UK Health Security Agency

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Private and confidential

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Our ref: CIMS 201160344

Dear Parent or Guardian,

Re: Important: Meningococcal Disease Information Following a Case in School (Please Read All Pages)

You may have heard the very sad news that a student at Queen Elizabeth's Grammar School has died with suspected meningococcal disease which can cause both meningitis and septicaemia. Meningitis is when bacteria reach the meninges (the lining around the brain and spinal cord) and cause dangerous swelling. Septicaemia is when bacteria enter the bloodstream and cause blood poisoning. Both forms of meningococcal disease can trigger sepsis – an overwhelming and life-threatening immune response to infection which can lead to organ failure.

This letter gives you some information about the disease. There is no reason for you to make any change in the school routine and no reason for children to be kept at home.

We are investigating this death as part of a rapidly involving cluster in the Canterbury area. Further information regarding potentially affected settings will be communicated in the coming days.

Preventing the spread of meningococcal disease

The best way to stop the disease spreading is by giving antibiotics to the very close contacts of the patient with the illness. That usually means that only people who live in the same house as the sick child need treatment. School contacts are only very rarely at risk.

Symptoms of meningococcal disease

The risk of another case in the school is very small, but it is sensible to be aware of the main signs and symptoms of meningococcal meningitis and septicaemia, outlined below.

Some common signs and symptoms of meningococcal disease

High temperature	Rapid breathing
Vomiting or diarrhoea and stomach cramps	Joint or muscle pain
	Cold hands and feet
Severe headache	Pale blotchy skin
Stiff neck	Confusion and/or irritability
Dislike of bright light	Drowsiness or difficult to wake
Rash or bruising rash	Seizures or fits

One or more of these symptoms may develop and they can appear in any order.

Meningococcal disease can be hard to identify at first because it can be like a bad case of flu. However, anyone affected with meningococcal disease will usually become seriously ill within a few hours. You should keep checking your child if they are unwell and contact your GP (family doctor) or NHS 111 for advice if you have any concerns.

If you become worried about your child's condition, particularly if they are getting worse, seek medical help **urgently** at the closest A&E Department or by dialling 999.

Be watchful and use your instincts. Early treatment can be lifesaving.

Further information on meningococcal disease is available from:

- The Meningitis Research Foundation, www.meningitis.org telephone: 0808 800 3344
- Meningitis Now, www.meningitisnow.org telephone: 0808 80 10 388 helpline email address: helpline@meningitisnow.org

Yours sincerely,

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