



February 2024

By email only

**Reference Number: NIO.19.02.24.02**

**Re: Importance of MMR vaccine and being measles aware**

Dear Principal,

In recent months there has been a rise in cases of measles in parts of the UK and Europe. On 7<sup>th</sup> February the HSE reported the death of an adult with confirmed measles. This is the first confirmed measles case notified in Ireland in 2024.

The HSE is writing to ask for your support in raising awareness among parents, guardians and school staff about:

- watching out for symptoms of measles
- the importance of the MMR vaccine in protecting children and young people

We would appreciate if you would consider supporting efforts to prevent the spread of measles by:

1. Sharing information through your school channels about the signs of measles with parents (download a copy of the [Think Measles posters](#) from the HPSC and consider displaying in your school)
2. Encouraging parents to visit [www.immunisation.ie](http://www.immunisation.ie) for information about the importance of MMR vaccine.

We have drafted a sample letter, please do share this with parents'.

If there is a case of measles diagnosed in someone who attends your school, the local Public Health Department will be in contact to give advice to the principal.

If they have any concerns, please contact the Public Health Department in your region <https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/list/5/publichealth/publichealthdepts/contact%20us/>



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[www.immunisation.ie](http://www.immunisation.ie)  
[Twitter](#), [Instagram](#),  
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Kind regards,

Dr Lucy Jessop

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## **Importance of MMR vaccine and being measles aware**

Dear Parent/Legal Guardian,

In recent months there has been a rise in cases of measles in parts of the UK and Europe. On 7<sup>th</sup> February the HSE reported the death of an adult with confirmed measles. This is the first confirmed measles case notified in Ireland in 2024.

We are asking parents to be measles aware and to make sure your children have received their recommended MMR (measles, mumps and rubella) vaccines.

### **Be measles aware**

Measles can be unpleasant and is a potentially serious and highly infectious disease.

The symptoms of measles include:

- high fever
- cough
- runny nose
- rash, which usually appears on head and neck first and spreads to rest of body

Serious complications of measles include pneumonia and encephalitis (swelling of the brain). One in five infected may need to go to hospital and it can be fatal.

More information about measles symptoms is available at: <https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/measles/> or by searching 'HSE measles'.

If your child has been diagnosed with confirmed measles by your GP or hospital please contact your school. Children in your child's class may need to be vaccinated if they are not fully vaccinated against measles.



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## **MMR vaccine**

MMR vaccination is the best way to against measles.

Uptake of both doses of the MMR vaccine has been below 90% for some time which is of great concern because of the serious and infectious nature of measles.

## **Two doses needed**

You need two doses of the MMR vaccine to be considered fully vaccinated. The first dose is given by GP practices when children are 12 months of age. The second dose is given by HSE school vaccination teams when children are in junior infants. (In Sligo, Leitrim and Donegal this vaccine is delivered by GP practices).

## **Missed vaccines**

It is not too late to be vaccinated. The MMR vaccine is now available as a catch-up vaccine through GP practices for anyone who may have missed their first or second dose.

## **More information**

More information about MMR vaccine is available from [www.immunisation.ie](http://www.immunisation.ie)

Kind regards,

Dr Lucy Jessop

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