss AS LITTLE school as possible**
- 2. Pupils are given the best care to manage their illnesses, whether this is care at home or knowing when to go to a GP/Hospital**

This guide is not to be used instead of going to a GP/calling 111. If there is any doubt about your child's symptoms, please consult a medical professional.

Important information on medications:

As a reminder, please give any medication described below in guidance with medical advice from practitioners/pharmacists and **following the recommended dose** written on the medication pack.

Doses can vary with age and may differ between your children so please be cautious of this.

Colds, Flu, and COVID

Is it a Cold, Flu, or COVID?

The symptoms of these illnesses tend to overlap, however the difference in how they should be treated is very different. Consult the guide below if your child is experiencing any of these general symptoms:

- Tickly throat
- Runny/Stuffy nose
- Cough

How to tell the difference?

Your child is more likely to have Flu if:

- The illness came on suddenly
- They have a fever
- They're feeling tired
- They don't have much of an appetite
- They have aching limbs

They might have COVID if they have some of the above symptoms AND:

- They have no sense of taste/smell
- They have a headache
- They have recently been in contact with someone known to have COVID

It's most likely just a COLD if:

- They still have 'high energy'
- They don't act/say they're tired
- They have a normal appetite
- They don't have any additional symptoms

How do I manage them?

General management for at home and at school:

- Make sure they have plenty of fluids to drink
- Give them sugar free Paracetamol OR Ibuprofen (DON'T GIVE THEM ASPIRIN) - please follow the recommended doses.
- Keep them away from smoke/people who smoke. This will slow down their ability to clear the virus
- Make sure they have more than enough sleep
- Encourage constant hand washing and give them enough packs of tissues

If you suspect your child has a cold:

As long as they are feeling well enough, they should **CONTINUE TO ATTEND SCHOOL**. A minor cold should not be a reason for a child's learning to be disrupted. Continue to monitor their temperature, and be wary of the condition getting worse.

If you suspect your child has a flu:

If your child has a **high temperature** or **is feeling tired/unwell**, it is encouraged to keep them off school. It is also very important to book your child into **free flu vaccines** every year. As the flu virus continually changes every year, having the flu vaccine one year does not guarantee immunity the next year. These vaccines are offered at school and it is highly recommended your child has one.

If you suspect your child has COVID:

You can do a COVID test. These are still relatively cheap and freely available at pharmacies/larger supermarkets. If your child tests positive, you must keep them home from school until 3 days after a positive test result/start of symptoms. If your child is still experiencing mild symptoms 3 days after the positive test, as long as they feel well enough they should be encouraged to go back to school, as they are no longer infectious towards the other children. If your child tests negative, they may be experiencing flu-like symptoms. In which case, refer to the paragraph above

When to go to the GP?

Colds/Flu/COVID are illnesses that will clear themselves without any need for treatment. However, for some illnesses, medical intervention is required to make sure your child doesn't get seriously unwell. You should go to your GP/Call 111 if your child experiences any of these symptoms as well:

- They have a persistent temperature of above 38°C

- They have a fever along with a rash
- The cough has not gone away after a week
- They are **EXTREMELY** drowsy
- They are finding it hard to breathe
- Their fever doesn't reduce even with medication

Sore Throat

How does it present?

Your child may complain of:

- Pain/Soreness in the throat, especially when swallowing
- Hoarse voice
- Feeling unwell/tired
- Mild fever
- Earache
- Coughing

How to manage?

Sore throats are usually **viral**. This means that antibiotics won't help. Paracetamol OR Ibuprofen should be effective, along with giving your child 'soft' foods to eat. Cold drinks/ice cream can also be soothing. If your child has enough energy, they **should** be sent to school. Sore throats may be caused by **Tonsillitis**. Tonsillitis is not a serious condition, and does not generally require any medical intervention for it to go away. Your child may require antibiotics if the GP diagnoses Tonsillitis is bacterial. If your child has Tonsillitis often (several times a year), then you should have an appointment with your GP to discuss having your child's tonsils removed.

Hand, Foot, and Mouth

Sore throats can be one the first signs of Hand, Foot, and Mouth disease. It's usually

accompanied by a high temperature and lack of appetite. A few days later, mouth ulcers and spotted rashes will appear. This can be diagnosed by a GP, however there is no treatment for it. It should clear on its own in 7-10 days. Eating soft and non-spicy foods is recommended. Your child can go into school if they have Hand, Foot, and Mouth, however you can keep them off if they're feeling too unwell. You do not have to wait until they have fully recovered to send them back to school if they seem well enough.

Glandular fever

Glandular fever presents as a sore throat along with a swollen mass in the neck. It can also be accompanied by tiredness, headaches, rashes, and high temperatures. There is **no reason to keep your child off school** if they feel well enough to go and don't have a fever. Make sure they drink enough water even if swallowing is painful, and manage pain with ibuprofen or paracetamol.

