

#### 4.10 Sickness and Diarrhoea Plan

- a) Sickness and Diarrhoea are not classified as notifiable diseases except for food poisoning for which is covered under the Notifiable Diseases Plan (see section 4.09).
- b) Sickness and Diarrhoea are however not uncommon, and may occur at schools for a variety of reasons.
- c) The aim of this Plan is to deal with multiple cases of sickness and diarrhoea in schools and to prevent spread of infection within the school, to other schools and the wider community
- d) The Objectives of this Plan are to:
  - Ensure a coordinated and joined up approach when dealing with multiple cases of sickness and diarrhoea.
  - Minimise the impact of the incident on the normal running of the school.
  - Enable all persons involved being aware of their roles and responsibilities and those of others.
  - Ensure a consistent message is relayed to all parties including parents
  - Ensure that accurate information is given out as and when required.

#### e) Background - Gastroenteritis

- Gastroenteritis is an infection, which causes stomach upset. It may be caused by a number of different germs including viruses, parasites and bacteria. These may be contracted from food, but some can be passed directly from person to person.
- The main symptoms include diarrhoea, vomiting, nausea, abdominal pain and fever. Different germs cause different symptoms, but the same germs can cause different symptoms in different people.
- It is not always infectious, and infection is sometimes caused by eating infected food or drinking infected water. It can also sometimes spread directly from person to person, especially if hygiene is poor such as with small children. It may continue to be infectious for several weeks even after the person feels well. It can be spread if someone who is ill prepares food for others.
- The incubation period varies from a few hours to a few days, depending on the germs and how much infected food was eaten.

#### f) Initial Response to an Outbreak of Sickness and Diarrhoea

- The school should in the first instance contact the **Environmental Health Officer (EHO)** via **BFC Customer Services** on **01344 352000** for advice if unusually high numbers of cases are seen. Be prepared to provide details of the size and scale of the problem and details of the activities that have taken

place in the school that may be relevant to determining the cause and the risk of the outbreak spreading, also details of other users of the school site e.g. caterers and clubs.

- Notify the LA and communicate any additional support required e.g. staffing or finance.
- If the EHO agrees, notify **Thames Valley Health Protection Team** on **0344 225 3861 (option 4 & option 1)**. Be prepared provide more details of which classes, age ranges and the numbers of affected persons in each class including members of staff. Also the number of persons who have eaten school meals, packed lunches or who go home for meals.
- Nominate a member of staff to liaise with other parties and be the point of contact for the school. The EHO/PHE will determine who will be the main contact for the school and advise the school who that is.
- The LA will where necessary circulate information to other schools to minimise the risk of the disease or illness spreading.
- The LA will alert the Communications Team to assist the school with media enquiries
- The EHO/PHE will provide information to the school on measures required to minimise the risks of spreading the infection, including on 'exclusion' of cases for 48 hours.
- The school will follow the advice of the EHO/PHE. Specific advice may be given on a site by site basis but this plan sets out the control measures that are generally applicable to dealing with an outbreak of sickness & diarrhoea.
- The EHO/PHE may advise to temporarily cease use of drinking water fountains, water play cooking lessons where food is consumed, etc. where necessary in consultation with EHO and Headteacher

## **Infection Control Measures**

### **g) Limiting the Spread of the Illness**

- The school should take measures to limit the spread of the illness.
- Infected persons should avoid preparing food for others.
- Specific advice may be given by the EHO/PHE on an incident by incident basis, however in most cases robust hygiene protocols are required to prevent an outbreak of sickness & diarrhoea from spreading.
- It should also be noted that such measures may also prevent an outbreak from occurring in the first place and these are set out in more detail below.

