29 August 2012

Dear Parents, Students and Staff

Case of Whooping Cough (Pertussis)

The Moreton Bay Public Health Unit has been notified of a case of whooping cough occurring in your school.

Whooping cough is a highly infectious illness that is spread by coughing and sneezing. The illness is troublesome and distressing at any age but can be very serious in young infants.

Vaccination gives good protection to young children, but unfortunately this protection does wane with time. Whooping cough may still occur in older children and adults who were fully immunised in early childhood.

The following precautions are recommended to prevent spread of whooping cough in your school:

- We recommend that anyone with a **persistent cough** should see their local doctor immediately. Students with symptoms **should not attend classes** until they have been advised they are able to by their Doctor. Early diagnosis and treatment of this illness is important to limit the spread of whooping cough in the School and the community. **If whooping cough is detected early in its course, treatment will reduce the time it is infectious to other people.**

- The National Health and Medical Research Council recommends that all cases of whooping cough are excluded from classes for a period of 21 days from onset of symptoms or until they have received five days of a seven day course of antibiotics.

- It is very important to ensure that all young children are up to date with their vaccinations. Protection against whooping cough is included in the routine vaccinations given to children at 2 months, 4 months, 6 months and at 4 years. **If younger children have missed any of these vaccinations they can still be vaccinated against whooping cough up until their 8th birthday with government-funded vaccine.**

- For adults who have not received a whooping cough vaccine in the last 10 years (or since childhood), a **once only dose of adult booster vaccine** (Boostrix or Adacel) is available at your local GP. This vaccine provides a booster vaccination for whooping cough, tetanus and diphtheria. This vaccine is recommended for all child care workers, parents planning pregnancy or for parents of newborn children as soon as possible after delivery. Please speak to your doctor if you wish to discuss having this vaccine.

A Queensland Health fact sheet on whooping cough is enclosed for your information. If you have any concerns please arrange to contact your doctor.

Dr Susan Vlack
Public Health Physician