Dear Parents/Carers

Education and Children’s Services have been working with other Aberdeenshire Council Services and NHS Grampian Health Protection Team to put together guidance on managing gastrointestinal infection within schools.  It is expected that schools promote/raise awareness of this subject 3 times per year within the school community.  After the Christmas holidays is one of the recommended times.

**Norovirus**, sometimes referred to as the **winter vomiting bug**, is the most common cause of gastrointestinal outbreaks and can occur in the community-schools and nurseries in particular, especially at this time of year.

**What are the symptoms?**

The symptoms caused by noroviruses are usually a sudden onset of non-bloody, watery **diarrhoea and/or vomiting** which can be projectile, usually lasting 1-2 days.  Other symptoms may include abdominal cramps, muscle aches, headache, a feeling of weakness and a slightly raised temperature.  Staff/pupils can become symptom free then relapse with more symptoms a few days later.

Norovirus infection can occur throughout the year but is most common from mid-October to April.  The virus is highly contagious; therefore,isolation is key in stopping the spread of infection by limiting the contact between sick staff/pupils and those who could contract the illness.  Staff/pupils who are sick should stay home from school until they have recovered.

**What should you do if your child is unwell?**

• Make sure they get lots of rest.

• Ensure they drink plenty of fluids, taking sips rather than gulps to avoid vomiting.

• If you have any concerns about your child’s health, contact your GP. Or call NHS 24 Scotland on 111.

• Please ring the school and let them know that your child is ill and what symptoms they have.

• Keep them at home until they are well enough to return to school. However, if your child has been suffering from diarrhoea and vomiting **KEEP THEM AT HOME UNTIL THEY HAVE BEEN FREE OF SYMPTOMS FOR 48 HOURS.**

**How can you prevent the spread of these infections?**

Hand washing is one of the most important ways to prevent the spread of both of these infections. This applies to the child who is ill and the person looking after them. Hands should always be washed, using liquid soap if possible:

• Before and after caring for your child

• After using the toilet.

• Before eating or handling food.

• After cleaning up a mess (vomit, faeces or urine).

Hand sanitizers are not effective against Norovirus.

**Other ways of preventing the spread of infection are to:**

• Keep a separate towel for family members who have symptoms.

• Dispose promptly of used tissues and other items that your child may have coughed or sneezed on.

• Wash soiled clothing, bed linen and towels in a washing machine. Use the hottest wash for that fabric.

• Clean baths and washbasins thoroughly and disinfect after use.

• If cleaning up diarrhoea or vomit, wash the surface with hot soapy water and disinfect before allowing to dry. If using bleach remember that it can remove the colour from fabrics and can burn the skin. Keep your child away from other children and people that are particularly vulnerable, e.g. the elderly and those with chronic illnesses.

Yours sincerely

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Aberdeenshire Council Education and Children’s Services

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**‘Being the best we can be’**

**Respect-Honesty-Responsibility-Kindness-Hardworking**