

## Sample Letter: School Stationary

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May 2008

Dear Parent/Guardian, School Bus Drivers and Monitors:

We have had a confirmed case of pertussis ( whooping cough) indentified in our school. If you or your child has been around someone with pertussis, they may become sick with pertussis as well. This is especially true when the child has not received all the pertussis vaccine shots. Sometimes even if vaccines are up to date, a person may still be able to get pertussis. **There is a new vaccine called Tdap that can boost protection against pertussis. It is highly recommended for children 11 years of age and older and for adults who are regularly exposed to children.**

Pertussis is a highly contagious disease that is spread through the air by cough. Pertussis begins with cold symptoms and a cough which becomes much worse over 1-2 weeks. Symptoms usually include a long series of coughs (“coughing fits”) followed by a whooping noise. However, older children, adults and very young infants may not develop the whoop. There is generally only a slight fever. People with pertussis may have a series of coughs followed by vomiting, turning blue, or difficulty catching breath. The cough is often worse at night and cough medicines usually do not help alleviate the cough.

The incubation period for pertussis is 7 – 20 days. Persons are infectious for only the first 3 weeks following the onset of cough, even without antibiotics. All persons having close contact (usually means household members, persons sharing food or beverages and kissing) with a known infected person should consult their physicians about preventative treatment.

If your child has been in contact with someone with pertussis, antibiotics may prevent them from becoming ill and becoming nasal carriers of the bacteria. If it is longer than 21 days since the exposure antibiotics will not prevent infection. If you or your child is already having any of the symptoms described above, you should consult with a health care provider. Giving antibiotics early can help someone get well faster and lower the chances of spreading theinfection to others. If it has been longer than 21 days, the person with the cough is no longer infectious.

### **Please consider the following Department of Health recommendations:**

1. Infants under one year old, especially those under six months, are most likely to have severe symptoms if they develop pertussis. When possible, young infants should be kept away from people with a cough. **Infants with any coughing illness should be seen promptly by their doctor.**
2. The Pertussis vaccine series is only given to children under 7 years old. If you have children less than 7 years of age who have not been completely immunized against pertussis (particularly infants under one year) we recommend you talk to your child’s doctor about the benefits of vaccination. **Persons 11 years and older can benefit from a new vaccine against pertussis known as Tdap.** Receiving this vaccine will not help from this exposure but will provide future protection. Pertussis is a persistent problem in many communities.
3. If you or your child comes down with cold symptoms that include a cough, talk to your child’s doctor without delay. Tell the doctor that pertussis has been seen in your child's school setting.

If you have further concerns or questions, please refer to the enclosed information sheet or you may contact your doctor or the Dutchess County Health Department at:  
845-486-3402.

Sincerely,

**Please bring a copy of this letter with you if you go to a medical provider.**