When to go to the GP?

- If symptoms last longer than 4 days
- Pain is severe
- High temperature (over 38°C)
- Breathing difficulties
- Drooling
- Child acts extremely unwell
- Stomach Pain
- Cannot swallow

Vomiting/Diarrhoea

How does it present?

Usually, vomiting/diarrhoea is caused by a stomach bug. This will come on suddenly, and should only persist for 24 hours. It may also be accompanied by stomach pains.

How to manage?

If your child has had vomiting/diarrhoea, they should **not** be in school. Even if your child is feeling well, you should wait for 48 hours after their last instance of vomiting/diarrhoea to send them back to school.

At home, give them plenty of water to drink, and don't give them rich/salty foods. Avoid solid foods and large meals. Oral Rehydration solution sachets can be bought from the pharmacy, which can be added to water to help hydrate the child.

When to go to the GP?

- If the diarrhoea/vomiting persists/worsens
- Symptoms last more than 24 hours
- If your child is starting to: be sleepy, have a dry mouth, wee less (these are all signs of dehydration)
- If there is blood in the vomit/diarrhoea
- Your child is acting seriously unwell

Cough

How does it present?

Coughs generally are non-serious, especially if accompanied with cold-like symptoms. However, many childhood infections present with a cough, and so you should closely monitor your child and consult this guide to see if further action is required. If your child is feeding, drinking, eating and breathing normally and there's no wheezing, a cough is not usually anything to worry about.

What is causing my child's cough?

Asthma

It could be asthma if:

- The cough has been continuing for a long time
- Is worse at night
- Is brought on by your child running about

- They also suffer from hayfever/eczema
- Asthma runs in the family

If you suspect asthma, then you should take your child to the GP to have them checked. You don't need to take your child out of school while they are being tested for Asthma, unless it's to go to a GP appointment.

Croup

Croup is identified by a distinctive 'barking cough' and a harsh wheezing sound when breathing in. This may also be accompanied by a sore throat, runny nose, and temperature. If you suspect croup, you should take your child to the GP. Croup should clear on its own (maybe requiring steroids from your GP if severe), but will get worse before it gets better. After 3 days, your child's symptoms should start to improve, so they can be sent to school.

Whooping cough

Will initially present with cold-like symptoms (runny nose/sore throat). Then after a week a cough will develop. The cough is characterised by coughing 'fits' which last for several minutes, with 'whooping' gasps for breath between coughs. If you suspect whooping cough, you should take your child to the GP as it needs to be treated with antibiotics. After starting antibiotics, you must wait 2 days, and then your child can be sent back to school. If your child hasn't had antibiotics, you must wait 2 weeks to send them back to school. The cough may continue for weeks after, but will be non-infectious.

How to manage?

- Make sure they have plenty of fluids to drink
- Give them sugar free Paracetamol OR Ibuprofen (DON'T GIVE THEM ASPIRIN)
- Keep them away from smoke/people who smoke. This will slow down their ability to clear the virus
- Make sure they have more than enough sleep
- Encourage constant hand washing and give them enough packs of tissues
- Running hot showers or a hot tap in a bathroom to create steam can ease your child's breathing
- Propping your child up in bed with pillows will allow them to breathe better

When to go to the GP?

- You suspect Asthma/Croup/Whooping cough
- They are coughing up 'yellow goo'
- They are having difficulty breathing (call 999)
- They appear pale/blue (call 999)
- Their chest looks like it's 'caving in'

Rashes

How does it present?

A rash on its own is not very serious. Rashes are common in children and can be caused by: viral infections, heat, food, or even changes in washing powder. However, rashes can be serious if they have other symptoms.

Meningitis

If your child is unwell and appears with a rash, always think meningitis. Meningitis is a serious illness and requires immediate medical attention if suspected (999/ A+E).

It can be tested for by pressing the side of a clear glass against the skin. If the rash does NOT fade, then immediately take the child to hospital.



Meningitis may also present with the following symptoms, so even if the rash isn't

present think about meningitis if your child experience the following:

- a high temperature
- cold hands and feet
- vomiting
- confusion
- breathing quickly
- muscle and joint pain
- pale, mottled or blotchy skin (this may be harder to see on brown or black skin)
- spots or a rash (this may be harder to see on brown or black skin)
- headache
- a stiff neck
- a dislike of bright lights
- being very sleepy or difficult to wake
- fits (seizures)

Keep your child off school until they have fully recovered.

Slapped Cheek



Slapped Cheek initially presents with cold-like symptoms. Then a rash will appear on one or both cheeks. A few days later, a spotty rash may also appear on the chest, back, arms, and legs. If your child is feeling well enough, they should be kept in schools, as this illness is usually very mild.

However, keep an eye out for worsening/extra symptoms. Anyone with Slapped Cheek should

avoid contact with pregnant women.

