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www.publichealthwales.org

30th April 2015

Dear Parent / Guardian,

We have been informed that a number of children who attend Marlborough Primary School have been diagnosed with **chickenpox** and we are also aware that **scarlet fever** is circulating in the wider community.

Complications

Children who have had chickenpox 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. If you are concerned for any reason please seek medical assistance immediately.

If your child has an underlying condition which affects their immune system, you should contact your GP or hospital doctor to discuss whether any additional measures are needed.

Chickenpox

Chickenpox is a mild and common childhood illness that most children catch at some point. It causes a rash of red, itchy spots that turn into fluid-filled blisters. They then crust over to form scabs, which eventually drop off. To prevent spreading the infection, keep children off nursery or school until all the spots have crusted over.

For most children, chickenpox is a mild illness that gets better on its own. But some children can become more seriously ill and need to see a doctor. Contact your GP straight away if you're concerned, or if your child develops any abnormal symptoms, such as:

- if the blisters on their skin become infected
- if your child has a pain in their chest or has difficulty breathing

Scarlet fever

Scarlet fever is also a mild childhood illness but unlike chickenpox, it requires antibiotic treatment. Symptoms include a sore throat, headache, fever, nausea and vomiting, 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 should feel like 'sandpaper'. The face can be flushed red but pale around the mouth. As the rash fades the skin on the fingertips, toes and groin area can peel.

If you think you, or your child, have scarlet fever:

- See your GP or contact NHS Direct on 0845 46 47 as soon as possible
- Make sure that you/your child takes the full course of any antibiotics prescribed by the doctor.
- Stay at home, away from nursery, school or work for **at least 24 hours after starting the antibiotic treatment**, to avoid spreading the infection

You can find more information on chickenpox and scarlet fever on **NHS choices**: www.nhs.uk
Further advice can also be obtained from the **Health Protection Team** on 02920402478 during office hours.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Maïra Lyons". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'M' and a long, sweeping tail on the 's'.

Director of Health Protection, Public Health Wales.