



# Public Health England

Protecting and improving the nation's health  
Ref: EE201104

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To All Parents, Pupils and Staff

## Re: The Downs Primary School, CT14 7TL

This is to inform you that several pupils at the above school have reported symptoms of vomiting.

The pattern of the illness suggests it may be viral gastroenteritis. This is a common illness and quite often results in small outbreaks where a lot of people are together for a significant period of time, such as in care homes or schools.

Gastroenteritis can be caused by several different types of viruses and bacteria. The symptoms include vomiting, headache, fever and sometimes diarrhoea. The infection can be spread from person to person by the droplets produced by vomiting, or can also be spread by the faecal-oral route.

Individuals with gastroenteritis usually make a full recovery without any treatment, however if you are concerned about your child's health, and especially if your child has any unusual symptoms (e.g. fever or bloody diarrhoea), you should seek medical advice promptly.

Information on viral gastroenteritis infection is included in the appendix. To prevent further spread of this infection, all pupils and staff members who report symptoms should be excluded from school until 48 hours after the symptoms have stopped.

Yours sincerely

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## **Appendix. Viral gastroenteritis Infection**

### **What is gastroenteritis Infection?**

Gastroenteritis can be caused by several different types of viruses, for example norovirus. It is especially common in the winter months.

### **What are the symptoms?**

The symptoms often begin with nausea (feeling sick) and abdominal pain, followed by diarrhoea, vomiting, headache and mild fever.

### **How does it spread?**

The virus can be easily spread from person to person via droplets produced by vomiting. Viruses can also be spread from person to person by close contact, especially if hygiene is poor.

### **How long do the symptoms last?**

Viral gastroenteritis is usually a short illness most commonly lasting for 12-60 hours.

### **What is the incubation period?**

The incubation period is between 24 and 48 hours. A person is infectious during the acute stage of the illness and for up to 48 hours after the diarrhoea and/or vomiting has stopped.

### **How do I prevent the spread of infection?**

Always wash your hands thoroughly after using the toilet and before eating and drinking. Use soap, hot running water and clean towels. Keep towels separate for each person; better still, use disposable paper towels/kitchen roll for hand drying.

Do not handle or prepare food for other people until you have been symptom free for 48 hours.

If cleaning up vomit or diarrhoea, the surface should be washed with detergent and hot water. Paper towels or disposable cloths should be used for cleaning up and discarded immediately after use.

Toddlers potties, toilets, including the flush handles, toilet seats, toilet door handles and wash basins taps should be cleaned frequently (at least once a day) when a person has diarrhoea.

### **Is there any treatment?**

There is no specific treatment of viral gastroenteritis. It is important to drink plenty of fluids to prevent dehydration.

### **Should I stay away from work/school?**

A person remains infectious up to 48 hours after the diarrhoea and/or vomiting has stopped, therefore anyone who has been symptomatic should be excluded from work or school.