

Help your school community stay well this winter

Dear parent/ guardian

This is the first winter without pandemic restrictions in two years. While children and young people have been able to attend school throughout most of the pandemic, wider social events and holidays are now occurring and more will be planned over the winter. Mixing will be inside, increasing the chance of infection spreading.

Winter illnesses such as influenza and respiratory viruses in adults and children are on the increase and are returning to pre-pandemic levels. Younger children, especially those just starting school will not have been exposed to many infections and will have less natural immunity. The seasonal flu vaccination is being offered now to all children aged 2 to 11 years and some children in secondary school. There are also many adults eligible for a free flu vaccination.

The COVID-19 vaccination enabled the gradual and safe removal of restrictions on everyday life and remains key to living with the virus in the future. Many adults are eligible for an Autumn booster and the vaccine for children is still available.

Routine childhood vaccination uptake has been negatively impacted by the pandemic and is not yet back to rates that provide the community with robust protection to prevent infectious disease incidents and outbreaks. These can impact on school attendance and learning. Limiting any further disruption to children, who have already missed time at school due to the pandemic, is vitally important.

Please find below some information sources:

Childhood Illnesses

The **Healthier Together** website is a good place to go for advice and guidance for a wide range of concerns around children's health and well-being.

Advice around specific infections and school attendance. **Is-my-child-too-ill-for-school?**

This blog is aimed at the health of children under 5 years old but contains some useful information applicable to children of any age.

Vaccinations

Vaccination is the best defence against severe illness and infections. For a full list of the vaccines on offer search, **NHS vaccinations and when to have them** You can check if your child is up to date by contacting your GP or checking their red book.

More information can be found about flu and COVID-19 vaccinations via the following links:

Child flu vaccine - NHS (www.nhs.uk)

Coronavirus (COVID-19) vaccination for children - NHS (www.nhs.uk)