

Dear Parent/Carer

We have been advised by the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) that a child who attends the academy has recently been reported as having meningococcal disease. This is infection with the germ that can cause meningitis or septicaemia (blood poisoning).

I realise that you may be concerned about this, but I have been reassured by UKHSA that the risk of another case in the academy is very low and children and staff do not need antibiotics or additional vaccination (other than those routinely given). If your child is well they should attend the academy as usual.

### **How the disease spreads**

Meningococcal disease is not very infectious and very rarely spreads from child to child within a school. The bacteria that cause the illness live naturally in the back of the throat and can spread between people in droplets from the mouth and nose. Many people carry the bacteria in their throats without becoming unwell.

### **Preventing the spread of meningococcal disease**

The best way to stop the disease spreading is by giving antibiotics to the very close family contacts of the patient with the illness. This usually means that only people who live in the same house as the sick child need treatment. School contacts are very rarely at risk and do not normally need antibiotics or investigation. The people who need treatment have already been identified and have received antibiotics.

### **Symptoms of meningococcal disease**

The risk of another case in the school is very small but it is sensible to be aware of the main signs and symptoms, which are outlined below. The bacteria can cause either meningitis (inflammation of the lining of the brain) or septicaemia (blood poisoning) or both. This disease can be serious.

### **Some signs and symptoms of meningococcal disease:**

- High temperature
- Vomiting/diarrhoea and stomach cramps
- Severe headache
- Stiff neck
- Dislike of bright light
- Rapid breathing
- Joint or muscle pain
- Cold hands and feet
- Abnormal skin colour
- Rash/ Bruising rash
- Drowsiness or confusion



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Not everyone will develop these symptoms and they can appear in any order.

Meningococcal disease can be hard to identify at first because it can be like a bad case of flu. However, anyone affected will usually become seriously ill within a few hours. You should keep checking your child if they are unwell and contact your GP (family doctor) or NHS 111 urgently for advice if you have any concerns or if your child's condition is getting worse. BE WATCHFUL and use your instincts. Early treatment can be life-saving.

### **Protecting against meningococcal disease**

It is important to be aware that meningococcal disease is caused by different groups of meningococcal bacteria. In the UK disease is almost always caused by one of four meningococcal groups commonly known as MenB, MenC, MenW or MenY. Some groups of meningococcal disease can be prevented with vaccines. The following meningococcal vaccines are offered as part of the routine schedule in the UK:

- Men B vaccine (which protects against most Men B disease), routinely offered as three doses given at 2, 4 and 12 months of age as part of the infant immunisation programme
- Men C vaccine (which protects against MenC disease), routinely offered at 12-13 months as part of the routine childhood immunisation programme
- Men ACWY vaccine (which protects against Men A, MenC, MenW and MenY disease) routinely offered at around 13/14 years of age
- MenACWY vaccine is also available for new university entrants (<25 years) who have not previously received MenACWY vaccine

Please ensure that your child is up to date with their routine vaccinations via your GP. Be watchful for signs and symptoms even if your child is up to date with their vaccinations as available vaccines do not protect against all forms of the disease.

All meningococcal vaccines offered to eligible children as part of routine programmes are freely available on the NHS. Vaccines may be available privately for those who are not eligible under these programmes.

Further information on meningococcal disease is available from:

- The Meningitis Research Foundation, [www.meningitis.org](http://www.meningitis.org) 0808 800 3344 (24 hours)
- Meningitis Now, [www.meningitisnow.org](http://www.meningitisnow.org) 0808 80 10 388 (9am – 8pm)

If you need further support or advice, please contact the academy.

It is important that you are always vigilant, and if anyone becomes ill with symptoms of meningitis or septicaemia you should get urgent medical help right away.

Yours faithfully



Mr P Willerton  
Principal