Childhood Infectious Diseases Policy

Classification
Policy Number: HR201601-1.0 • Version/Last Updated: 1.0 February 2016 • Audience: Public • Commencement: February 2016

Implementation Resources
- Appendix A: List of infectious diseases for notification.
- Appendix B: Sample letter - Exclusion of susceptible Primary school contacts Measles.
- Appendix C: Sample letter - Immune Primary school contacts Measles.
- Appendix D: Sample letter - Secondary school contacts.

1.0 Rationale

This policy is in place to assist school Principals to meet the NSW Department of Health requirements in regards to infectious diseases in schools.

Infectious diseases can spread rapidly within the classroom and wider school community. Although many pose minimal risk to healthy individuals, some may have adverse and long-term effects on health if undetected or untreated. Some individuals may also have particular susceptibility to, or risks associated with, certain diseases. e.g. children with suppressed immunity and pregnant women.

Schools have a duty of care to provide and maintain a healthy and safe environment for all staff, students and others working at or visiting the school, and to minimise the risk of anyone in the school community contracting an infectious disease.

2.0 Guiding Principles

2.1 Protection of the health and wellbeing of the whole school community is of paramount importance.

2.2 The school will support and protect from unlawful discrimination, harassment or vilification, any students, staff or others who have an infectious disease.

2.3 The school will safeguard the privacy of any staff, student or other person who discloses that they have an infectious disease.

2.4 Members of the school community with an infectious disease have a duty of care to minimise the risk of transmission to other members of the school community and staff.

2.5 The outline in the enrolment policy for priority of enrolment is applied regardless of a child’s immunisation status. A school must not subject a child who attends, or seeks to attend the school, to any detriment because of the child’s immunisation status.
3.0 Policy

3.1 Principals must notify their local Public Health Unit by phone as soon as possible after they are made aware that a child enrolled at the school is suffering from one of the following vaccine-preventable diseases:

- Diphtheria
- Mumps
- Poliomyelitis
- Haemophilus influenzae Type b (Hib)
- Meningococcal disease
- Rubella (“German measles”)
- Measles
- Pertussis (“whooping cough”)
- Tetanus

3.2 Children who are not vaccinated against certain infectious diseases may be excluded from school if class members are diagnosed with those diseases listed in 3.1. (see sample letter of exclusion for measles included at Appendix B). A parent is not required to apply for an exemption from attendance in cases of the child being prevented from attending school because of a direction under section 42D of the Public Health Act 1991. The principal may grant a Certificate of Exemption for the period determined by the medical officer of health.

3.3 Principals must consult with the Area Health Unit in regards to children not immunised during an outbreak of vaccine-preventable diseases, and whether a child is to be excluded from school, and for what duration.

3.4 Principals should notify the school community of the outbreak of any highly infectious diseases listed in Appendix A, or those which have particularly adverse effects on highly susceptible individuals. Fact sheets for a range of infectious diseases can be downloaded from NSW Health for the purpose of informing the community (links included in Appendix A).

3.5 Principals are encouraged to seek advice from their local Public Health Unit when they suspect an infectious disease outbreak is affecting their school, such as an outbreak of a gastrointestinal or respiratory illness.

3.6 Where there is an outbreak of any highly infectious diseases listed in Appendix A, and a staff member is pregnant, or a staff member is not vaccinated against the Vaccine Preventable Diseases listed in 3.1, and the staff member presents a medical certificate stating that they are at risk, a risk assessment will be made around the appropriate course of action.

3.7 Children being enrolled in a Catholic Primary school must provide an immunisation certificate.

3.8 Primary schools must request and record the immunisation status of each enrolled child.

3.9 Where the immunisation certificate is not, or cannot, be provided, the child is classified as not immunised and considered a “child at risk” under the Public Health Act 2010 (NSW) Sect 85.

