

The New School at West Heath

Policy on Human Flu Pandemic

Introduction

Avian influenza, or “bird flu”, is a contagious disease of animals caused by viruses that normally infect only birds and, less commonly, pigs. Avian influenza viruses are highly species-specific, but have, on rare occasions, crossed the species barrier to infect humans.

In domestic poultry, infection with avian influenza viruses causes two main forms of disease, distinguished by low and high extremes of virulence. The so-called “low pathogenic” form commonly causes only mild symptoms (ruffled feathers, a drop in egg production) and may easily go undetected. The highly pathogenic form is far more dramatic. It spreads very rapidly through poultry flocks, causes disease affecting multiple internal organs, and has a mortality that can approach 100%, often within 48 hours.

As such our school has developed this policy as an appropriate and effective response to the dangers of this infection affecting our life and work. Meanwhile, we will expect always to implement the highest of standards in terms of Health & Safety for our students and staff. We will follow all the appropriate recommendations from worldwide health organizations, the Government and/or the Department for Education and Skills.

Objectives

This policy is intended to ensure that we continue to keep our students and staff safe from the direct risk of harm through contracting avian influenza whilst minimising the risk of spreading the virus. Subsequently, our response in the event of the virus directly affecting our school. Meanwhile, we intend to ensure the minimum disturbance to our student’s education.

Strategies

We will ensure that all members of our School community are kept informed as appropriate, with a particular emphasis on communication with students, staff and parents and carers.

If human-to-human transmission begins to be seen in Europe and this Country, and it would seem that our School could therefore be threatened by a spread of this, then a Crisis Management Team will be set up and hold regular reviews of the situation, listen to parents, and research and implement preventative action as recommended by official sources of information. The Crisis Management Team will consist of a representative, school medical officer, senior boarding staff, teaching assistant and student representatives.

Particular attention will be paid to the arrangements we have with our catering contractor both in school and The West Heath Centre. Importantly, our risk assessments for trips and visits will have their procedures extended to consider control factors to avoid contacts with birds, both domestic and wild, as will student access to our school grounds.

We will set up a system of four “Alert Levels” to inform our response. These are: -

Alert Level Green: Global concerns about virus mutation – CURRENT STATUS

- More preventive guidelines will be set up for Trips and Visits
- Information is communicated to all students, staff parents and carers
- Response plans are elaborated in conjunction with Government guidelines
- Risks are reviewed for each new activity, particularly where there may be contact with birds for students and staff and a decision is taken on whether these may go ahead
- Crisis Management Team set up and held ready
- Agreements made about minimum staffing requirements to keep our school open
- Arrangements for staff to take time off from work to look after dependent relatives agreed
- Vaccination is encouraged if this is Government policy

Alert Level Yellow: Inefficient human-to-human transmission cases outside UK

- Crisis Management Team meets
- Protection measures are re-enforced: some travel and some activities may be cancelled after review
- we apply most stringent government recommendations
- Catering contractors’ procedures are reviewed as appropriate
- Staff begin to prepare for possible delivery of courses remotely

Alert Level Orange: Pandemic cases outside UK, or inefficient human-to-human cases in UK

- All Trips and Visits cancelled
- Regular information meetings
- School remains open unless specific quarantine for endemic cases in school proximity
- Catering contractors’ procedures are reviewed as appropriate
- Risk assessment done before any visitors are allowed in school from areas where there is pandemic (including prospective parents and students, and job applicants)

- Quarantine arrangements for students or staff who may have been abroad where pandemic cases
- Staff, students, parents and carers advised not to travel to these areas
- Staff finalise arrangements for possible delivery of courses remotely

Alert Level Red: Pandemic cases in UK

- We follow UK Government plan
- School may be closed (on Government or Strategic Co-ordinating Group advice)
- Daily communication by mail, e-mail and website
- If closed, students marked in register to show authorised absence.
- Students follow courses by e-mail and other remote methods

Alert Levels moving down:

- Quarantine arrangements for students or staff who may have been near pandemic cases

