Public Health
Director of Public Health: Sally E Cartwright

Cambridgeshire County Council
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Dear Headteacher

We are writing to you at the start of the national influenza (flu) immunisation programme for 2026-2027. The school-aged eligible cohorts remain unchanged. All primary school aged children (from reception to year 6) and all secondary school aged children (from year 7 to year 11) will be offered free influenza vaccination. The priority is to start vaccinating children from September, as soon as vaccine is available, therefore vaccination clinics will be arranged for schools when the autumn term commences. As in previous years, Vaccination UK will be coming into schools to administer the influenza vaccination.

The childhood element of seasonal flu vaccination is vital to the health of our communities over the winter period; Department of Health & Social Care modelling has shown that doses to children are the most effective at reducing hospital admissions.

Last season's uptake in Cambridgeshire was good, with 79.1% uptake for primary and 70.4% uptake for secondary schools (UK Health Security Agency data). To maintain or improve this level of coverage and make sure that as many children are protected as possible this influenza season, headteacher support with the following is requested:

- **Please facilitate all pupils without a 'decline' response attending the influenza vaccination clinic, even if the consent form has not been returned**. Vaccination UK can contact parents during the clinic to get parental consent over the telephone. This has been shown to considerably improve uptake. In secondary schools, some older children may be able to provide their own consent if their parent/carer has not returned the consent form. The vaccination team is trained to assess competency to self-consent, whilst making every effort to obtain verbal consent from the child's parent/carer.

- Please supply Vaccination UK with class lists including parent/carer contact details when requested. This enables the vaccination team to contact the parent/carer during the clinic using the most up-to-date contact numbers.
- If Vaccination UK provide paper consent forms, please ensure that these are sent to parents/carers in good time prior to the planned vaccination clinics.

- Please send reminders to parents/carers on forthcoming vaccination clinics via your usual channels – website, newsletters or text distribution lists
- Note that an injectable influenza vaccination will be available at all school vaccination sessions as an alternative to the nasal spray vaccine for children whose parents do not accept the use of porcine gelatine in vaccines. In addition, if you feel that your parent population would benefit from translated or easy-read information on the influenza vaccination, please let the Vaccination UK team know when they contact you and these can be provided where possible.
- If you feel that parents/carers require assistance in completing the consent form, please do so where possible.

A briefing for primary schools is available here. Guidance for secondary schools on adolescent vaccination programmes including influenza is available here.

A webinar to support schools with facilitating vaccination will be held by NHSE on 14th October at 1600, you can register for this here: Vaccinations in Schools: Support for Educators | NHS England Events.

Many thanks in advance for supporting the influenza vaccination programme, which remains a critically important public health intervention to reduce morbidity and mortality in those most at risk.

Yours sincerely,

Sally E Cartwright
Director of Public Health
Cambridgeshire County Council

Sarah Callaghan
Service Director: Education
Cambridgeshire County Council

Useful resources:

- Flu vaccination films for people with a learning disability and autistic people and their family or carers.
- British Islamic Medical Association Flu Resources for the Islamic position on taking up flu vaccination and halal requirements.