

Dear Head Teacher

Measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) vaccination for children & young people

We are writing to inform you about an increased number of cases and outbreaks of measles in England and Europe, a risk of subsequent spread of infection within our population in Scotland and to tell you about the steps we are taking across NHS Lothian to avert a measles resurgence.

Measles general information

There has been an increase in the number of people getting measles. Measles is one of the most infectious diseases, spreading quickly from person to person, especially in schools, nurseries and other educational and childcare settings. Each child with measles can lead to 12-18 other cases when vaccination rates are low, and these subsequent cases can in turn go on to spread the infection further. Children with measles typically feel very unwell. Unvaccinated close contacts of a measles case need to isolate at home for up to 21 days, resulting in considerable disruption for child and family. Sometimes measles infection can lead to very serious illness and death. For every 1,000 children who catch measles, one or two children will die from it.

With the upcoming school holidays in February 2024, and subsequent school holidays in the summer, any unimmunised / incompletely immunised child or young adult travelling to England / Europe or outside the European Union, will be at a significant risk of contracting measles.

Immunisation with the MMR vaccine is the safest way to protect yourself and your family against measles, mumps and rubella. NHS Scotland offers 2 doses of the MMR vaccine to children at around 12 to 13 months, and 3 years 4 months. If it is missed at these times, it can be given at any age.

MMR catch-up campaign

In February, NHS Lothian will write to all parents/carers of school aged children who have not yet had two doses of the MMR vaccine. Parents/carers are urged to book an appointment for their child or young person to receive their MMR vaccine by calling the NHS Lothian Vaccination Helpline on 0300 790 6296.

We would appreciate your support in encouraging parents/carers to book a vaccine appointment if required.

If a child becomes unwell with a raised temperature and rash while at your school or nursery, parents/ carers should contact their GP or call 111 out of hours for further advice. If clinical staff think that it is measles, they will notify the East Region Health Protection Team. HPT will contact the school with further advice and to gather further information. If you have concerns, please contact HPT on 0300 790 6264.

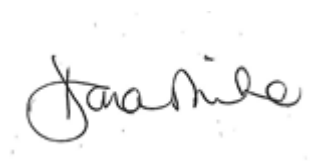
Communications

Parents/carers can gain further information on measles, including signs and symptoms to look out for by accessing NHS Inform <https://www.nhsinform.scot/campaigns/mmr-against-measles/>

To help raise awareness, Public Health Scotland has created an MMR Against Measles Toolkit, with social media assets and suggested captions. We would appreciate if you could use these social media assets with the hashtag #MMRagainstmeasles <https://publichealthscotland-newsroom.prgloo.com/resources/f/immunisation/mmr-vaccine/mmr-against-measles/generic-assets>

Thank you in advance for your support in this important campaign which will protect children from vaccine preventable disease.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dona Milne', enclosed in a thin black rectangular border.

Dona Milne
Director of Public Health and Health Policy