



Policy Guidance in the event of a Pandemic

GENERAL

1. A pandemic is a contagious disease that spreads rapidly. Declaration of the status of a disease such as human influenza as a pandemic does not necessarily mean that the disease is deadly. Figures for the number of deaths caused by Human influenza every year in the UK are notoriously unreliable as they are mixed up with annual mortality rates and inseparable from other factors such as age, simultaneous illness and weather. Influenza is generally little worse than a bad cold unless the infected person is weakened by another condition and most people suffering the virus recover from it by self-medication. A pandemic is caused when the influenza virus mutates and spreads rapidly because human immunity to the new strain is initially non-existent or much lower than it is to strains of the virus already in circulation. A new strain might be very contagious but that does not mean that it is or will be any more dangerous than those which have already been identified. The message is that if the World Health Organisation declares a Human Influenza Pandemic staff should not be unduly alarmed but should follow the simple procedures set out in this document.

DISEASE CONTROL

2. A respiratory virus is spread most effectively when people cough or sneeze. The virus remains suspended in the air but will also survive for around 24 hours on horizontal surfaces. It can be breathed in when suspended in the air or transferred from hand to mouth. The important control practises are:
 - Anyone coughing or sneezing should cover the mouth or nose with the hand or a tissue. Hands should be washed frequently (either with soap and water or hand sanitizer). Tissues should be disposed of appropriately and immediately.
 - Horizontal surfaces in the vicinity of a cough or sneeze should be wiped down with disinfectant spray.

DECLARATION OF A PANDEMIC

3. Declaration of a pandemic does not mean that the school will automatically close. Parents will be asked to keep any child exhibiting symptoms of a cold or respiratory virus at home and any child or member of staff exhibiting such symptoms at school will be sent home.
4. If the pandemic takes hold and a significant number of pupils are infected, the Management Team will consider whether it is in the best interests of all pupils that the school is temporarily closed. As a pandemic can take hold quite quickly, the school might not be able to give much notice of a closure but every attempt will be made to give as much notice as possible.
5. Exactly the same control measures will apply to outpatients. Signs will be placed at the entrance asking visitors to stay away if they are coughing or sneezing. Outpatient clinics will continue to run but outpatients will not be allowed into the main part of the school (all the rooms to the South of Reception will be out of bounds to everyone but school staff and pupils).

SCHOOL/CLINIC CLOSURE

6. Closing the school and the clinic will be part of the measures taken in the interests of public health by reducing the opportunities for the transmission of the disease. Closure does not necessarily mean that the staff should not come to work as normal. This will be a separate decision and will only be taken if the pandemic is very severe indeed.

After completing relevant risk assessments, the Management team will communicate via letter, phone and social media what procedures are put in place to comply with relevant government guidance and minimise risks to all who enter Vbranch House.

FURTHER QUESTIONS

7. If you have any questions about this guidance note then please speak to the Chief Executive.

Kate Moss, Chief Executive