



8th January 2018

School Heads in the South East

Dear Colleagues,

Re: Seasonal influenza outbreaks – awareness and notification

As the annual Chief Medical Officer letter has now been released to say that flu is now circulating widely in the community, we are writing to remind you to be alert for any potential flu (influenza) outbreaks in your school setting, as well as the need to report to your local health protection team as soon as you suspect an outbreak.

Outbreaks often initially present as a sudden or unexpected rise in absenteeism and therefore a high index of suspicion is required. Obtaining information, where possible, about the types of symptoms experienced by individuals can help the assessment of whether or not you have an outbreak.

The **definition of a flu outbreak** is:

- Two or more cases of flu-like illness within 48 hours which occur in pupils and/or staff who are in close proximity to each other

Symptoms and signs of flu-like illness include:

- Fever of 37.8°C (which usually start suddenly and can last for 3-4 days)
- **PLUS** one or more of:
 - Dry cough
 - Headaches
 - Chills
 - General muscle aches and pains
 - Runny nose or congestion
 - Sneezing
 - Sore throat
 - Wheezing
 - Some children may also feel sick (nausea) or have diarrhoea

Flu-like symptoms are worse and last longer than the ordinary cold. The fever tends to decrease after the second day when a stuffy nose and a sore throat become more noticeable.

If you suspect your school may have a flu outbreak, then please telephone your local Health Protection team (details at the top of this letter) who will provide you with further advice and support.

Yours sincerely

The South East Health Protection Team

Kent Health Protection Team	0344 225 3861 Option 1, option 1
HLOW Health Protection Team	0344 225 3861 Option 2, option 1
Surrey & Sussex Health Protection Team	0344 225 3861 Option 3, option 1
Thames Valley Health Protection Team	0344 225 3861 Option 4, option 1