

7th December 2022

JVe/KTr

Dear Parents/Carers

Please find below some information that has been sent to all schools regarding the current situation regarding streptococcus and scarlet fever.

Group A Streptococcus (GAS)/Scarlet Fever

The UK Health Security agency which provides advice to health professionals around infectious diseases has issued the following advice to parents: "As a parent, if you feel that your child seems seriously unwell, you should trust your own judgement.

Contact NHS 111 or your GP if:

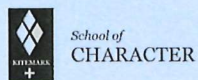
- your child is getting worse
- your child is feeding or eating much less than normal
- your child has had a dry nappy for 12 hours or more or shows other signs of dehydration
- your baby is under 3 months and has a temperature of 38°C, or is older than 3 months and has a temperature of 39°C or higher
- your baby feels hotter than usual when you touch their back or chest, or feels sweaty
- your child is very tired or irritable

Call 999 or go to A&E if:

- your child is having difficulty breathing – you may notice grunting noises or their tummy sucking under their ribs
- there are pauses when your child breathes
- your child's skin, tongue or lips are blue
- your child is floppy and will not wake up or stay awake"

The most important advice is to talk to a health professional if your child is showing signs of deterioration after a bout of scarlet fever, a sore throat, or a respiratory infection. Follow the NHS advice for getting the right support at the right time

www.kentandmedwayccg.nhs.uk/your-health/local-services . In an emergency always call 999.



Good hand and respiratory hygiene can stop the spread of many bugs. Children should know how to wash their hands properly with soap for 20 seconds and should be encouraged to always use a tissue to catch coughs and sneezes.

Please also see attached FAQs.

Yours sincerely

John Vennart
Headteacher



Fact sheet for schools and parents about Group A Streptococcus (GAS)/Scarlet Fever.

What is Group A Streptococcus?

Group A Streptococcus or *Streptococcus pyogenes* is a bacterium that can be found in the throat and on the skin. People may carry it and have no symptoms of illness or may develop infection.

How is it spread?

Group A Streptococcus survives in throats and on skin for long enough to allow easy spread between people through sneezing and skin contact. People who are currently carrying the bacteria in the throat or on the skin may have symptoms of illness or they may have no symptoms and feel fine. In both cases, these bacteria can be passed on to others.

What kinds of illnesses are caused by Group A Streptococcus?

Most Group A Streptococcus illnesses are relatively mild, with symptoms including a sore throat ("strep throat"), scarlet fever or a skin infection such as impetigo. However, on rare occasions, these bacteria can cause other severe and sometimes life-threatening diseases.

Although scarlet fever is usually a mild illness, it should be treated with antibiotics to minimise the risk of complications and reduce the spread to others.

The **symptoms** of scarlet fever include a sore throat, headache, fever, nausea and vomiting. This is followed by a fine red rash which typically first appears on the chest and stomach, rapidly spreading to other parts of the body. On more darkly-pigmented skin, the scarlet rash may be harder to spot, but it will still feel like 'sandpaper'. The face can be flushed red but pale around the mouth.

Children who have had **chickenpox** or **influenza ('flu')** recently are more likely to develop more serious infection during an outbreak of scarlet fever and so parents should remain vigilant for symptoms such as a persistent high fever, cellulitis (skin infection) and arthritis (joint pain and swelling). If you are concerned for any reason please seek medical assistance immediately.

What is invasive Group A Streptococcal (iGAS) disease?

Although rare, invasive Group A Streptococcus disease may occur when bacteria get into parts of the body where bacteria are not usually found. These infections are called invasive Group A Streptococcal disease and can be very serious and even life-threatening.

What are the symptoms of invasive Group A Streptococcal disease?

The most important thing to be aware of are the early signs and symptoms of invasive Group A Streptococcal disease. These are:

- High Fever
- Severe muscle aches
- Localised muscle tenderness
- Redness at the site of a wound

What should I do if my child becomes unwell?

If your child becomes unwell contact your GP practice. Alternatively, you can call NHS111 and you should also call NHS111 if your surgery is closed.

If my child is unwell, should they stay off school?

If your child becomes unwell with these symptoms you should contact your GP practice or call NHS111 (which operates a 24/7 service) to seek advice. If your child is unwell they should stay off school until they are better.

What else can I do to prevent my child from becoming unwell?

Because Group A Streptococcal disease is spread through coughing, sneezing and skin contact, it's important to have good hand hygiene and catch coughs and sneezes in tissues and throw these away. If you are unwell, stay at home and seek medical advice. This will all help limit the spread of other infections, which are common this time of year.