3.10 Where a child who is not immunised is enrolled and marked as a “child at risk” the parent must be informed that the child may be excluded from school for their own protection if there is an outbreak of a vaccine-preventable disease in the school.
4.0 Procedures

4.1 Responsibility of the Principal:

4.1.1 Ongoing education of the school community as to this policy, and in particular, the need to notify immediately any diagnosis or contact with any of the infections/diseases listed in Appendix A.

4.1.2 Consult with the Area Health Unit in regards to children not immunised during an outbreak of an infectious diseases and whether a child is to be excluded from school or not.

4.1.3 Ensure an immunisation certificate is lodged and record the immunisation status of each child enrolled at the school.

4.1.4 The Principal must, on being asked to do so by a parent of the child or the Principal of another school, forward the certificate to the Principal of the other school.

4.1.5 The Principal must retain the immunisation certificate in safe custody and must produce it for inspection on request by the Public Health Officer.

4.1.6 The Principal must notify their Regional WHS Officer in the instance of an outbreak of any of the vaccine-preventable diseases listed in 3.1.

4.2 Responsibility of all staff:

4.2.1 Inform the school office immediately when notified of an infectious disease by a parent or child.

4.2.2 Distribute any notification information provided by the school office, on the same day as received.

4.3 Responsibility of the School Office:

4.3.1 Print a notification, and if applicable, a fact sheet, for all families in the affected class, upon receiving notification of an outbreak of one of the infections or diseases listed in Appendix A.

4.3.2 Distribute the information to class teachers on the same day as notification.

4.3.3 Notify all parents of the outbreak in the next weekly newsletter, in consultation with the Principal.

4.4 Responsibility of the Parents/Guardians:

4.4.1 Inform the school immediately if their child is diagnosed with any of the diseases listed in Appendix A, or have been in contact with an infected person.

4.4.2 Comply with recommended periods of exclusion as determined by the school Principal in consultation with the Area Health Unit.

4.4.3 Provide an immunisation certificate as to the immunisation history of a child.

5.0 Bases of Discretion

5.1 Method of notification of the school community will be at the discretion of the Principal.

5.2 The period of exclusion for a "child at risk" will be determined by the Principal in consultation with the Area Health Unit.

6.0 Explanatory Notes and Definitions

6.1 Infectious diseases

Those listed by the NSW Department of Health as infectious diseases requiring a period of exclusion from school and reporting by the school.
6.2 Exclusion

For the purposes of this policy, means that the particular child will be refused entry/participation in any school/class activity/function, both at the school or in an alternative location (including class activities/functions that occur out of normal school hours).

6.3 Immunisation certificate

A statement as to the immunisation history of a child issued by the Australian Childhood Immunisation Register.

6.4 Area Health Unit

Community health service based on locality. See listing by NSW Health.

6.5 Highly susceptible individuals

For the purposes of this policy, highly susceptible individuals are those who have particular vulnerability to, or risks associated with, certain diseases such as the elderly, children with suppressed immunity or pregnant women.

7.0 Supporting Documents

7.1 Related policies

- Enrolment Policy for Systemic Catholic Schools

7.2 Supporting documents

- Public Health Act 2010 (NSW)
- Department of Health - Infectious Disease Factsheets

8.0 Appendices

- Appendix A: List of infectious diseases for notification.
- Appendix B: Sample letter - Exclusion of susceptible Primary school contacts Measles.
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9.0 Classification

9.1 Policy Number: HR201601-1.0

9.2 Version: 1.0

Last modified: February 2016

This policy supersedes all previous policies relating to matters contained therein. In so much as any aspect of this policy may appear to be in conflict with another Archdiocesan system or school-based policy, then precedence is to be given to this policy.

9.3 Audience: Public

9.4 Review by: October 2017

Changing laws, legal precedents, and experience may all serve as triggers for immediate review.
9.5 Approved by Leadership Team: 8 October 2015
9.6 Endorsed by SACS Board: NA
9.7 Approved by Executive Director of Sydney Catholic Schools: 10 February 2016
9.8 Commencement Date: 10 February 2016

Related Policies
- Enrolment Policy for Systemic Catholic Schools