**Whooping Cough (Pertussis)**

Dear Parents and Carers

There has been a confirmed case of Whooping Cough in the school. We are writing to give you detailed information regarding this condition as this disease is contagious.

**Description**

Whooping cough is a bacterial infection of the nose and throat caused by *Bordetella pertussis*. The illness often begins with ‘cold-like’ symptoms and general unwellness. After 3-7 days a dry cough develops. The cough is usually present for many weeks and may last for months. The coughing is immediately followed by a deep breath in, resulting in the typical whoop. Some people do not whoop, but coughing may be followed by vomiting.

**Incubation period**
6-20 days, most commonly 7-10 days.

**Infectious period**

Pertussis is highly infectious when the “cold-like” symptoms occur in the early stages. Without treatment, a person is infectious for the first three weeks of coughing. With appropriate antibiotic therapy, the person is no longer infectious to others five days after starting antibiotics.

**Control of the spread**

Vaccination of infants at two, four and six months, followed by a booster dose at 4 years. A person with whooping cough should be excluded from school until five days after starting antibiotic treatment. Unimmunised contacts should be excluded from school for 14 days after the last exposure to infection or until they have been on antibiotic treatment for at least 5 days. Any school contacts of a person with whooping cough should seek medical advice if they develop any symptoms.

**Treatment**

Appropriate antibiotic therapy, given in the early stages of infection, may prevent or lessen the severity of symptoms. Treatment later in the infection reduces the spread of the disease, though it may not lessen symptoms.

*Courtesy of You’ve Got What? – Department of Human Services (SA) 1998*

Helen Ward
Principal
2 June 2014