Dear Parents/Caregivers

There have been recently confirmed cases of whooping cough reported to the College. We ask that you please check your child for any signs of whooping cough. The cough is the clue to the diagnosis which gradually (after approximately a week to 10 days) develops into a series of rapid consecutive coughs followed by a deep, hurried taking in of air. This produces the characteristic whoop.

Children affected must be taken to a doctor for correct diagnosis and then kept home until appropriate treatment has been completed.

Parents are requested to ensure that the child is no longer contagious before the child returns to school. If an affected child is noticed at the College, he/she will be isolated from the other children and parents/caregivers will be contacted and requested to collect the child.

Please notify the College immediately if you suspect or can confirm your child has this condition. This will enable us to control any outbreaks quickly. Your information will be treated in strict confidence.

Please contact the College if you have any queries or concerns.

I have included up-to-date information for parents (please see over page).

Yours sincerely

Don Grimmett
Principal
Whooping Cough (Pertussis)

Whooping Cough (Pertussis) is a bacterial infection of the nose and throat caused by *Bordetella Pertussis*.

**How Whooping Cough is Spread**
Whooping cough is spread when an infected person talks, coughs or sneezes small droplets containing infectious agents into the air. The droplets in the air may be breathed in by those nearby. Infection may be spread by contact with hands, tissues and other articles soiled by infected nose and throat discharges.

**Signs and Symptoms**
The illness often begins with cold-like symptoms such as a runny nose, sore watery red eyes, low-grade fever and general unwellness. However, these symptoms are not present in all people.

After 3 to 7 days, a dry cough develops:
- the cough is usually present for many weeks and may last for months
- the cough is classically paroxysmal, that is, a prolonged fit of coughing occurs
- frequently, the coughing is immediately followed by a deep breath in, resulting in the typical whoop – hence the name ‘whooping cough’ – but some people do not whoop
- the cough may be followed by vomiting.

Whooping cough kills about 250,000 children worldwide every year and many surviving children are left with brain damage. Other serious complications include pneumonia, bleeding into the nose, eyes or brain or development of hernias.

**Diagnosis**
Diagnosis is most accurately made by PCR (polymerase chain reaction) testing in a pathology laboratory of mucus from the nose and throat, combined with clinical history, although blood tests are still used in some places.

**Incubation Period** *(time between becoming infected and developing symptoms)*
4 to 21 days, most commonly 7 to 10 days.

**Infectious Period** *(time during which an infected person can infect others)*
Whooping cough is highly infectious when the ‘cold-like’ symptoms occur in the early stages. Without treatment, a person is infectious for the first 3 weeks of coughing. With appropriate antibiotic therapy, the person is no longer infectious to others 5 days after starting antibiotics.

**Treatment**
Appropriate antibiotic therapy, given in the early stages of infection, may prevent or lessen the severity of symptoms. Treatment within 2 weeks of onset of the cough reduces the spread of the disease, though it may not lessen symptoms.
**Prevention**
Protection against whooping cough is provided by a Whooping Cough containing vaccine as part of the routine childhood immunisation.

Cover your nose and mouth when sneezing or coughing. Dispose of soiled tissues appropriately. Wash hands after contact with soiled articles, such as tissues.

If there is a young child under 6 months of age in the same household as the person with whooping cough or a woman in the late stages of pregnancy, it is recommended that all household members receive preventive antibiotics. It is important that anyone with suspicious symptoms see their doctor so that an accurate diagnosis can be made and treatment commenced, if necessary.

**Exclusion Periods**
*A person with whooping cough should be excluded from childcare, preschool, school and work* until 5 days after starting antibiotic treatment. If not treated, he/she should be excluded for 21 days from the start of any cough.