

From the Headmaster:
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Dear Parents/Guardians

Swine Influenza: Outbreaks in Mexico and the United States

You will all, I am sure, have been following closely the media's coverage of the current outbreak of Swine Influenza. As you would expect, we, too, have been closely monitoring the progress of the outbreak in an effort to identify, at the earliest possible stage, whether the spread of the illness might present any issues to the pupils, parents and staff of the Foundation Schools. In addition, and mindful of the responsibility we have to safeguard the health and education of all our pupils, we have sought government guidance as to steps that should be taken in cases of suspected Swine Influenza.

The UN's World Health Organisation has raised the alert to Level 5 following the human-to-human transmission of the virus in at least two countries. To date, there have only been a small number of cases identified in the UK but we clearly need to take all reasonable precautions to ensure that, should the WHO declare a pandemic (Level 6 of the alert system), we have in place measures to ensure the wellbeing of our pupils and staff. The Foundation has long had in place a Pandemic Contingency Plan and we are currently working to ensure that this remains fully updated and that we are ready to implement any measures that may be required.

The current advice of the Health Protection Agency is that, if you or your family have recently returned from a country or area where human cases of influenza have been identified, it is important for you to monitor your health closely for seven days after your visit to the affected area. If during this period you or your child develops a feverish illness accompanied by one or more of cough, sore throat, headache and muscle aches, you should contact your GP by telephone or seek advice from NHS Direct (0845 4647). You should also ensure that you tell those from whom you are seeking advice that you have recently travelled to an area affected by Swine Influenza. To assist us in the prevention of the spread of the illness at School you or your child should not come into School when you have these symptoms.

If further investigations are felt to be needed you will be advised on the appropriate arrangements for you or your child to be tested. At that stage it is important that you avoid contact with other people as much as possible until the results of your tests are returned. This will include keeping your child at home and not returning to school until you have been advised to do so by the health professionals advising you.

Those who have not recently returned from a country where a human case of influenza has been identified but who exhibit similar symptoms should follow the same advice given above. Further information about the illness can be found through the Department of Health's website (www.dh.gov.uk) or the Swine 'Flu information line (0800 1513 513).

We will continue to monitor the situation and update you should the circumstances change significantly.

With best wishes.

Yours sincerely

Dr Dominic Luckett