

Methodist College Flu Pandemic Action Plan 04/09/2009

During a flu pandemic the Principal will meet regularly with the Senior Leadership Team to consider the available information regarding the severity of the outbreak and to assess its impact on the activities of the College. The following strategies will be used as appropriate to manage the situation:

1. Pupil and staff contact details, including emergency contact details, will be checked and up-dated.
2. All members of the school community will be encouraged to practice good hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette. This will be reinforced through assemblies, staff guidance and posters.
3. The Director of Services will liaise with premises staff regarding the cleaning regime that needs to be in place.
4. Parents and guardians will be advised to:
 - a. Encourage their child(ren) to wash their hands often and thoroughly with soap and water.
 - b. Supply them with tissues and encourage them to cover their coughs and sneezes.
 - c. Encourage them to avoid sharing personal items like drinks, food or unwashed utensils.
 - d. Supply their child(ren) with sanitising gel.
5. Pupils and members of staff who contract the H1N1 flu virus will be instructed to remain at home for 7 calendar days, even if they feel better sooner. If they still have a fever after 7 days, they should stay at home until at least 24 hours after they no longer have fever or do not show signs of fever (without the use of fever-reducing drugs).
6. Staff will be vigilant for flu-like symptoms* and will send pupils who present with such symptoms to the College Nurse. The Nurse will assess their health and take action accordingly. If a child has to be sent home then the parents or guardians will be contacted to make suitable arrangements.

*Symptoms include fever (a temperature of 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit, 38 degrees Celsius or greater), sore throat, diarrhoea, headache, feeling generally unwell and a dry cough. *Source: NHS*

7. If a member of staff develops a fever or flu-like symptoms while in school they should contact the College Nurse to seek medical advice and the VP with responsibility for cover. If necessary arrangements will be made to take them home.
8. In order to reduce the potential for the spread of infection during a pandemic some school events and activities may have to be curtailed or cancelled (e.g. assemblies, sports fixtures, concerts, parents' consultations, trips and visits). The decision to postpone or cancel such events will be made by the Principal in consultation with the Senior Leadership Team.

9. Depending on the severity of the outbreak it may be necessary to close the school. The circumstances in which such action would be taken include:

a. Instruction to close from local or national government

In the event that the school is instructed to close advice will be sought from DENI or the instructing Government Department as to whether or not staff who are fit to attend should come into school.

b. Staff absence reaches a level where it is no longer safe or practical to open the school

The decision to close the school due to the circumstances outlined in (b) will be taken by the Principal in consultation with the Senior Leadership Team. The Chair of the Board of Governors, BELB and DENI will be informed of any such decision. Pupils will remain in school until the end of the school day on which the decision is taken and will be sent home at the normal time. A letter to parents and guardians informing them of the decision will be sent home with the pupils. Information will also be posted on the school website. Those staff who are fit to attend should continue to do so unless instructed otherwise by the Principal or his delegated representative (normally the Senior VP, Director of Services or a VP).

If the school has to close it is likely that it will remain closed for at least 7 calendar days. The decision to reopen will be taken by the Principal in consultation with the Senior Leadership Team. An announcement regarding the reopening of the school will be made through the local media (radio and television) and posted on the school website.

During any period of closure the school will endeavour to maintain a reasonable level of education for the pupils. Appropriate work will be posted on Learning NI. A link to this site will be available on the school website and pupils will be reminded about how to access the site. Alternative arrangements will be made for pupils who cannot access Learning NI from home e.g. supplying work by e-mail; sending work home by post. Heads of Department will be responsible for coordinating the provision of such work.

10. **Boarding**

Boarding pupils who contract the H1N1 flu virus during term-time will initially be isolated from the other boarders and given the same professional care and support that they would otherwise receive if they were ill. Their parents and/or guardians will be contacted and where feasible arrangements will be made for them to return home for the duration of their illness. If this is not possible they will continue to be cared for in boarding and their parents and/or guardians will be kept informed of their progress.

If necessary, other members of staff at the College will be asked to volunteer for boarding duty on a rota basis to maintain the boarding service.

Every effort will be made to maintain the boarding department service during a flu pandemic. However, if it is necessary to close the boarding department during term time the decision to do so will be taken by the Principal in consultation with the Senior Leadership Team and the Heads of Boys and Girls Boarding. The parents of the boarding pupils will then be contacted and arrangements made for their return home or for them to stay with their local guardians or with agreed local families. The parents of

boarding pupils will be asked to clarify the guardianship arrangement that will be used in the event that their child is unable to return home in a pandemic which might involve the closure of the boarding department.

Should a decision to close the boarding department be taken during a holiday period the parents and guardians will be instructed not to send their child(ren) back to boarding until they receive further advice from the College.

The re-opening of boarding will be communicated to the parents and/or guardians of boarders by telephone, e-mail and/or letter.

During such a closure the education of the boarding pupils will be maintained using the strategies outlined in paragraph 8.

11. Contact Numbers and Web Addresses

BELB Health Safety and Security Section 028 9056 4302
(Swine Flu Response Team)

DHSSPS Helpline 0800 0514 142
DENI 028 9127 9279

Media Contacts

BBC News (Radio) 028 9033 8000
Radio Ulster (newsroom) 028 9181 5211
Cool FM 028 9181 7181
UTV 028 9032 8122
BBC NI Newslines 0370 4111 630

General Advice is available on the following websites:

DENI www.deni.gov.uk

BELB www.belb.org.uk

Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: www.dhsspsni.gov.uk.

Health Promotion Agency www.publichealth.hscni.net

NI Executive www.nidirect.gov.uk/index/health-and-well-being/swine-flu.htm

World Health Organisation www.who.int/en

Health and Safety Executive www.hase.gov.uk