## h) Hygiene Protocols – Hand Washing

- Personal hygiene should be very strict. Everyone should always wash their hands with warm, soapy water and dry them thoroughly after going to the toilet and before handling food.
- Careful and effective hand washing is probably the single most important prevention and control measure. It is therefore essential to have good hand washing facilities.
- All staff should be instructed regarding good technique. Children should also be taught and encouraged to wash their hands.
- Hand washing technique is set out on the diagram below and includes:
  - Wet hands under running warm water
  - Apply liquid soap
  - Rub all parts of the hands vigorously, without applying more water, using the six-step technique
  - Rinse hands under running water
  - Dry thoroughly using disposable paper towels



- Hands need to be washed:
  - After using the toilet
  - Before eating meals or snacks
  - Before cooking
  - After dealing with an infected case
  - After cleaning
  - When hands are visibly dirty
  - After handling animals

### **i) Hygiene Protocols – Enhanced Cleaning**

- Enhanced cleaning of the school and home environment is also recommended, to prevent/reduce the risk of an outbreak of sickness and diarrhoea, with particular attention to toilet facilities.
- All communal toilet areas should be cleaned twice daily with detergent, warm water and disinfected with freshly made 1000ppm (0.1%) hypochlorite solution (bleach) or Milton at the recommended concentration.
- Particular attention should be made to flush handles, toilet seats, sink taps, door handles and light switches.
- Separate mops and buckets should be used for toilet areas.
- Mop heads and buckets should be stored dry between uses.
- Non-disposable mop heads should be disinfected in a washing machine (hot cycle).
- Disposable mop heads should be changed daily.
- Cleaning cloths should be disposable.
- Water used for cleaning should be fresh and changed regularly, at least between areas and after cleaning a spillage.
- All surfaces should be cleaned with a neutral detergent.
- After cleaning, disinfect with freshly made 1000ppm (0.1%) hypochlorite solution (bleach) or Milton at the recommended concentration or with ultra heated dry steam vapour if bleach would damage the material.
- Carpeted areas should be steam cleaned following each episode of contamination.
- Vacuuming carpets and buffing floors is not recommended as it can re-circulated the virus.
- Steam cleaning of upholstered furniture is suggested.
- Machine wash all soft toys in the affected areas. All other toys should be wiped with hot soapy water and then disinfected.
- Disposable gloves and an apron should be worn when cleaning surfaces or equipment, in affected areas.

### **j) Specialist Cleaning**

- The PHE will advise on the scope and scale of any specialist cleaning over and above the schools enhanced cleaning regime.
- Specialist cleaning may not be necessary in all cases but where it is specialist contractors will be required with appropriate training and specialist equipment.

- The school needs to be very clear about the scope and scale of any specialist cleaning required before it is purchased, as these two factors can greatly affect the complexity, disruption and final cost.
- A Medical Deep Clean would need the school to be closed for the period of the clean.
- Education Capital & Property team can advise on specialist cleaning contractors that have been previously employed in schools.

#### **k) Dealing With A Child With Sickness And Diarrhoea**

- The first priority is the child's well being. One staff member should remain with the child, and this staff member should put on disposable gloves and a disposable apron.
- Other staff should be called in to assist with the child, keep people away from the contaminated area and to carry out a vigorous cleaning programme.
- The following equipment should be made available to them to carry out the cleaning – an emergency box should be kept containing: -
  - Paper towels
  - Disposable wipes
  - Disposable gloves
  - Disposable apron
  - Yellow clinical waste bag
  - Red soluble linen bag
  - Bowl
  - Detergent
  - Bleach or Milton.
- Procedure for cleaning
  - Wear disposable gloves and apron
  - Paper towels should be used initially to absorb fluids and placed in a clinical waste bag
  - Clean the soiled area with detergent and warm water using a disposable cloth
  - Disinfect the contaminated area with freshly made 1000ppm (0.1%) hypochlorite solution (bleach) or Milton at the recommended concentration
  - Dispose of gloves, apron and cloths into the clinical waste bag.
  - Disinfect the contaminated area with freshly made 1000ppm (0.1%) hypochlorite solution (bleach) or Milton at the recommended concentration
  - Wash hands thoroughly using soap and water and dry them

### **l) Record Keeping**

- The Headteacher/nominated member of staff will ensure daily records are kept of children and staff suffering from the symptoms (information should include date illness commenced, class, details of any other family members affected and when the symptoms ended). A suggested template to assist with gathering this information is set out below.

