

London Borough of Waltham Forest
Waltham Forest Town Hall
Fellowship Square
London E17 4JF

To:

Headteachers

10th January 2023

Re: Update on Winter Vaccinations in Secondary Schools

I am writing to you to update you on the upcoming routine vaccination programmes which will start in secondary schools from January and to ask for your support in helping us to protect as many young people from disease as possible.

Flu vaccination programme

This year, the number of elderly and very young people admitted to hospital as a result of the flu is around 10 times higher compared to last year. From this we know that this year's flu strain is much stronger than we have seen in previous years - for this reason it is vital that we do everything we can to increase uptake of the flu vaccine this year. Doing so will not only protect vulnerable students and family members from ill-health over the winter months but also help to keep more children in school over the winter by reducing sickness absence at your school.

Starting in January, our vaccination provider (Vaccination UK) will be visiting secondary schools to administer flu vaccinations to secondary school children as part of the UK's routine vaccination schedule.

Due to issues of low stock this year, only secondary school children in year 7, 8 & 9 will be eligible to receive a flu vaccination as part of this year's flu vaccination programme, at least for the time being. For all children in these year groups, (except those for whom the nasal spray isn't suitable), the vaccine is given as a nasal spray rather than an injection. The nasal spray vaccine contains porcine gelatine (derived from pigs). Parents who would rather their children receive the flu injection which doesn't contain porcine can specify this on the e-consent form provided by Vaccination UK (paper consent forms are also available from Vaccination UK).

Human Papillomavirus (HPV) Vaccine

Vaccination UK will also be visiting secondary schools in January to give children in year 8 the first dose of the HPV vaccine.

The HPV vaccine protects against several types of cancer which are caused by the human papillomavirus, namely: cervical cancer; mouth and throat cancers and cancers of the anal and genital areas. Two doses of the vaccine are needed to give protection against these cancers, with the second dose given 6-24 months after the first.

It's really important that both girls and boys get this vaccine as HPV infection is very common. Over 70% of those who do not get vaccinated are likely to be infected by HPV, which can lead to several types of cancer and also genital warts.

DPT/MenACWY vaccine

In February, Vaccination UK will visit schools to administer both the DPT (3-in-1 teenage booster) and MenACWY vaccines to children in year 9.

The DPT vaccine, otherwise known as the 3-in-1 teenage booster protects against three different diseases: diphtheria, polio and tetanus. As part of the routine vaccine schedule in the UK, children should receive 5 doses of the diphtheria, polio and tetanus vaccines to be fully protected against these diseases. The 3-in-1 teenage booster given in year 9 is the fifth and final dose of this vaccine.

The MenACWY vaccine is given to children in year 9 and offered again to children in year 10 who missed this. A single dose of the vaccine is enough to protect children against meningitis and blood poisoning (septicaemia), these can lead to life-changing disabilities such as amputations, hearing loss and brain damage.

Actions for secondary schools

To support our work in seeking to prevent ill-health among the borough's secondary school children, I am asking that secondary schools support the school vaccination team (Vaccination UK) by undertaking the following actions:

- **Provide Vaccination UK with a class list for year groups being offered vaccination** which includes the child's full name, date of birth, gender and form group. This will ensure that only those who have consented to vaccination are vaccinated. This list should also include contact numbers and e-mail addresses for parents of each child to allow Vaccination UK to contact parents that haven't returned consent forms on the day of the clinic. The sharing of this information between schools and providers of school-age vaccination providers is entirely lawful under the GDPR and Data Protection Act (DPA 2018). Class lists should be sent to walthamforest@V-uk.co.uk as soon as possible.
- **Share the links to the e-consent forms with parents** and encourage them to complete this, regardless of whether they decide to give consent for their child to be vaccinated or not. Links to e-consent forms can be found in the attached letter to parents/guardians. Paper consent forms can be requested from Vaccination UK.
- **Assist the vaccination team in facilitating the visiting and re-visiting your school** If uptake is low, it might be necessary for Vaccination UK to organise a 'catch-up' session at your school.
- **Promote school and community vaccination clinics** with parents, issuing reminders as clinic days approach, we will provide templates for this that schools should feel free to adapt
- **Nominate a staff member** to take lead responsibility for facilitating the immunisation sessions. This staff member will arrange a timetable for the day and make sure all children are efficiently brought down to see the vaccination team

The team can also answer any other questions you may have about this process:

Vaccination UK email: walthamforest@v-uk.co.uk / Vaccination UK telephone: 0208 017 4291

We would be grateful if you could circulate the attached letter to parents/guardians to give them the latest information regarding the upcoming vaccination programmes, as well as the accompanying information from Vaccination UK about catch-up clinics running throughout the borough.

We really appreciate your support in helping us to protect children from ill-health and as always, if you have any questions regarding the upcoming winter vaccinations or any other childhood immunisations, please get in touch by emailing Public.Health@walthamforest.gov.uk

Kind regards,



Joe McDonnell
Director of Public Health
Waltham Forest Council