

Dear Parent or staff member,

As you are probably aware some pupils in schools in the Borough have tested positive for the A/H1N1 virus (swine flu).

As a result of this we are now writing to all parents to inform them of this outbreak and asking them to follow the advice of the NHS by following good hygiene practices.

General infection control practices and good respiratory hand hygiene are significantly effective in reducing transmission of all viruses, including the human swine influenza. This includes:

- Covering your nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing, using a tissue when possible
- Disposing of dirty tissues promptly and carefully
- Maintaining good basic hygiene, for example washing hands frequently with soap and water to reduce the spread of the virus from your hands to face or to other people
- Cleaning hard surfaces (e.g. work surfaces and door handles) frequently using a normal cleaning product
- Making sure your children follow this advice

The advice from the Health Protection Agency (HPA) is that affected schools should remain open as there would be no added public health benefit from closing the school to lessen the spread of the virus. This is because there have been a significant number of children in the community with the illness already and so it is likely that people will come into contact with the virus outside of school while mixing with family and friends. Please be reassured that most children are experiencing a mild illness, similar to normal seasonal flu, and will recover.

Cases of swine flu are now determined by clinical diagnosis by your GP as opposed to swabbing and laboratory testing. Swabbing was originally carried out so health experts could initially study its make-up and transmission as a new virus. This is no longer necessary as swine flu is now circulating at large amongst the community.

If your child has flu-like symptoms, please telephone your GP for assessment or NHS Direct on 0845 4647. Further information on Swine Flu is also available by phoning 0800 1 513 513.

Any pupil or member of staff who does feel ill should remain at home and ring their GP or one of the numbers given above. They should not go to the GP surgery or the A&E department unless specifically instructed to do so by a health professional. If your symptoms do match those of Swine Flu then you will be prescribed the antiviral drug tamiflu by your GP. Tamiflu does not prevent Swine Flu but does lessen its effects and aid recovery. Tamiflu is not prescribed for well people without flu-like illness.

Anyone taken ill should inform the school of their condition and remain at home until they have recovered. They should get a friend or family member to collect prescriptions on their behalf to minimise the spread of infection.

You can download more basic hygiene advice by going to www.redbridge.nhs.uk or for more information visit www.nhs.uk