

Heathside School

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Children
First

3.11.09

Dear Parent/Carer,

Pupils with an Illness Attending School

The clocks have gone back, the dark nights are upon us and the colder weather has started to take hold and inevitably the season of coughs, colds, sneezes, sniffles and runny noses will emerge before you can say "Christmas". Obviously, we want to see children in school as much as possible but if they are not well then home is the best place for them and hopefully the information in this letter will help you when judging if your child is fit for school.

A child who is ill will not feel well enough to take part in the activities that are planned for the day and will find the normal routine tiring and demanding. This often results in them feeling worse and their condition deteriorating. Occasionally some parents will ask that their child does not swim if they are "not 100%" but if they are unable to swim then they shouldn't really be in school. Unfortunately the staff in the classroom find it difficult to give sick children the extra time they may need because of the usual demands of working with and teaching the other children. Inevitably, however, staff end up having to "look after" the sick child and this then interrupts the learning of the other children. Another consequence is that germs are being spread to both staff and other pupils either through coughing, runny noses, sneezes or the equipment/toys that the children may play with. The staff and other children then end up with the "bug".

The staff at Heathside are very dedicated and caring and we all are happy to help families in any way that we can. However, what we cannot do is "look after" children who are not well because they have *a temperature, a bad cold with a runny nose, sore throat, cough, ear ache, sickness or diarrhoea*. In these circumstances please do not send your child to school because the best place for them is at home where they can be taken care of properly and allowed to recover in comfort. Please err on the side of caution if you are unsure of the extent of your child's illness. Taking their temperature can help and if it is above 37 degrees Celsius this indicates they are unwell.

Also, if your child requires medication, such as penicillin, and needs it three times per day, it is not necessary that a dose be given at lunch time. If a dose is given in the morning before school another can be given on arrival at home and then the third at bedtime. We have some problems with storing such medication and we do not have a school nurse on site to administer it, or to offer any support with sick children.

Attached to this letter is further information from the Health Authority about childhood illnesses and the appropriate responses to take when dealing with them. Please keep this information in a safe place and refer to it as necessary. Can I draw your attention particularly to the 2 day exclusion period for cases of vomiting and diarrhoea.

Finally, can I say that the vast majority of parents and carers adopt a very responsible attitude when their child is ill, but when pupils come into school ill the impact can be far reaching. Thank you for your co-operation in this matter and if you wish to discuss it further please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,