

September 24, 2019

Dear Parents,

First, I'd like to thank you all for your warm welcome. Thank you to all who have stopped by my office and introduced yourself. Forgive me if I don't remember your name right away, I'm not as good as Sr. Noreen or Fr. George at remembering names.

We have had several kinds of sickness floating throughout the school so far this September. Children have been presenting to me with runny noses, coughing, headaches, sore throats and "stomach aches". A couple have come in with an ear ache here and there. Every child that comes in to see me because they are not feeling well has their temperature taken first to see if they have a fever. So far, none have had a fever. If they are not febrile, I will not send them home or call you unless they come to me multiple times and their symptoms are persistent.

I'm trying to figure out my "frequent flyers" and I certainly have a few of those. I know my younger son was a frequent flyer when he was here, especially in his younger years. I try my best to send a note home with each student when they come in, but some days are truly hard to do that as I literally have 5 students in at a time and the flow of visitors is constant. I have been trying to send an email or give a call if your child's symptoms seem like they might need to be watched closer to see if their symptoms worsen and or if I think they should be seen by a doctor. There have been many times where I can't make a call because of the volume of students coming in, so I will send an email as soon as I can. If their symptoms warrant imminent medical attention of course I will track you down. I believe once the initial "paperwork season" gets sorted out, I'll be more efficient at getting better correspondence if I feel it's needed. I have called a couple parents and talked with them about their child who is in my office. These parents know their children well enough to know that their child really isn't sick and that they just need some words of encouragement to get back to class. Thank you to those parents...usually they don't want to listen to me that they're truly fine and can go back to class.

I will also do my best to send out correspondence when there are multiple episodes of sickness presenting at school. Right now, we do have several cases of strep throat and earlier in the month, we had some students who had a stomach virus. In addition, many have had common cold symptoms. The culprit of most common cold symptoms is the rhinovirus. Please try and keep your child home if they have a persistent cough, persistent sneezing, or an excessive runny nose even if they have no fever. Most times with a rhinovirus a child won't have a fever and if they do it will be a low-grade fever. Even though your child may not have a fever, you should keep your child home especially if their symptoms are persistent, so that we can reduce the risk of exposure to other students, teachers and staff. The common cold is spread by droplets so if a child is sneezing and coughing persistently or if they are coughing and sneezing into their hands and touching desks, door handles, or other surfaces around them, it will spread it quickly.

Strep Throat is a bacterial infection and can be caught by breathing in droplets of someone who is infected, by touching objects that have droplets on them and then touching your nose or mouth and by sharing drinks with those who are infected with Strep Throat. Common signs and symptoms include fever, a sore throat that starts quickly, pain when swallowing, red and swollen tonsils that will sometimes have white patches on them, and swollen lymph nodes in the front of the neck. Other less common symptoms may include, headache, stomach pain and nausea or vomiting. Your child must be on antibiotics for 24 hours before they can return to school. As I mentioned when I spoke on Back To School Night, please remember to throw out your child's toothbrush with-in 12 – 24hours of them being on antibiotics.

I think we are all aware of the signs and symptoms of a stomach virus...unfortunately. To prevent any illnesses from spreading at home and hopefully school, please be sure to demonstrate for your child how they should wash their hands. I have helped some of the little ones with doing this. Remind them of these important steps:

- Use warm water (never hot water and not cold water)
- Use soap (it does not have to be anti-bacterial soap)
- Scrub/rub hands vigorously in a circular-“ish” motion (front and back of hands) while singing the alphabet (about 20 seconds)
- This last step is important...Show them how to turn off the water faucet with their elbow or by using a towel. The reason for this is that they have touched the faucet handles with “germs” on their hands. Hopefully they have cleaned them well and then they essentially put the “germs” right back on their hands by touching the faucet handles again. While you’re probably thinking I’m a hypochondriac, I certainly not, but I know as well as you that proper handwashing technique, and frequent handwashing helps reduce the spread of germs. It’s even been proven scientifically...yes that is me trying to be funny.

This is also a reminder to please send in your child’s updated paperwork. The forms needed are:

- Annual Pre-Participation Physical Form
 - Part 1 (2 pages) filled out by parent; Part 2 (2 pages) filled out by child’s physician
- Health Update (only filled out by parent) if your child had a physical earlier this year and you already handed in paperwork to Mrs. Ruane last school year.
- Permission to Share Information about your child form (for each child).
- Medication Form if your child needs medication filled out by your child’s physician. You must provide me with the medication labeled with your child’s name on it as well as the paperwork of course.

I feel like you’re all probably hearing the teacher “voice” from Peanuts right now. Thank you so much for your time reading this letter.

Best regards,

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