

Date 10th April 2024

Our ref: HPZ 116852

Dear pupil/parent/staff member,

The Public Health Agency (PHA), Health Protection team (HPT) has been informed that there are a small number of suspected whooping cough cases in Glenlola Collegiate School. Whooping cough is a bacterial infection of the lungs and breathing tubes.

Clinicians and laboratories are required to report any illness where the suspected cause is whooping cough to the PHA. Our role is to provide advice to help prevent the spread of infection to other people.

Signs and Symptoms

The first signs of whooping cough are similar to a cold, such as a runny nose and sore throat (a high temperature is uncommon).

After about a week, you or your child:

- will get coughing bouts that last for a few minutes and are worse at night
- may make a "whoop" sound – a gasp for breath between coughs (young babies and some adults may not "whoop")
- may have difficulty breathing after a coughing bout and may turn blue or grey (young infants)
- may bring up a thick mucus, which can make you vomit
- may become very red in the face (more common in adults)

The cough may last for several weeks or months.

Prevention

The whooping cough vaccine protects babies and children from getting whooping cough. This is why it is important to have all the routine NHS vaccinations.

The whooping cough vaccine is routinely given as part of the:

- 6-in-1 vaccine – for babies at 8, 12 and 16 weeks
- 4-in-1 pre-school booster – for children aged 3 years 4 months

If a pupil or staff member is pregnant, the whooping cough vaccine is recommended– ideally between 16 and 32 weeks.

Risk Groups

Unimmunised infants and infants of mothers who did not receive the pertussis vaccination in pregnancy are at increased risk of severe whooping cough.

Treatment

Treatment for whooping cough can be provided by the GP. Treatment depends on when the infection started and the person's age.

If whooping cough is diagnosed within 3 weeks of the infection, antibiotics will be given to help stop it spreading to others. Antibiotics may not reduce symptoms.

Spread

It is important that pupils and staff stay off school until 48 hours after starting antibiotics, or 3 weeks after their symptoms started if they have not had antibiotics.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'D Cromie', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Dr David Cromie

Consultant in Public Health

Your personal identifiable information will be held confidentially and only shared with stakeholders/those directly involved in managing this infection in accordance with General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) (EU) 2016/679.