

Director of Public Health  
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Date: 25 January 2024

Dear Head Teacher

**Important: Measles cases are rising in the UK**

Measles cases in the UK have been rising since November 2023. While Hertfordshire has no outbreaks at the moment, we are close to London and the West Midlands where there has been a large rise in cases. The UK Health Security Agency has declared the increase in cases of measles a national incident (19 January 2024). There is the potential for cases and outbreaks in Hertfordshire as uptake of the Measles Vaccination (MMR) in the county is lower than recommended.

Measles is a highly infectious viral disease that can have serious and sometimes fatal consequences. Measles spreads quickly from person to person, especially in schools. Spending more than 15 minutes in direct contact with someone infected with measles is sufficient to transmit the virus. A child with measles will infect almost all unprotected children they have contact with.

Measles is spread through coughing and sneezing, close personal contact or direct contact with infected nasal or throat secretions. For more information about measles and the symptoms, see [Measles - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](https://www.nhs.uk)

**Important for staff and pupils**

If someone thinks they have measles they should not come into school or work for at least 4 days from when the rash first appears.

Your school could be impacted if unvaccinated staff or children contract measles. Unvaccinated individuals are at risk of contracting measles and, if identified as a close contact of someone with measles they may be asked to self-isolate for up to 21 days.

**Call to action**

We are urgently asking that you advise your staff and parents to be alert to signs and symptoms of measles and ask parents to check that their children are fully vaccinated. If anyone has missed one or both doses of the MMR vaccine, **it is not too late to catch up**. Please can you advise parents to contact their GP practice to book an appointment as soon as possible if they have missed either dose. The MMR vaccine is free on the NHS, whatever your age. Our best protection against measles is MMR vaccination and this will help stop outbreaks occurring in the community.

Contents of this letter and the attached information may be distributed to staff and parents

**In addition further advice and guidance can be found here:**

[MEASLES - Protect yourself, protect others \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

[Measles - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](https://www.nhs.uk)

[MMR \(measles, mumps and rubella\) vaccine - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](https://www.nhs.uk)

<https://educationhub.blog.gov.uk/2024/01/22/what-to-do-if-you-think-your-child-has-measles-and-when-to-keep-them-off-school/>

Yours sincerely



Sarah Perman  
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