

## ***Thornton College***

### ***Pandemic Influenza: Information for parents***

#### ***Introduction***

For a number of years scientific advice has indicated that the UK will suffer an influenza pandemic. In line with government recommendation we have prepared a plan which will provide guidance about the most appropriate response to make should a pandemic be declared by the World Health Organization.

Thornton College will expect always to implement the highest of standards in term of Health and Safety for our pupils and employees. The school is being advised by the Local Authority and its own Medical Officer and is following the guidance provided by World Health Organisation, the British Government, the Department for Health and the Department for Children, Schools and Families.

#### ***Pandemic Flu Alert Level 5***

Influenza (flu) is a familiar infection in the UK, especially in the winter months. The illness caused by the flu virus can be mild or severe, and can at times lead to death. Some groups of people – older people, young children and people with certain health conditions – are generally more susceptible to flu, and each year people in those groups are encouraged to have a flu vaccination.

Pandemic flu is different from ordinary flu as it occurs when a new flu virus emerges into the human population and spreads readily and rapidly from person to person worldwide. As it would be a new virus, no-one would have any immunity to it, and there is unlikely to be a suitable vaccine available. Everyone would be susceptible, healthy adults and children as well as those most susceptible to normal ‘seasonal’ flu. In comparison with seasonal flu, many more people could become severely ill, and many more could die.

#### ***Symptoms of Pandemic Flu***

<b>Most significant</b>	<b>Other</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Fever</li><li>• Cough and/or shortness of breath</li><li>• Sudden onset of symptoms</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Aching muscles</li><li>• Sore throat</li><li>• Runny nose, sneezing</li><li>• Loss of appetite</li><li>• Headache</li><li>• Malaise (lethargy, listlessness)</li><li>• Chills</li></ul>

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|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Diarrhoea</li></ul> |
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The symptoms of pandemic flu would probably be similar to those of seasonal flu, but they could be more severe and cause more serious complications. A key message during a pandemic should however be that, in case of doubt, one should assume that an infection is pandemic flu, and act accordingly.

It is important for the school to have information about any pupil who might have had personal contact with someone who has contracted the flu.

The **incubation period** (the time from being exposed to the virus to showing symptoms of infection) for the virus can be up to seven days, therefore we would require a member of the school who has had such contact to remain at home for at least a full, symptom-free week. Specific advice will be offered in individual cases.

In terms of the **infectious period** (how long you are infectious to others), people are most infectious soon after they develop symptoms, and remain infectious to some extent until the symptoms disappear. In general, adults can continue to excrete viruses for up to five days, and children for up to seven days, but occasionally longer. Over this period, the amount of virus, and therefore the infection risk to others, will decline as symptoms improve, but does not disappear until the symptoms themselves also disappear.

Flu, including pandemic flu, is **spread from person to person** by close contact. Some examples of how it may be spread are shown below:

- Infected people can pass the virus to others through large droplets when coughing, sneezing, or even talking within a close distance (one metre or less).
- You can catch the virus by direct contact with an infected person: for example, if you shake or hold their hand, and then touch your own mouth, eyes or nose without first washing your hands.
- You can catch the virus by touching objects (eg door handles, light switches) that have previously been touched by an infected person, then touching your own mouth, eyes or nose without first washing your hands. The virus can survive longer on hard surfaces than on soft or absorbent surfaces.

Current advice is that school business should continue as usual, although all pupils and staff should pay particular attention to routine matters of health and hygiene:

- hands should be washed regularly with soap and water;
- tissues should be used to cover mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing.

While tissues and anti-bacterial hand wash will be available within school we suggest every pupil should bring their own so that they are readily accessible to them should they be required.

### ***Flu Pandemic Management Team***

The Flu Pandemic Management Team will consist of members of the School's Full Management Team, School Doctor, Matron, IT Technician, Head of Housekeeping, Governors' representatives

and parents' representatives. The team meets once the alert level is raised to the pre-pandemic stage 5 in order to ensure that best practice is followed and that all members of the community can respond quickly and effectively should a pandemic be declared.

### ***General Principles***

The following general principles will be applied when implementing this plan:

Thornton will remain open, providing child care and education while there are sufficient staff to safely accommodate the children and provide the timetabled curriculum.

During any period of closure, we will continue to provide some form of education by remote methods.

In the event of staff shortage priority will always be given to pupils preparing for public examinations.

We will endeavour to ensure that there are clear lines of communication to staff and parents.

### ***School Closure***

The decision to close the school may be taken by the Headmistress in the event that staff sickness results in inadequate supervision to safely accommodate pupils or we may be directed to close by the Government or Local Authority in an attempt to limit the spread of infection.

Every effort will be made to avoid closure.

In the event of school closure arrangements will be made to accommodate boarders should they be unable to return home or go to their guardians.

Work will be set for pupils and can be accessed from the school website.

### ***Reopening after closure***

In the event of a school closure parents will be informed via the website when the school is to be reopened.

It is possible that the authorities will recommend partial reopening first (e.g. for children who had been infected and recovered).

Children who have had flu will be able to return to school once they are free of all symptoms.

It is likely that as our youngest children will be most at risk during a flu pandemic they will be the last group to return to school.

### ***Further Information can be obtained from:***

Schools and Children's services guidance documents:  
[www.teachernet.gov.uk/humanflupandemic](http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/humanflupandemic)

Government wide planning available from the Department of Health:  
[www.dh.gov.uk/pandemicflu](http://www.dh.gov.uk/pandemicflu)

Information specifically targeted at parents can be found at:  
[www.parentscentre.gov.uk](http://www.parentscentre.gov.uk)

## ***WHO and UK Alert Levels***

### ***Pandemic alert phases***

#### ***International***

Six distinct phases have been defined by the World Health Organization to help global preparedness planning:

#### ***Inter-pandemic Period – new virus in animals, no human cases***

Phase 1 Low risk of human cases

Phase 2 Higher risk of human cases

#### ***Pandemic Alert Period***

Phase 3 No, or very limited, human-to-human transmission

Phase 4 Evidence of increased human-to-human transmission

Phase 5 Evidence of significant human-to-human transmission

#### ***Pandemic Period***

Phase 6 Efficient and sustained human-to-human transmission

The World Health Organization (WHO) continues to monitor the situation carefully.

### **United Kingdom**

When the international situation reaches WHO Phase 6 there will be 4 alert levels in the UK:

UK alert level 1 No cases in the UK

UK alert level 2 Virus isolated in the UK

UK alert level 3 Outbreak(s) in the UK

UK alert level 4 Widespread activity across the UK