



## INFLUENZA POLICY

**Avian influenza** is a disease that affects birds. It can be carried by wild birds, though often it does not make them ill. It can therefore be easily transmitted across country borders. The disease, caused by a class of viruses, includes the infection caused by the virus sub-type H5N1 which is very dangerous particularly to domestic poultry. The disease has now reached several European countries.

H5N1 avian influenza is very difficult to transmit from birds to humans and such transmission has occurred almost entirely within those working closely with poultry. Human to human transmission is virtually unknown. The main worries as far as the UK is concerned are:

- that the disease reaches the UK, and poultry is affected;
- that there is bird-man transmission within the poultry industry causing the illness in humans;
- that the virus H5N1 mutates (probably via human already infected with one of the human influenza viruses) and the mutated virus is then easily transmissible between humans. There would be no “inbuilt resistance” to such a virus which could, though not necessarily, cause a severe and dangerous “human-type influenza” with a high mortality rate. A pandemic, which occurs from time to time with human influenza, would then be likely.

**Swine influenza:** an acute and highly contagious respiratory disease of swine caused by the orthomyxovirus thought to be the same virus that caused the 1918 influenza pandemic.

### **Prevention of infection:**

Reasonably effective ways to reduce the transmission of influenza include good personal health and hygiene habits such as: not touching your eyes, nose or mouth; frequent hand washing (with soap and water, or with alcohol-based hand rubs; these have been installed throughout the Junior School); covering coughs and sneezes; avoiding close contact with sick people; and staying home yourself if you are sick. Avoiding spitting is also recommended.

Since influenza spreads through both aerosols and contact with contaminated surfaces, surface sanitizing may help prevent some infections. Alcohol is an effective sanitizer against influenza viruses, while quaternary ammonium compounds can be used with alcohol so that the sanitizing effect lasts for longer.

### **Preventing complications in children**

Watch for emergency warning signs that need urgent medical attention. These warning signs include:

- Fast breathing or trouble breathing
- Bluish or grey skin color
- Not drinking enough fluids
- Not urinating or no tears when crying
- Severe or persistent vomiting
- Not waking up or not interacting
- Being so irritable that the child does not want to be held
- Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen
- Sudden dizziness
- Confusion
- Flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough.

### **Schools' policy**

**Avian Influenza:** At present, the virus has not reached the UK bird population. It is possible, though not inevitable, that it will do so. There is no evidence, even in those areas long infected, that bird-human transmission is anything other than difficult and uncommon. There is no evidence, anywhere in the world, of facile human-human transmission. At this stage, then, the schools' view is that there is nothing to be done other than to explain the policy that would apply if the situation were to change.

**Swine Influenza:** This virus has reached the UK and Guernsey. There is evidence that preventing the spread of the infection in school communities is difficult. The School will continue to discourage the early return to school of children and staff who have been diagnosed with Swine Influenza. Preventative measures have been put in place and parents have been advised to keep pupils at home if they display any of the known symptoms.

Lowering the risk of infections is important and pupils, parents and staff will be advised of the following measures that will be put into place:

- Cover the nose and mouth with a tissue when coughing or sneezing. Throw tissues in the specific bin after use;
- Wash hands often with soap and water, especially after coughing or sneezing. Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective;

- Avoid touching the eyes, nose, or mouth. Germs spread this way;
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people;
- Those sick with flu-like illness are recommended to stay home for at least 48 hours after their fever is gone, except to get medical care or for other necessities. (The fever should be gone without the use of a fever-reducing medicine.) The sickened are advised to keep away from others as much as possible to avoid making others sick.

If the situation were to worsen;

- College will act with due regard to recommendations from worldwide and national health organisations, such as the Chief Medical Officer and appropriate government agencies, such as the Health Protection Agency, the DfE and local government in Guernsey (particularly the States' Education Department). Advice to schools given by the Medical Officers in Schools' Association (MOSA) will be kept under review.
- The College Senior Management Team will keep under review any threat of human-to-human transmission as it unfolds. The SMT will seek medical advice as necessary and keep the Board of Directors informed.
- Other groups such as our Caterers and hirers of College facilities will be asked to provide information from their perspective.
- Risk assessments for trips/visit etc., will, as necessary be extended to consider factors such as likely contact with birds.

Thereafter we will:

- inform parents promptly of the school's response;
- update that response regularly in line with the emerging situation;
- use email, intranet, internet and other appropriate means to inform parents, so that advice is prompt and easily accessible;

**Elizabeth College Policy** identifies the following levels of alert for **Avian Influenza**

**Green** – Global concern about virus mutation

**Action**

Review of risks; drawing up of risk assessments; more preventative guidelines; communication with school constituencies; school responses to Government; DfE advice including vaccination policy; SMT aware.

**Yellow** – some evidence of human-to-human transmission cases outside UK.

**Action**

Protection measures identified; viability of overseas trips reviewed; recommendations from Government; DfE, SED etc. acted upon; catering procedures reviewed; consideration of how to deliver work to pupils\*<sup>1</sup>, should schools be required to close e.g. external access to school's Intranet, delivery of courses by email.

\*<sup>1</sup> Particularly with regard to those pupils in the final year of courses leading to external examinations.

**Amber** – Pandemic outside UK some human-to-human cases in UK but not Guernsey.

**Action**

All off-island trips, visits, exchanges cancelled; school open unless local guidance or specific quarantine for endemic cases locally dictates otherwise; caterers' procedures reviewed; risk assessment on all visitors from areas where there is pandemic; quarantine for pupils/staff who may have been in affected areas abroad; staff and pupils advised not to travel to such areas; final plans drawn up for remote delivery of courses where practicable.

**Red** – Pandemic in UK and cases Guernsey

**Action**

Follow UK Government plans; probable school closure\*<sup>2</sup>; daily communication with staff/pupils by mail; electronically and website; where possible pupils follow courses via remote access.

\*<sup>2</sup> School closure to be kept under review in light of latest national and local guidance.

Thereafter as alert levels reduce there may need to be "quarantine" arrangements (i.e. exclusion from school on medical grounds) for those who may have been near pandemic cases or otherwise exposed to risk of infection.

**Useful information**

Useful sources of further information can be found at:

Department of Health – [www.dh.gov.uk](http://www.dh.gov.uk), and then putting "avian flu" or "swine flu" into the "search this site" box;

Health Protection Agency – [www.hps.org.uk/infections](http://www.hps.org.uk/infections)

MOSA – [www.mosa.org](http://www.mosa.org)