



# MAGHERAFELT PRIMARY SCHOOL

02879632822

## PRINCIPAL

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CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS

Rev Dr J Curry

**MAGHERAFELT PRIMARY SCHOOL**

32 Castledawson Road, Magherafelt

BT456PA

**Friday 9 December 2022**

**Dear parents/carers,**

We have been informed that a one child who attends Magherafelt Primary School has been diagnosed with Scarlet Fever. The Public Health Agency have advised that because of increased rates Group A streptococcus in the community compared to what is usually seen at this time of year, that it is not unexpected that schools and early years settings will see cases. We have also been advised that in most cases, this is a mild childhood illness and that there is no need for undue worry.

Here in Magherafelt PS the health and wellbeing of each and every child is our chief concern. As such we want to keep you informed regarding the current situation and provide you with the information that you need to keep your children safe and well.

The Public Health Agency has provided the enclosed information leaflet for parents and guardians. I would encourage you to read it as it contains useful information about Scarlet Fever and other infections caused by Group A streptococcus.

If your child is unwell, they should not attend school or early years settings.

If your child is diagnosed with Scarlet Fever they should stay at home and not attend school or early years settings for at least 24 hours after starting the antibiotic treatment, to avoid spreading the infection. ***We would ask you to make it known to the school office via the absence reporting form on our school website if your child has been diagnosed with Scarlet Fever.***

Further information about Scarlet Fever is available on the PHA website:

<https://www.publichealth.hscni.net/news/scarlet-fever> and <http://pha.site/scarlet-fever-2022> and also on NI Direct <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/conditions/scarlet-fever>

Sincerely,

**Ian Somerville**  
Principal



# Public Health Agency

## What is 'Group A Strep'?

Recently parents have been asked to be alert to signs of Group A Streptococcal infections, also known as 'Group A Strep'. This document gives some extra information on what to look out for.

## What is Group A Strep?

Group A Strep is a common bacteria that can live harmlessly in our throats and on our skin. Some Group A Strep can cause mild illnesses like sore throats or more serious illnesses like scarlet fever. These illnesses can be easily treated with antibiotics.

Rarely, Group A Strep causes very serious illness such as pneumonia (a bad chest infection), sepsis (when the infection gets into the blood) or bone infections. These very serious illnesses need hospital treatment.

It's important to remember that most sore throats and coughs are caused by viruses and will get better by themselves.

## How is Group A Strep spread?

Group A Strep spreads through sneezing, coughing and direct skin contact.

## What are the symptoms of Group A Strep?

### Mild Group A Strep can cause:

- a sore, red throat;
- fever;
- a white coating on the tongue;



- skin infections;
- scarlet fever. Scarlet fever starts with a sore throat, headache, fever and swollen neck glands, usually followed by a rash which sometimes feels like sandpaper, rashes can be harder to see on black or brown skin but you can still feel it.



**The more severe type of Group A Strep can cause:**

- high fever;
- severe muscle pain;
- pain, swelling and redness at site of wound;
- diarrhoea and vomiting.

**What should I do if my child has symptoms of Group A Strep?**

If your child has symptoms of Group A Strep, contact your GP or out-of-hours doctor. See [www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/gp-out-hours-service](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/gp-out-hours-service)

If your child is given antibiotics for Group A Strep they will need to stay off school for at least 24 hours.

Please seek urgent medical attention if:

- your child seems more unwell than usual;
- your child is getting worse;
- this is different to their normal coughs and colds.

**Can we do anything to stop Group A Strep spreading?**

Yes. Simple things make a big difference. Alongside regular hand washing with soap and water, you can reduce the chances of Group A Strep spreading by:

- catch it – use tissues when coughing or sneezing, and encourage your child to do the same;
- bin it – throw away used tissues in the bin;
- kill it – wash your hands with soap and hot water.

## **Vaccinations**

Make sure vaccines are up to date. Rises in recent cases of Group A Strep across the UK may be due in part to more social mixing, which may also result in other illnesses circulating at the same time.

The PHA would therefore urge everyone eligible for the free flu vaccine to get it at the earliest opportunity. In particular we would urge parents of all pre-school children aged two years and over and those aged 6 months to 2 years who are in risk groups to avail of the free flu vaccine.

Find out more about where to get vaccinated at [www.nidirect.gov.uk/wintervaccines](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/wintervaccines)