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Carolyn Millham
Assistant Principal

November 15, 2011

Dear MBS Parents,

Late in the day on Monday, I was notified by the Health Department that one of our MBS students has been diagnosed with pertussis (whooping cough). This student was not in school on Monday and will be out for the rest of the week for treatment; however, other students could have been exposed prior to this week. Please see the attached letter from the Health Department outlining what you should do if your child has any cough symptoms.

At MBS we held a brief staff meeting outlining the steps staff should take including extra hand washing, cough etiquette (coughing into sleeves) and sending any students with cough symptoms to the nurse for evaluation. Any students who I am concerned about, I have contacted families and suggested by the health department to be referred to their physician for consultation. Additionally, we will increase our building and school classroom cleaning with our custodial staff.

Most children have been vaccinated for pertussis, however, if your child is NOT immunized, you may want to also contact your child's physician for advice on how to proceed given the diagnosis of pertussis in our building. As always, please call me directly at 264-5904 if your child is ill. If you do suspect a cough and get advice from your child's doctor about treatment or monitoring, please let me know at this number so I can monitor this outbreak closely.

Rest assured we will monitor your child's symptoms and keep you posted if we have any individual concerns. The good news is with vacation next week; this will hopefully be behind us after our Thanksgiving Holiday.

Sincerely,

Tammy Frieberg RN

MBS School Nurse

Julie Benay

MBS Principal

November 15, 2011

Dear Parent/Guardian:

This letter is to provide information about Pertussis. This infection has been diagnosed in our community and other Vermont communities. You can help to reduce the spread of this serious infection. Pertussis, also known as "whooping cough," is a contagious disease that is spread through the air when infected people cough. While immunization protects most children during the elementary school years, protection from the vaccine lessens over time. *Pertussis can infect fully immunized individuals of all ages.*

Pertussis begins with cold symptoms and an irritating cough, which usually becomes increasingly severe over 1-2 weeks. Symptoms often include a series of coughs, sometimes followed by a whooping noise. However, older children, adults and very young infants may not develop the whoop. Vomiting may occur after a coughing episode. There is generally no fever.

Antibiotic treatment early in the disease may decrease the severity of symptoms and reduce the infectiousness of the ill person. Antibiotics are also recommended for close contacts of pertussis cases in order to prevent them from contracting and transmitting the disease.

Please consider the following Vermont Department of Health recommendations:

1. If your child has a cough that has persisted for one week or more, contact your physician to have your child evaluated for pertussis.
2. Please use and teach good health manners to children. Stay home when sick! Cover coughs and sneezes. Properly dispose of used tissues, and then wash hands thoroughly with soap and warm water. Washing hands regularly is simple, cheap, and an important action to prevent the spread of infection. Keep unwashed hands away from the eyes, nose and mouth.
3. Children or staff diagnosed with pertussis or suspected pertussis should be excluded from school and other public settings until they have completed 5 days of the antibiotic treatment for pertussis. Asymptomatic contacts are not excluded.
4. The Vermont Department of Health recommends that all adolescents, ages 11-18 years, receive a single (booster) dose of Tdap vaccine. Adults, especially those who have, or anticipate having, close contact with an infant should receive a single dose of Tdap vaccine. Please consult your child's/your health care provider.
5. Children less than 1 year old, particularly infants under 6 months of age, are most likely to experience severe illness if they develop pertussis. When possible, young infants should be kept away from people with a cough. Babies with any coughing illness or choking episodes should be promptly evaluated by their physician.

School Nurses and the Vermont Department of Health work together closely to determine who is a close contact when a Pertussis case is diagnosed. Please notify the school nurse and the Vermont Department of Health if anyone in your household is diagnosed with Pertussis *or suspected Pertussis*. If you have questions, please call the Vermont Department of Health at (802) 863-7240 or 863-7323. 11/01/11