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On Wednesday, 18 January Marshall Watkinson, a Year 6 learner at the Grace Darling Campus of the Northumberland Church of England Academy, was admitted to hospital with suspected meningitis/scepticaemia. We deeply regret that he subsequently died that day.

Our thoughts and prayers are with his family at this difficult time.

We have taken advice from the North East Health Protection Agency, who have issued the following advice.

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## **MENINGITIS INFORMATION FOR SCHOOL CONTACTS**

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A pupil at your child's school who was admitted to hospital with suspected meningitis / blood poisoning due to the meningococcal germ has sadly died.

This letter is to give you some information about the disease. There is no reason to make any change in the school routine and no reason for children to be kept at home.

### **How the disease spreads**

The disease is not very infectious and it very rarely spreads from child to child within a school. The germ which causes the illness lives naturally in the back of the throat and spreads between people in droplets from the mouth and nose. Many people carry the germ in their throats without becoming unwell.

### **Preventing the spread of meningitis/blood poisoning**

We try to stop the disease spreading by giving antibiotics to the very close family contacts of the patient with the illness. That usually means that only people who live in the same house as the sick child need treatment. School contacts are only very rarely at a higher risk and therefore do not normally need antibiotics or investigation. The people who need antibiotics have already been identified and given them.

### **Symptoms of meningococcal meningitis/blood poisoning**

Although the risk of another case in the school is very small, it is sensible to be aware of the signs and symptoms:

- High Temperature
- Vomiting
- Severe Headache
- Stiff Neck
- Dislike of bright light
- Bruising Rash
- Rapid Breathing
- Cold hands and feet
- Joint or muscle pain
- Drowsiness or confusion

Not all of these signs may show at once, but someone with this illness will become very ill. The illness may progress over one or two days, but it can develop very rapidly, sometimes in a matter of hours.

The early signs can be similar to a bad 'flu', but **BE WATCHFUL** and use your instincts. **IF SOMEONE BECOMES ILL WITH SOME OF THESE SIGNS OR SYMPTOMS, CONTACT THE DOCTOR URGENTLY** and ask for advice.

**Further information**

**North East Health Protection Unit 0844 225 3550**

**24-hour helplines**

Meningitis Trust 0800 028 1828

Meningitis Research Foundation 0808 800 3344

NHS Direct 0845 46 47

**Websites**

Meningitis Trust ([www.meningitis-trust.org](http://www.meningitis-trust.org))

Meningitis Research Foundation ([www.meningitis.org](http://www.meningitis.org))

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