Scarlet Fever

Scarlet Fever initially presents with flu-like symptoms, as well as raised neck glands (you can feel a mass in your child's neck). 12 to 48 hours later, a rash consisting of small raised bumps will appear on the chest/tummy. A white film will appear on the tongue, which will eventually peel off. If you suspect Scarlet Fever, you should go to your GP, as it has to be treated with antibiotics. If, after 24 hours after starting antibiotic treatment, your child feels well enough to return to school, they should do so. If antibiotics have not been taken, your child should be kept off school until they have no symptoms.



Scabies



Scabies is characterised by an intense, itchy rash that spreads and turns into small spots. Until treated, the child should be kept off school due to its highly contagious nature. If suspected, it can be treated by going to a pharmacist and getting a cream that can be applied all over the body. 24 hours after treatment, the child can return to school.

Ringworm

A ring-like itchy rash. It can be treated with anti-fungal medications from a pharmacist. If your child has ringworm, they should still be sent to school, regardless of whether they have started treatment or not. Physical contact with other children should not be encouraged, and you should regularly clean their bedsheets as it may take several weeks for the rash to disappear.



If the rash is on their scalp or does not improve with medication, you should take the child to the GP.



Chickenpox

Chickenpox presents as rashes that have spots, which turn to blisters, which turn to scabs. The rashes are very itchy, so encourage your child to not scratch themselves by putting them in loose clothing and cutting their finger nails. Itching creams can also be bought at the pharmacist. Your child should be kept off

school for a minimum 5 days, and after that they should only be sent back into school if all their blisters have crusted over.

Impetigo

Impetigo starts as itchy red sores/blisters that collect around the face and hands. These will burst and form crusty areas. If you think you're child has impetigo, you should take them out of school until either:

1. The sores are fully healed/crusted over
2. They have been on antibiotics for 24 hours



If they have recurrent impetigo infections, you should go to the GP to ask about testing for impetigo-causing bacteria.

Measles/Rubella

Measles/Rubella infections start with flu-like symptoms. Then, a few days later, a rash will appear which starts on the face and spreads to the lower body, along with spots on the tongue. Measles is very contagious via coughs/sneezes so if you suspect it, take your

child out of school as soon as possible and go the GP to get diagnosed. If they have measles, 4 days from the onset of the rash, if your child feels well enough, they should return back to school. If they have Rubella, 5 days from the onset of the rash, if your child feels well enough, they should return back to school.

The best way to prevent measles/rubella infections is the MMR vaccine. Children should get two doses of the MMR vaccine, starting with the first dose at 12 to 15 months of age, and the second dose at 4 through 6 years of age. If your child is older, they can still get the vaccine by talking to your GP about it. Support them at home by giving them plenty of rest and fluids to drink, along with paracetamol OR ibuprofen



How to manage?

In addition to GP treatments, you may also:

- Use Calamine lotion to soothe itching
- Use antihistamine tablets to soothe itching
- Drink plenty of cooling fluids
- Paracetamol (NOT ibuprofen) if accompanied by a temperature
- Go to a pharmacist for advice of a cream/ointment

When to go to the GP?

You should take your child to the GP if:

- You suspect any of the illnesses described above
- The rash starts to worsen
- Additional symptoms develop

Other illnesses

These illnesses have specific symptoms, treatments, and exclusion criteria. Consult this list to see how long your child should spend off school and how to take care of them at home.

Athlete's foot

Athlete's foot looks like crusty, white patches between the toes. This is not a reason for your child to be off school. It will clear by itself but will take a long time. You should go to your pharmacist for anti-fungal and soothing creams.

Cold Sores

Cold sores are painful blisters that appear around the mouth. They are not a reason for your child to be off school. You can use paracetamol OR ibuprofen for the pain. Pharmacists can provide antiviral and soothing creams which should be dabbed onto the sore. Drinking plenty of fluids will also help.

Need treatment to return to school.

Conjunctivitis

Conjunctivitis causes red and itchy eyes that produce pus. They are not a reason for your child to be off school unless the symptoms are very severe. Pharmacists can suggest antihistamines or drops, but the infection should clear by itself within 2 weeks. At home, you can clean the eyes with wet clean cotton pads, and you can use a cold flannel over the eyes to help the 'burning' feeling.

Head Lice

Head lice are usually first noticed by an 'itching' on the scalp. Using a fine tooth comb can find live lice in the hair. Speak to a pharmacist to get head lice treatments, and check everyone in the family's hair if your child has lice. Your child should **stay in school**, even before they've been treated for head lice.

Warts/Verrucas

Warts and verrucas are small lumps that appear on the skin. They are caused by infections, but aren't serious. They may be itchy/painful/embarrassing, but they are **not a reason for your child to be off school**. They can be treated by either talking to your GP or Pharmacist. Verrucas should be covered with a plaster in swimming pools/gyms/changing rooms. You should take care to wash socks daily if the verruca is on your feet, and wash your hands after touching a verruca/wart.