



H1N1 'swine flu' document

In response to parental concern we have put together the following policy document on the H1N1 virus, more commonly known as 'swine flu'.

Parents should try to separate some of the hysterical media coverage of this illness from the reality: that the H1N1 virus is not dangerous for normal healthy children. The symptoms are much less severe than normal flu and respond quickly to treatment.

The benefits of attending our course far outweigh the small possibility that a child may develop mild flu-like symptoms. If this happens, we know exactly what to watch out for and how best to treat it:

- If a child exhibits a high temperature we will immediately place the child in our isolation area. We will treat with Paracetamol, inform parents and place the child on 'watch', checking the temperature every four hours. The isolation room has a TV, board games, bells to summon assistance and an en suite bathroom. Sarah and I live next door and are available throughout the night if there is a problem.
- If the child exhibits a high temperature plus two of the following symptoms – a sore throat, a runny nose or a cough – we will decide with parents whether to prescribe Tamiflu. Tamiflu is an anti-viral drug that stops the spread of flu within the body.
- Any child whose symptoms do not respond positively within 24 hours will be referred to a doctor. So far this has not been necessary but doctors are on standby if needed.
- After the temperature has returned to normal the child will be placed in a Recovery Area in the school for a further 24 – 48 hours to ensure that there is no further possibility of transmission to the other students. If a child continues to cough after other symptoms have disappeared we will soothe with cough linctus and continue to monitor the condition. Children in the Recovery Area have a comfortable sitting room with Playstation, Nintendo Wii and board games. During mornings, when other students are in class, they can walk in the very pleasant school grounds if they wish.

There is a danger that the measures described above might lead parents to think that the H1N1 problem is more severe than it really is. I repeat that the symptoms are mild and disappear quickly and that H1N1 virus is not a danger to normal, healthy children.

As a further precaution we have instituted a strict hygiene policy: all furniture and fittings – door handles, toilet seats, etc – are sanitised daily. All children are advised frequently to wash their hands with soap and hot water. Additional hand gel sanitisers are available as children enter and leave accommodation areas. This will help to provide a cleaner, more sanitary environment for the children in our care than they would meet in normal everyday life.

There are some things that you can do as parents to assist your child during his or her stay:

1. Talk to your doctor about Tamiflu. This will help to avoid delay in making a decision if your child becomes ill at the school.
2. Let us know if your child has any serious underlying medical condition. Inform us if your child cannot take Paracetamol.
3. Talk to your child in a calm, adult manner about the situation. Emphasize the importance of telling us immediately if he or she feels unwell and reassure your child that the illness is not dangerous.
4. Obviously, do not send your child to us if he or she is ill. Obtain a doctor's note stating that the child is unable to travel. We will assist in making arrangements so that your child can join us when he or she is completely better.
5. Begin now to teach your child the habit of regular hand washing: not just a quick splash but proper washing with soap and hot water!

We look forward to welcoming your child to English Country Schools this summer.

Christopher Etchells
Director, English Country Schools
21 July 2009