<b>Sickness &amp; Diarrhoea Record Keeping</b>											
NAME Class	SYMPTOMS	FIRST DAY ILL	LAST DAY ILL	SCHOOL MEALS	PACKED LUNCH	LUNCH AT HOME	COMMENT S	TICK IF ILL TODAY			
Date of Birth	(refer to key)			Please tick as appropriate			Eg. Sibling cases				

Key: D = Diarrhoea  
 V = Vomiting  
 F = Fever  
 N = Nausea  
 AP = Abdominal  
 Pain

### **m) Treatment**

- Most people will get better with no treatment. One or two of the least common germs may require some specific treatment
- Guidance from PHE is that at first, the infected person should drink plenty of clear fluids and try not to eat. Water, non-fizzy fruit drinks or tea without milk are good. The symptoms will usually clear up after 24 hours
- If the symptoms last for more than 24 hours, or there is blood in the diarrhoea, the person should contact their GP.

### **n) Information to Parents/Carers**

- The school will send out a letter advising all parents/carers of incident, of the action the school is taking and what action families need to take.
- The following text provides a sample letter that could be used.

Dear Parents/Carers

**RE: Diarrhoea and Vomiting at .....**

I write to inform you that at present the school is currently experiencing an increase in the number of pupils with symptoms of diarrhoea and vomiting illness.

We are working with Public Health England and Environmental Health to minimise the risk of spread of the infection within the school.

If your child is unwell we request you not to send your child to school until they have been symptom free for **48 hours**. However, please ensure that you contact us and inform us so that we can monitor the situation.

*Delete if not applicable under advice from EHO/PHE: [If your child is suffering from sickness and diarrhoea the investigating team urge you to try and collect a stool sample as soon as possible. An early stool sample gives them the best chance of finding the cause of this illness.*

*Arrangements for school sample collection are .....* ]

With this letter we are also enclosing a Fact Sheet on gastroenteritis/diarrhoea and vomiting that you may find useful. If you are concerned about your child's health please seek medical advice.

If you have any general questions please feel free to call the school office.

Yours sincerely

**o) Investigating the Cause**

- If appropriate, the EHO will carry out investigations of kitchens, including possible samples of food or taking copies of information e.g. temperature records, menus, food samples etc. if necessary.
- The EHO will provide the results of any analysis of food samples taken to the school and any other relevant parties, e.g. the catering contractor.
- Where an organism has been identified, additional control measures may be required. The Head Teacher will carry out communication of those measures. Where necessary a further meeting of all parties will be arranged.
- Where a food poisoning organism has been identified, the EHO may carry out further investigations to determine the source.
- Head Teacher liaises with all parties on a daily basis. All representatives ensure that any new information is passed to the Head Teacher so that it can be cascaded to others where necessary.
- When there are no new cases for 5 days unless incubation of suspected disease is longer, the Head Teacher will arrange a final meeting to summarise any lessons learnt during the incident and identify any measures that can be

taken to prevent future occurrences. Other parties may be invited as appropriate, e.g. EHO.

**p) Exclusion Period**

- Children and staff who are affected and show signs and symptoms of vomiting and/or diarrhoea should be sent home immediately or cared for separately if there is a delay.
- People should stay away from school or work until they have been free of symptoms for **48 hours**.
- Those who handle food as part of their work should check with their employers and GP before returning.
- If a child or a member of staff becomes ill at home this exclusion period should also be applied.



**RESPONDING TO AN OUTBREAK OF SICKNESS AND DIARRHOEA.**

An increasing or unusually high number of cases of sickness and diarrhoea



Contact Environmental Health Officers  
via Customer Services on 01344 352000



Contact Thames Valley Health Protection Team  
**0344 225 3861 (option 4 & option 1)**



Emphasise need for strict & supervised hand-washing  
Exclude cases until they are symptom free for 48 hours  
Implement Infection Control Measures



Consider sending a letter with information sheet to all  
parents and carers.



Record daily numbers of children & staff who are  
symptomatic, upon the information sheet



Ensure adequate numbers of domestic staff to maintain  
good infection control principles.



Have in place a routine cleaning schedule. Additional  
enhanced cleaning will need to be carried out. Spillages  
should be dealt with promptly