



Worcestershire County Council  
Educational Services

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## The Fairfield Community Primary School

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12<sup>th</sup> June 2015

Dear Parents/Carers,

We have been asked by Public Health England to contact parents and to distribute the attached leaflet on whooping cough (pertussis). This follows a number of cases linked to the Chantry Academy in Martley, Worcestershire. A small number of pupils at the Chantry and schools in their locality have been confirmed as having had whooping cough. **Although our school has not had any outbreak** of infection, it is important to raise awareness so that any further cases in the community are detected earlier so that preventative measures can be quickly put in place.

Whooping cough (pertussis) is a bacterial infection of the lungs and airways. The condition usually begins with a persistent dry and irritating cough that progress to intense bouts of coughing. The cough can cause a distinctive "whooping" noise, which is how the condition got its name. Other symptoms include a runny nose, raised temperature and occasional vomiting after coughing. The cough can last for weeks or even months.

In many cases this illness is mild, especially where children have been vaccinated, with a persistent troublesome cough being the most common sign. Most fit adults and children recover fully from whooping cough, even without treatment.

If your child is showing symptoms or you are concerned, please do contact your GP. Antibiotics are sometimes given to those with whooping cough, and, when given early, may, to some extent, reduce illness and reduce the period where your child is infectious to others. After three weeks from the onset of symptoms, antibiotics are less likely to be of benefit in reducing infectiousness. If your child is well enough and it has been more than three weeks since the start of symptoms or your child has a course of antibiotics from your GP for possible whooping cough, your child can go to school/nursery as normal.

Whooping cough can more rarely be a much more serious illness, particularly in very young babies (who are simply too young to have had their routine immunisations) and in other unimmunised young children.



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We therefore have been asked by Public Health England to recommend the following:

If within your **household there is a young baby not yet vaccinated** (especially under the age of four months) and that baby or another household member has symptoms that suggest possible whooping cough, please seek prompt advice from your GP.

It is important to ensure any child in your household under 10 years of age is fully up to date with their 'whooping cough' vaccines. All children are recommended to receive three doses of whooping cough vaccine at 2, 3 and 4 months of age, plus a pre-school booster dose from 3 years 4 months. You can check this with your GP surgery, if you are not sure.

Women are offered a pertussis vaccination at 28-38 weeks of pregnancy and this can further help protect their newborn infants from pertussis infection.

We must stress that there is no need to be alarmed by any of this. Public Health England are keen that parents are fully informed/educated about this condition. Further, despite the Martley cases, there is nothing to suggest there is a particular cause for concern in our school.

Please do get in touch if any questions; thank you for your support.

Yours faithfully,



Mrs. B. Baynes/Mrs G. Deakin  
**Acting Headteacher**



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## **WHOOPING COUGH**

### **(PERTUSSIS)**

#### **What is it?**

Whooping cough (Pertussis) is a chest infection caused by a bacterial infection. It is most common in children but can occur at any age.

#### **What are the symptoms?**

Initial symptoms are of catarrh and a cold which develops into a cough. Children may whoop and vomit after a spasm of coughing. Babies may have difficulty feeding because of it. The illness may last for a number of weeks

#### **Is it infectious?**

Yes. People with whooping cough are infectious from 2 – 4 days before they start coughing until up to 21 days afterwards. Antibiotics shorten the infectious period to 5 days if started early in the illness.

#### **Are there any tests to confirm infection?**

Your GP may take a swab or a blood sample.

#### **Is treatment needed?**

Most people will recover within a few weeks without any treatment. Antibiotics may be prescribed by the GP to reduce illness and infectiousness.

#### **Can whooping cough be prevented?**

Yes. Whooping cough (Pertussis) vaccine is part of the routine childhood vaccination schedule given at 2, 3, & 4 months and as part of the pre-school booster. It provides very good protection. Immunisation may be postponed if the child is suffering from an acute illness or, in the case of the second or third doses, if there has been a significant reaction to the previous dose. Your GP or Health Visitor will be able to give you advice about this.

#### **How soon can someone return to nursery /school / work?**

Three weeks from onset of symptoms or five days from commencing antibiotics and feeling well enough to do so.