

7<sup>th</sup> February 2024

Dear Parents and Staff of Gold Coast schools,

**Re: Whooping Cough (Pertussis) Alert**

The Gold Coast Public Health Unit advises there is an outbreak of whooping cough (pertussis) in the Gold Coast area. The majority of cases are in school aged children.

Whooping cough is a highly contagious respiratory infection that can be life threatening for babies and young children. Symptoms can range in severity from quite mild to coughing fits which often end with a gag or a vomit. Whooping cough usually starts with symptoms typical of a head cold with a runny nose, sneezing and tiredness and then the cough develops.

The Qld Health fact sheet on whooping cough provides further general information [Whooping cough \(pertussis\) | Health and wellbeing | Queensland Government \(www.qld.gov.au\)](https://www.health.qld.gov.au/health-and-wellbeing/communicable-diseases/whooping-cough-pertussis)

***If you have any concerns about the symptoms of whooping cough in your child, then you should exclude them from school and take them to your doctor as soon as possible.***

All children or staff diagnosed with whooping cough are to be excluded from the school until they have received either 5 days of an appropriate antibiotic (please see your GP) or excluded for 21 days from the onset of coughing.

Please consider the following recommendations to protect you, your family and your community from whooping cough:

1. Please not send your child to school with a cough or cold symptoms.
2. Remind your child to use a tissue or the inside of their arm when they cough or sneeze, throw tissues away after use and wash their hands regularly.
3. Make sure your family is fully up to date with all their vaccinations. Vaccination against whooping cough is included in vaccinations given at 2, 4, 6 and 18 months and 4 years.
4. A funded booster vaccine against whooping cough is currently provided for Year 7 students through the School Based Vaccination program.
5. Pregnant women from 20 weeks gestation are recommended to have a whooping cough vaccine each pregnancy.
6. The whooping cough containing vaccine is recommended (not funded) for those working with young children such as health care workers, child care workers and teachers and is available on prescription from your GP or at a Gold Coast Health immunisation clinic – visit [www.health.qld.gov.au/immuniseGC](http://www.health.qld.gov.au/immuniseGC)

Vaccination gives good protection, but this protection does wane with time.

Your understanding and co-operation in this matter is appreciated.

Yours sincerely,  
**Communicable Disease Control team**  
**Gold Coast Public Health Unit**