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### Scarlet Fever and Group Strep A Infections

Dear parents/carers

There are an increased number of cases of Group A streptococcus (Strep A) and scarlet fever compared to normal at this time of year.

#### **What are scarlet fever and Strep A?**

Scarlet fever is caused by bacteria called Group A streptococci (Strep A). The bacteria usually cause a mild infection that can be easily treated with antibiotics. In very rare occasions, the bacteria can get into the bloodstream and cause an illness called invasive Group A strep (iGAS).

#### What is strep A?

It's sometimes found in the throat or on the skin. Many people carry it harmlessly without even knowing, but they can spread it to others who might become ill.

#### How can you get it?

People can catch it through close contact and from coughs and sneezes.

#### What are the symptoms?

Most often, symptoms are mild - a sore throat or a skin infection that can be easily treated with antibiotics. Strep A can cause a range of things - and some of them are more serious. One is scarlet fever, which mostly affects young children and, again, needs antibiotics. In very rare occasions, the bacteria can get into the bloodstream and cause an illness called invasive Group A strep (iGAS).

- Sore throat
- Headache
- Fever
- A fine, pinkish or red body rash with a sandpapery feel
- On darker skin the rash can be more difficult to detect visually but will have a sandpapery feel

If a child becomes unwell with these symptoms we advise you contact your GP practice or contact NHS 111 (which operates a 24/7 service) to seek advice. If a child has scarlet fever, we advise they stay at home until at least 24 hours after the start of antibiotic treatment to avoid spreading the infection to others. We encourage parents to trust their own judgement and if your child seems seriously unwell call 999 or go to A&E if:

- a child is having difficulty breathing – you may notice grunting noises or their tummy sucking under their ribs
- there are pauses when a child breathes
- a child's skin, tongue or lips are blue
- a child is floppy and will not wake up or stay awake.

If your child is unwell please call school on 0121 675 4617 to inform us on the symptoms and if you have a confirmed case of Strep A or Scarlet Fever please let nursery know.

Yours sincerely

Sharon Lewis

Executive headteacher

