Insert School or Health Department Name or Logo Here

[DATE]

[ORGANIZATIONAL ADDRESS, CITY, STATE, ZIP]

[ORGANIZATIONAL PHONE NUMBER]

Dear Teachers and Staff:

An individual in the school has been [DIAGNOSED WITH/EXPOSED TO] pertussis, also known as whooping cough. As a result we are working closely with [SCHOOL OR HEALTH DEPARTMENT NAME] in response and we wish to provide you with some important information.

Pertussis can be a very serious illness, especially in the very young who haven’t had the opportunity to be completely protected through immunization. The disease is caused by a bacteria that is spread through sneezing and coughing. The time between exposure to the bacteria and disease symptoms is usually between 7 - 10 days, but in rare cases it can take up to 3 weeks.

In the early stage of illness, pertussis can resemble a common cold. Symptoms include sneezing, runny nose, mild dry cough and low-grade fever. The disease is most contagious at this time. After about 1 to 2 weeks, more serious “coughing spells” develop that can last for more than a minute and result in difficulty breathing. At the end of a coughing spell, the individual may make a high pitched “whooping” sound as they try to catch their breath. Sometimes the coughing will cause vomiting. Coughing in this latter stage of pertussis tends to be worse at night. Between spells, the individual usually feels well.

Fortunately, vaccinations against pertussis have made it a rare disease. The majority of children have been protected against it through their routine childhood immunizations. However, protection from the vaccine tends to fade over time and individuals over 10 years old should receive a booster vaccine if they haven’t already had one. Pertussis can also be treated or even prevented with antibiotics if detected early or before the disease has started.

At this time we are making the following recommendations for you:

1. Observe staff and students for any sign or symptoms (sneezing, runny nose, low-grade fever, cough) consistent with pertussis.
2. Exclude staff or students who exhibit persistent cough (> 7 days), a “whoop”, or coughing spells.
3. Refer excluded staff or students to their personal physician for testing and possible treatment.
4. Exclude individuals diagnosed with pertussis for at least 5 days after starting antibiotics, or 3 weeks after onset of symptoms if not being treated with antibiotics.

If you have any questions about this issue please contact [NAME], with [ORGANIZATION NAME] at [PHONE NUMBER] or [EMAIL]. More information is also available at www.cdc.gov/Features/Pertussis/.

Thank you,

[NAME]