

Dear Parents/Guardians,

As we head into the fall season, this is a quick reminder to be mindful of the beginning of cold and flu season. It is important that we work together to keep our children healthy. Viruses/Common Colds spread easily among children in schools, and families with school-age children have more infections than others. By keeping our children flu-free, we benefit the community as a whole. You can help prevent the spread of flu and the common cold or help your child get better if he/she does get sick by following a few simple steps:

- If possible, you and your child should get a flu shot to help prevent infection with the flu.
- **Remind your child to cover his/her nose and mouth with a tissue when sneezing or coughing and dispose of the tissue immediately. We teach them to cough or sneeze into the bend of their elbow, or to cough down into the front of their own shirt to help keep as many germs as possible off of the hands.**
- Have your child wash his/her hands frequently with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds.
- Use hand sanitizer if soap and water is not available. Always follow with soap and water as soon as it is available.
- Disinfect frequently-touched surfaces and shared items at least once a day.
- Ensure that bathrooms are stocked with soap, hand towels and tissues.
- **Teach your child not to touch his/her mouth, nose and eyes.**
- **If your child is sick and has a fever, keep him/her at home to prevent the spread of illness to others.**
- **Your child should be naturally fever free (temp below 100 degrees, per DHEC guidelines, without Tylenol or Motrin) for at least 24 hours before returning to school. This is very important!**

A good rule of thumb is to keep your child at home if he or she has a fever of 100 degrees or more. When temperature is present in the morning prior to school (99.0 or greater) it will only climb higher as the day progresses. If your child has cold or flu symptoms as well, please do not give Tylenol or Motrin to cover the fever and send them to school. As soon as the medicine wears off, the fever will return and you will have exposed your child's classmates and teachers to your child's illness. Also, when your child has fever, he/she is even more at risk for other illnesses/ viral infections. There are many reasons why it is best to keep a sick child at home.

Flu is a serious illness and **children with the flu should not come to school.** Flu symptoms include fever, chills, cough, sore throat, headache, and muscle aches. You must contact the doctor with these symptoms. If you are unsure about the symptoms, contact your doctor early.

Cold symptoms include stuffy nose, sneezing, sore throat, and hacking cough. Colds often come on gradually, and are usually not serious. However, symptoms can become severe and you may need to keep your child at home to get rest and plenty of fluids to prevent worsening of symptoms. If you are treating the symptoms with "cold medicines" at home prior to school, please be sure that they are the non-drowsy type medicines so that your child will be able to stay awake. Save the "night time" medicines for bedtime. Again, if your child has a fever (100 degrees or more) he/she should stay at home until fever free for at least 24 hours. If your child does develop a fever along with cold symptoms, you will want to contact the child's doctor.