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| All schools and nurseries in Cheshire East | **Public Health**  Cheshire East Council  Floor 2, Westfields  C/O Municipal Buildings  Earle Street  Crewe  CW1 2BJ  Tel: 01270 685799  [www.cheshireeast.gov.uk](http://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk) |

**Date:** 27 May 2014

Dear Colleagues,

**Re: Increase in scarlet fever**

I am writing to inform you about recent local and national increases in notifications of scarlet fever. Up to mid April 2014 there were 25 notified cases across Cheshire East, compared to only 10 in the whole of 2013. Nationally over 7000 cases have been notified this year, which is more than twice the usual number.

**Signs and symptoms of scarlet fever**

Scarlet fever is a common childhood infection caused by group A streptococcus. The early symptoms of scarlet fever include sore throat, headache, fever, nausea and vomiting. After 12 to 48 hours the characteristic red pinhead rash develops, typically appearing first on the chest and stomach, then rapidly spreading to other parts of the body, and giving the skin a sandpaper-like texture. On more darkly pigmented skin the scarlet rash may be harder to spot, although the 'sandpaper' feel should be present. Children typically have flushed cheeks and pallor around the mouth. This may be accompanied by a ‘strawberry tongue’. As the child improves, peeling of the skin can occur.

**Infection control advice**

In schools and nurseries the infection can be spread through direct physical contact and shared contact with surfaces such as table tops, taps, toys and handles.

As per national *Guidance on Infection Control in Schools and other Child Care Settings,* children and adults with suspected scarlet fever should be **excluded** from nursery / school / work for **24 hours** after the commencement of appropriate antibiotic treatment. Good hygiene practice such as hand washing remains the most important step in preventing and controlling spread of infection.

Schools are not expected to contact GPs about suspected cases, but should advise parents to seek medical advice from their GPs and to report back to the school. This is in order to distinguish scarlet fever from other viral infections with similar symptoms.

An **outbreak** is defined as “Two or more cases of scarlet fever occurring within 10 days of each other in the same school or nursery.The scarlet fever diagnosis should be corroborated by a GP or other health professional.”

**Recommended actions if you suspect an outbreak at your school or nursery:**

* **Contact** your Health Protection Team on 0844 225 1295 (option 1 thrice) for advice
* Your Health Protection Team will provide you with a **letter** to cascade to staff and parents if appropriate

Yours sincerely,

Dr Guy Hayhurst

Consultant in Public Health Medicine