



**Rye Community Primary School & Starfish Pre-school**  
The Grove, Rye, East Sussex TN31 7ND  
[www.ryeprimary.co.uk](http://www.ryeprimary.co.uk)  
Executive Headteacher: Mr Barry Blakelock  
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5th January 2023

Dear Parents and Carers,

You will likely have seen recent news coverage regarding a rise in the number of strep A infections; we are therefore sending this letter to help parents understand the types of infections associated with strep A, whether you should be concerned and what to look out for.

### **What is strep A?**

Group A streptococcus (GAS), more commonly referred to as strep A, is a common group of bacteria which lots of us carry in our throats and on our skin and it does not always result in illness. It can, however, cause a number of infections which can be mild or more serious in certain circumstances.

The milder infections caused by GAS include:

- Scarlet fever
- Impetigo
- Cellulitis
- Pharyngitis

GAS infections can be unpleasant, but they are rarely serious and all of the above infections can be treated easily with antibiotics. The most serious infections linked to GAS, however, come from the invasive group A streptococcus, known as iGAS. This type of infection can occur when a person has:

- Sores or open wounds that allow the bacteria to get into the tissue.
- Breaches in their respiratory tracts.
- A weakened immune system.

It is important to recognise that the more serious iGAS infections are currently still very uncommon and cases are rare in children; however, it is true that infections have risen this year, particularly among children under 10, sadly resulting in a small number of deaths.

The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) is investigating the increase in iGAS infections in children, which has not pointed towards any evidence of a new strain, although it has stated that it is likely to be something to do with increased social mixing compared to the previous two years.

### **Scarlet fever**

A higher-than-normal number of scarlet fever cases are currently present in the UK. The first signs of scarlet fever can be flu-like symptoms, including a high temperature, sore throat, headaches and swollen neck glands. A rash appears 12 to 48 hours later which looks like small, raised bumps and feels a bit like sandpaper. It starts on the chest and tummy and spreads. On white skin the rash looks pink or red. On brown and black skin, it may be more difficult to see a change in colour but you can still feel the rash and see the raised bumps. The illness can also include vomiting and nausea.

Scarlet fever is usually mild and clears up quickly after a course of antibiotics. The UKHSA does advise contacting NHS 111 or your child's GP if you suspect they have scarlet fever, to avoid more serious infection.



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### **What is the school doing to ensure your child is kept safe?**

The school will continue to follow its usual outbreak management processes and keep these under review in accordance with the UKHSA's guidance. An outbreak will be declared in the event that two or more probable or confirmed cases have been identified in the school within 10 days of each other.

The school has been advised by the UKHSA to:

- Ensure that all pupils and employees that are ill go home until they are well enough to return.
- Encourage good hand hygiene and carry out regular cleaning.
- Ensure that cuts, scrapes and wounds are cleaned and covered.
- Following an outbreak and once all cases have stopped, carry out a deep clean of all buildings.

We hope this information is useful for you, if you have any concerns or queries, please contact the school office.

Kind regards

*K Martin*

Miss K Martin  
Headteacher