Dear Principal,

You must be aware of the recent increase in acute respiratory illnesses, including seasonal influenza and COVID-19, within our community. Since mid-July 2024, Queensland Health has reported a significant rise in influenza cases and hospitalisations. Additionally, there has been a recent surge in pertussis (whooping cough) notifications, predominantly affecting school-aged children. These diseases are highly contagious and can pose a significant risk to our school community.

In light of these developments, we kindly request your attention to the following measures to safeguard the health of all students and staff:

1. **Infection control guideline**: Adhere to the [latest infection control guidelines from the Department of Education](https://url.au.m.mimecastprotect.com/s/z0JBCp81X0fn3Bw9tPfwuGZxOm?domain=education.qld.gov.au), including hand hygiene, environmental hygiene, and immunisations.
2. **Monitoring absenteeism**: Remind parents and staff to provide specific reasons for absences. This can enable the school to track and identify any unusual patterns or surges in respiratory illnesses among students and staff. Those who are unwell should stay home and seek medical advice promptly. Refer to [Queensland Health’s “Time out” resource](https://url.au.m.mimecastprotect.com/s/GiBeCq71Mvh8jo21SXhWuEkzFS?domain=health.qld.gov.au) for the recommended minimum exclusion periods for different infectious diseases:

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| **Condition** | **Recommendation** |
| COVID–19 | Exclude until symptoms have resolved, normally 5–7 days. |
| Influenza and influenza-like illness | Exclude until symptoms have resolved, normally 5–7 days |
| Pertussis (whooping cough) | Exclude until 5 days aft­er starting appropriate antibiotics or for 21 days from onset of cough AND confirmed that they are not infectious\*Notify Wide Bay Public Health Unit promptly if the patient has had contact with a pregnant staff in your school |

1. **Regular communication**: Keep parents and staff informed with regular updates about the current situation, including any measures being implemented and relevant infection control and health advice.
2. **Infection control advice**: If your school requires any advice on infection control or management of infectious disease outbreaks, please contact the Wide Bay Public Health Unit at (07) 4184 1800 or wbphu-cdc@health.qld.gov.au .
3. **Promoting influenza immunisation**: Influenza immunisation remains one of the most effective ways to prevent influenza-related illness and death. This year, all Queensland residents over the age of 6 months can access the influenza vaccine for free. Your support in promoting this among staff and students is crucial to protecting our community.

Thank you for your attention to this matter and for your ongoing dedication to maintaining a safe and healthy school environment for all students and staff. Should you have any questions or require further assistance, please do not hesitate to reach out to us at (07) 4184 1800 or wbphu-cdc@health.qld.gov.au.

Yours faithfully,



Dr Josette Chor

Director of Public Health/Public Health Physician

Wide Bay Public Health Unit