

Director of Public Health for North Yorkshire

Health and Adult Services

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Dear Parent(s)/Carer(s),

Re: Back to school advice amid high levels of flu, COVID-19 and scarlet fever

I am writing to outline some guidance on returning to school this term following the increase in infectious diseases circulating in our communities.

The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) issued a press release on Monday 2nd January with 'back to school' advice for education settings, including nurseries, in response to the continued high circulation of flu, COVID-19 and scarlet fever. This guidance has been issued in addition to the letters sent on behalf of UKHSA in the last week of term regarding scarlet fever.

Flu and coronavirus (COVID-19) are currently circulating at high levels and are likely to continue to increase in coming weeks. High case numbers of scarlet fever, which is caused by group A streptococcus bacteria, also continue to be reported.

I would like to emphasise the key messages in the UKHSA guidance to prevent transmission of such infections in school and the wider community:

- *If your child is unwell, they should stay home from school or nursery until they feel better. This is particularly important if your child has a high temperature.*
- *Practice regular handwashing at home with soap and warm water. Catch coughs and sneezes in tissues and then put the tissue in the bin to help stop illness from spreading.*
- *Adults should try to stay home when unwell and if you do have to go out, wear a face covering.*
- *Take up opportunities for vaccinations when offered.*

Ventilation in the home is also important when someone in your household has a respiratory infection, or when you have visitors to your household. Bringing fresh air into a room by opening a door or a window, even for a few minutes at a time, helps remove older stale air that could contain virus particles and reduces the chance of spreading infections.

The flu vaccination programme is being rolled out across schools nationally. Your school will notify you of the date that vaccinations are taking place and give you details for the online consent form to complete (further information, including frequently asked questions, can be found on the [School Age Immunisation Service website](#)). If you can't complete the consent form online, your school should provide you with a paper copy.

Flu vaccine roll out for Years 7-9 in North Yorkshire are commencing this week. If you have a primary aged child that has missed their vaccine please contact your GP practice.

Uptake of nasal spray flu vaccine among children aged 2-3yrs is lower than in previous years - hospital admissions for flu in under-5s remain high so parents are encouraged to get infants vaccinated through their GP practice if they have not yet been vaccinated this winter.

For more information on flu vaccines for children visit [Child flu vaccine - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](http://www.nhs.uk).

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Louise Wallace', written in a cursive style.

Louise Wallace
Director of Public Health for North Yorkshire