Getting Ready for School this Autumn

A message from Jim McManus, Hertfordshire's Director of Public Health

As part of getting your child ready to start or go back to school this autumn please also take the time to check that all their vaccinations are up to date.

If you are unsure your child has had all their routine vaccinations, you can check their personal health record (Red Book) or by asking your GP. You can also check the childhood immunisation schedule online.

Getting vaccinations up to date and taking them when offered helps prevent serious illnesses. It is particularly important your child has both doses of the MMR vaccination. This protects against measles, mumps and rubella (German measles) which can cause the following problems:

Measles	• Nearly everyone will have a high fever, a rash and generally be unwell. • Children often must spend about five days in bed and could be off school for ten days - adults are likely to be ill for longer. • The complications of measles affect one in every 15 children and include chest infections, fits, encephalitis (infection of the brain), and brain damage. And measles can kill.
Mumps	• Can lead to fever, headache, and painful, swollen glands in the face, neck and jaw and can result in permanent deafness, viral meningitis (infection of the lining of the brain) and encephalitis. • It can also cause painful swelling of the testicles in males and the ovaries in females. • Mumps lasts about seven to ten days. • Before the MMR vaccine was introduced, mumps was the most common cause of viral meningitis in children under 15
Rubella (German measles)	• In children it is usually mild and can go unnoticed and causes a short-lived rash, swollen glands and a sore throat. • It is very serious for unborn babies and can seriously damage sight, hearing, heart and brain – a condition called congenital rubella syndrome (CRS). • A rubella infection in the first 3 months of pregnancy causes problems in up to nine out of ten cases and often pregnant women catch rubella from their own or their friends' children.

Vaccinations are the best way to protect against these diseases so please do check your child is up to date with them and do accept vaccinations when they are offered.

For more information about vaccinations and their benefits please visit www.nhs.uk/vaccinations or talk to your school nurse about them.