



DIRECTOR GENERAL

LETTER CIRCULAR

Information: X **Date:** 7 January 2014
Action Required: X **Ref:** DES 01/2014
To: All Heads of Schools (State & Non-State)
From: Director General, Educational Services **Tel:** 2598 2404
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Subject: Peak Influenza Season

Due to the fact that we are now entering the peak influenza season, it is best for **All Schools** to be reminded of preventive measures to be taken. Standard practices outlined below will prevent many types of infectious diseases occurring in schools.

1. Schools are to keep promoting information by various means on ways to reduce the spread of influenza by encouraging children to cover their nose and mouth with a tissue when coughing or sneezing (or coughing or sneezing into their upper arm or sleeve if a tissue isn't available) and frequently washing hands with soap and water.
2. Access to adequate hand washing facilities is to be ensured; hand washing with soap is to be promoted and facilitated regularly; all cloth towels are no longer being recommended and disposable paper towels are to be provided instead. Regular hand washing is the best way to rid any person of germs and alcohol gel or wipes should only be used when regular hand washing is not possible (such as school outing). Hand washing, when done correctly, is the single most effective way to prevent the spread of communicable diseases.
3. Tissues are to be disposed of properly. Since the influenza virus can survive temporarily outside the body, transmission can also occur from freshly contaminated objects, e.g., handkerchiefs, tissues or by hand to hand contact.
4. Waste bins are to be easily accessible and are to be emptied regularly.
5. Windows in school corridors/classrooms are to be kept open wherever possible.
6. School children and staff with influenza-like illness (fever and chills with cough or sore throat, and (i.e. including) any of the following: headaches, runny nose, aches and pains, diarrhoea, vomiting and nausea) should stay at home and not attend school.
7. School children and staff who develop illness symptoms during the day are to be reassured and are to be isolated promptly in a room separate from other children; normal procedures for making the necessary arrangements for ill children to be picked up and taken home should be followed.

8. With regard to the need of a certificate that states a child is fit to return to school, this certificate should be requested if a child is absent for three days or more (only one certificate is needed i.e. once the child is fit to return to school). One or two day absences no longer need certification.
9. Frequently-touched surfaces are to be cleaned routinely with detergents, as well as when they become visibly soiled. Children are to be encouraged to take care of their immediate areas.
10. With regards to kindergarten and special schools, all toys that can be washed are to be washed on a regular basis. All cushions, soft toys and rugs can be used in classrooms; these are also to be cleaned on a regular basis.
11. Sand trays and plasticine can be used; however, schools are encouraged to use types of sand and plasticine that can be washed/disinfected.
12. Assemblies and whole school activities (such as prize days) can be held indoors.
13. Since students in special schools are more vulnerable to infectious diseases, a more vigilant monitoring for special schools' children should be exercised.

George Borg
Director General
Directorate for Educational Services