



DOVECOTE
SCHOOL

Shapwick Manor
21 Station Road
Shapwick
Somerset
TA7 9NJ

7th December 2022

Dear Parents and Guardians

Group A streptococcal (GAS)

I hope this email finds you well.

The Department for Education is yet to issue its own advice to schools but is directing them to guidance from the **UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA)**. Parents and guardians are being urged to be alert for the signs of group A streptococcal (GAS) infections by the Public Health Agency (PHA).

Group A streptococcus bacteria usually cause a mild infection producing sore throats or scarlet fever that can be easily treated with antibiotics. In very rare circumstances, these bacteria can get into the bloodstream and cause serious illness – called invasive Group A strep (iGAS).

While iGAS is still uncommon, it is important that parents are on the lookout for symptoms of illnesses caused by group A streptococcus bacteria and seek medical advice so that their child can be treated appropriately and to help prevent the infection becoming serious.

What to do if you suspect your child has scarlet fever - Scarlet fever mainly affects children under 10, but people of any age can get it. In the early stages, symptoms include a sore throat, headache, and fever, along with a fine, pinkish or red body rash with a sandpapery feel. On darker skin, the rash can be more difficult to detect visually but will have a sandpapery feel.

The PHA is asking parents to contact their GP if they suspect their child has scarlet fever, because early treatment with antibiotics is important to reduce the risk of complications such as pneumonia or a bloodstream infection.

Don't put off seeking help if your child continues to get worse - There can be a range of causes of sore throats, colds and coughs. These should resolve without medical intervention. However, children can on occasion develop an infection and that can make them more unwell.



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The PHA is also urging parents to seek help if their child is very unwell or seems to be getting worse – even if they have started treatment. Parents should contact their GP if they feel:

- their child is getting worse
- their child is feeding or eating much less than normal
- their child has had a dry nappy for 12 hours or more or shows other signs of dehydration
- their baby is under 3 months and has a temperature of 38°C, or is older than 3 months and has a temperature of 39°C or higher
- their baby feels hotter than usual when they touch their back or chest, or feels sweaty
- their child is very tired or irritable.

Call 999 or go to the Emergency Department if:

- your child is having difficulty breathing – you may notice grunting noises or their tummy sucking under their ribs
- there are pauses when your child breathes
- your child's skin, tongue or lips are blue
- your child is floppy and will not wake up or stay awake.

For further information on scarlet fever, visit www.pha.site/ScarletFever

Children and adults with scarlet fever should not return to school until at least 24 hours after starting treatment with an appropriate antibiotic.

Children and staff with scarlet fever should not return until they have been taking antibiotics for at least 24 hours.

Thank you for your support in this matter.

Yours sincerely

Neil Gage
Headteacher – Dovecote School