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Direct Dial

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Date

15th February 2024

Dear Headteachers,

We are seeing much higher than normal levels of measles in London this year, including in Bexley schools. Measles spreads very easily among those who are unvaccinated, especially in nurseries and schools, and is a nasty illness and in some children can be very serious and lead to hospitalisation – and in rare cases tragically can cause death. People in certain at-risk groups including babies and young children, pregnant women, and people with weakened immunity, are at increased risk of complications if they catch measles.

[Find out more about the symptoms of measles here.](#)

We recommend you take the below steps to keep your school safe from measles in the coming weeks and months.

In the event that you are informed of a suspected or confirmed case of measles, contact South London Health Protection team immediately by:

- Emailing SLHPT.OnCall@ukhsa.gov.uk
- Calling 0300 303 0450 (available 24/7)
- You can also copy in publichealth@southwark.gov.uk if you would like additional input from the local authority, including on vaccination.

Familiarise yourself with the guidance around measles:

- [Public Health guidance on measles in school is available here](#)

Continue to support school immunisations, including requests for special MMR clinics

- The best way to prevent measles is to increase uptake of MMR vaccinations.
- Schools can support immunisation by cascading council, UKHSA and NHS communications about the importance of the MMR vaccine with parents. (see template message at the end of this letter that you can use to promote MMR today).
- Schools may also be approached by Hounslow and Richmond Community Healthcare Trust (HRCH), or another NHS provider, to discuss arranging pop-up MMR clinics in your school, as part of a national MMR catch-up programme. Please facilitate this as best you can, [in line with recommendations on supporting immunisation programmes in schools.](#)

Thank you for your continued support protecting the health of children in Bexley. If you have any questions around measles, or suggestions of how we can support you to improve MMR vaccine uptake in your school community, please email:-

public.health@bexley.gov.uk

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nicole Klynman', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Dr Nicole Klynman

Director of Public Health for Bexley

Enc:

Appendix 1 – MMR message for parents

The UK Health Security declared a national health incident over the weekend due to rising cases of measles, including in London. Measles spreads very easily among those who are unvaccinated, especially in nurseries and schools, and is a nasty illness and in some children can be very serious and lead to hospitalisation – and in rare cases tragically can cause death. People in certain at-risk groups including babies and young children, pregnant women, and people with weakened immunity, are at increased risk of complications if they catch measles.

[Information on the symptoms of measles and what to do if you or your child has them is available from the NHS.](#) The measles rash can sometimes look different on darker skin – an example is available [here](#). There is no specific cure for measles, but the MMR vaccine is very effective at preventing you from getting it.

Measles was eliminated in the UK in 2017, due to the success of the MMR vaccination programme, but falling vaccination uptake since then has meant that it has come back. [MMR vaccination](#) is very effective at preventing measles and is extremely safe. It is given in two doses, one at 12 months, and one at 18 months (in some other parts of the country, the second dose is given later). A version of the MMR vaccine that **does not** contain pork gelatine is available on request from all GPs. If you or your child have not had all your MMR vaccines please contact your GP today to book an appointment.