



Hand, Foot and Mouth Disease Policy

St Charles Catholic Pre-school

Purpose

Hand, Foot and Mouth Disease (HFMD) is a common and highly contagious childhood illness. It can spread easily within preschool environments through close contact, respiratory droplets, contact with saliva, faeces and fluid from the blisters.

At St Charles Catholic Preschool, we recognise that current national guidance does not require a child with hand, foot and mouth disease to be excluded from an early years setting once they are well enough to attend.

However, due to the highly contagious nature of the illness, the close contact between young children and the difficulty of maintaining hygiene during play, eating and personal care, St Charles Catholic Preschool has adopted a stricter setting-specific approach to help reduce the spread of infection.

Our Policy

Where a child has been diagnosed with, or is showing symptoms consistent with, hand, foot and mouth disease, parents/carers must inform the pre-school as soon as possible.

Although national guidance does not require a specific exclusion period, St Charles Catholic Preschool asks that children remain at home for a minimum of 5 days from the onset of symptoms and/or until the blisters have scabbed over, whichever is later.

This additional exclusion period is a preschool policy and is intended to reduce the risk of transmission to other children, families and staff.

Why We Have This Policy

HFMD can spread very easily in a pre-school environment. Children are often in close contact with one another, share resources and equipment, and may touch their faces and mouths frequently.

The infection can be spread through:

- Coughs and sneezes.
- Saliva and respiratory secretions.

- Contact with fluid from blisters.
- Contact with faeces, particularly during nappy changing or toileting.
- Contaminated hands, toys and surfaces.

Children are generally most infectious during the first few days of illness, although the virus can continue to be present in faeces for longer.

Our additional exclusion period is therefore intended as a precautionary measure within our preschool setting and is not being presented as a national government exclusion requirement.

Returning to Pre-school

Before returning, children should:

- Have completed the pre-school's **minimum 5-day exclusion period**.
- Be well enough to participate comfortably in the preschool day.
- Not have a high temperature.
- Have blisters that have **scabbed over**, where applicable.
- Be able to manage normal activities without requiring care that cannot reasonably be provided within the pre-school environment.

If a child remains unwell, has a high temperature or is not well enough to participate in normal activities, they should remain at home until they are well enough to return.

Hygiene and Infection Control

The preschool will continue to follow robust hygiene procedures to reduce the spread of infection, including:

- Regular handwashing with soap and water.
- Supporting children to wash their hands regularly, particularly after using the toilet and before eating.
- Thorough cleaning of toys, equipment and frequently touched surfaces.
- Appropriate hygiene procedures during nappy changing and toileting.
- Safe disposal of tissues and contaminated materials.
- Encouraging children not to share cups, cutlery or other personal items.
- Maintaining good ventilation where appropriate.

Parents/carers should also notify the preschool if their child has been diagnosed with HFMD so that staff can monitor for any further cases and reinforce infection-control measures.

Other Illness Symptoms

If a child develops symptoms of HFMD while attending preschool, parents/carers may be contacted and asked to collect their child, particularly if the child is unwell, has a high temperature, is distressed or is unable to participate comfortably in the session.

If there are several cases within the preschool, the setting will consider whether further advice should be sought from the local Health Protection Team.

Important Note for Parents and Carers

We understand that keeping a child at home can be difficult for families, particularly when children may appear well after the initial symptoms have improved.

Our 5-day and blister policy is St Charles Catholic Preschool's own precautionary policy. It is not intended to suggest that this is the current national exclusion requirement. The policy has been introduced because we believe the additional precaution is appropriate for our particular preschool environment and helps us reduce the spread of infection among our young children, families and staff.

Policy reviewed: October 2026

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