Implementation and Monitoring

Human Flu Pandemic	
This Policy should be read in conjunction with the following policies:	
Appendices: Avian Influenza Leaflet	
Monitoring of Policy Implementation is the responsibility of: The Senior Leadership Team	
Lead responsibility:	Vice Principal - Residential
Relevant Legislation:	To be detailed in the next release
Annual Policy Review Required:	Yes / No
Approved by: H&S. Committee	Date approved: 09/2007
Ratified by: Trustees	Date ratified: 10/2007
Reviewed – no changes	Date:
Reviewed – with revisions	Date:
Revision No.	1.0

- ❑ Invite the local health department, and other medical providers as necessary, to participate in the review and revision of the safety and emergency plans.
- ❑ Review existing employee sick leave policies and student absence policies to ensure they are consistent with safety and emergency preparedness plans.
- ❑ Ensure that safety and emergency preparedness plans include a crisis communications strategy addressing the pandemic status and response action within the school that takes into account cultural and language differences.

Collaboration with health community

- ❑ Participate in the local health department pandemic planning process to ensure that school interests are represented.
- ❑ Maintain contact with public health and education officials who can provide regular updates on pandemic status.
- ❑ Work with local health department to create a system to provide updates on student and staff health, such as an increase in absenteeism that may signal an outbreak.

Prevention

- ❑ Promote current infection control policies such as good hygiene with the help of the local health department.
- ❑ Reduce anxiety within schools and the community by providing information about avian influenza facts and myths.

Additional issues to consider

- ❑ Given that frequent hand washing is one of the simplest and most effective ways to limit a contagious infection, do the policies, practices and facilities in place promote or inhibit this preventative activity?
- ❑ Do emergency plans anticipate situations and events that might result from an outbreak (e.g. student and staff absences) and consider how they would affect student learning and school operations?
- ❑ If school closure is deemed to be the most effective means of reducing exposure to the flu, does the district's plan address subsequent impacts? Examples of challenges school communities with closed facilities may experience include: communicating with parents, the loss of meals for disadvantaged students, maintaining continuity of classroom instruction, adapting to schools being used as overflow emergency medical facilities, making up for lost days, alternative methods for instruction (e.g. Web-based) and maintenance of district office functions (e.g. payroll).

Further reading

U.S. Department of Education, Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools

Practical Information on Crisis Planning: A Guide for Schools and Communities (February 2006)
www.ed.gov/admins/lead/safety/emergencyplan/crisisplanning.pdf

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

www.cdc.gov/flu/avian/gen-info/avian-flu-humans.htm

Transmission of Influenza A Viruses Between Animals and People:
www.cdc.gov/flu/avian/gen-info/transmission.htm

Avian Influenza: Current Situation:
www.cdc.gov/flu/avian/outbreaks/current.htm

World Health Organization

Cumulative Number of Confirmed Human Cases of Avian Influenza (2003-2006):
www.who.int/csr/disease/avian_influenza/country/cases_table_2006_03_r3/en/index.html

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Pandemic Flu Factsheet:
www.hhs.gov/nvpo/pandemics/dhhs.html

American Public Health Association

The Nation's Health: "Response plans prepare for avian influenza outbreak: Progress made on vaccine for flu strain" (October 2005):
www.apha.org/tmh/Index.cfm?fa=ADetail&ID=1323

National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases

Focus on the Flu: Seasonal Flu, Avian (Bird) Flu, and Pandemic Flu:
www3.niaid.nih.gov/news/focuson/flu/default.htm

Questions and Answers: H5N1 Avian Flu Vaccine Trials (March 2006):
www3.niaid.nih.gov/news/newsreleases/2005/H5N1QandA.htm

Focus on the Flu: Scientific Publications:
www3.niaid.nih.gov/news/focuson/flu/publications/

U.S. Homeland Security Council

National Strategy for Pandemic Influenza (November 2005):
www.whitehouse.gov/homeland/pandemic-influenza.html

California Department of Health Services, Immunization Branch

Pandemic Influenza Information
www.dhs.ca.gov/ps/dcdc/tzgroup/pandemic.htm