201

THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF
PHILADELPHIA

Watson T. Comly Elementary School
1001 Byberry Road
Philadelphia, PA 19116

Kate Sylvester
Principal

Phone: (215) 400-3010
Fax: (215) 400-3011

November 15, 2017

Dear Parent or Guardian:

The purpose of this letter is to inform you that a first grade student at Watson T. Comly School, following a doctor's examination, was determined to have elevated levels of lead in their blood.

The Philadelphia Department of Health is the authority when a student has elevated levels of lead in his/her blood. The Department of Health is conducting testing to trace the source the lead. They will make a final confirmation on the source.

As a precautionary measure, students have been relocated out of the classroom the student was in while testing takes place and the source of lead is identified.

Representatives with the Department of Health and School District will be at our school tomorrow to answer any questions. For more information about lead levels you can call the Lead Prevention Unit of the Philadelphia Department of Health at (215) 685-2788 or visit http://www.phila.gov/health/childhoodlead.

As more information becomes available, I will continue to update our school community.

Sincerely,

Kate Sylvester

Kate Sylvester, Principal

201

Watson T. Comly Elementary School

November 16, 2017

Kate Sylvester
Principal

Phone: (215) 400-3010
Fax: (215) 400-3011

This is a follow-up to yesterday's notice sent home to parents about a first grade student here at Comly who was determined to have elevated levels of lead in their blood.

1. When it was determined that a first grade student here at the school had elevated levels of lead in his/her blood the Philadelphia Health Department and the School District of Philadelphia were immediately notified.
2. When a child has elevated levels of lead in his/her blood The Philadelphia Department of Health is the authority that deals with the situation.
3. The Department of Health is working to identify the source of the lead. The Department will determine and report the source to the student's family and the District.
4. As a precautionary measure, the first grade class has been relocated to another classroom while testing takes place and the source of lead is identified.
5. Additionally, as a precaution, the District is assessing the school for lead sources and is removing loose paint from several areas of the school and cleaning surfaces to ensure there is no dust or debris.
6. The school will continue to be surveyed for sources of lead as a precautionary measure.
7. For more information or questions you might have about lead levels you can call the Lead Prevention Unit of the Philadelphia Department of Health at (215) 685-2788 or visit http://www.phila.gov/health/childhoodlead.

On the back is a series of frequently asked questions regarding situations revolving lead and children. I am here to answer any questions you might have and as more information becomes available, I will continue to update our school community.

Sincerely,

Kate Sylvester

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is lead?

Lead is a metal that occurs naturally in the earth's crust, but human activity — mining, burning fossil fuels and manufacturing — has caused it to become more widespread. Lead was also once used in paint and gasoline and is still used in batteries, solder, pipes, pottery, roofing materials and some cosmetics. Exposure to even low levels of lead can cause damage over time, especially in children. The greatest risk is to brain development, where irreversible damage can occur.

2. How are children exposed to lead?

Lead-based paints for homes, children's toys and household furniture have been banned in the United States since 1978. But lead-based paint is still on walls and woodwork in many older homes and apartments. Most lead poisoning in children results from eating chips of deteriorating lead-based paint.

3. Who is at risk?

Children under the age of 6 years old are at risk because they are growing so rapidly and because they tend to put their hands or other objects into their mouths including possibly paint chips.

4. What can be done to prevent exposure to lead?

- Wash hands and toys to help reduce hand-to-mouth transfer of contaminated dust or soil.
- Wash children's hands after outdoor play, before eating and at bedtime.
- Wash toys regularly. Clean dusty surfaces with a damp cloth. Run cold water. Don't use hot tap water for drinking. Prevent children from playing on soil.
- Eat a healthy diet. Regular meals and good nutrition might help lower lead absorption. Children especially need enough calcium, vitamin C and iron in their diets to help keep lead from being absorbed.
- Keep buildings well-maintained. If a building has lead-based paint, check regularly for peeling paint and fix problems promptly. Try not to sand, which generates dust particles that contain lead.

Sources:
Mayo Clinic Patient Care and Health Information: https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/lead-poisoning/symptoms-causes/syc-20354717

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: Lead Prevention Tips.
https://www.cdc.gov/nceh/lead/tips.htm

THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF PHILADELPHIA

Watson T. Comly Elementary School

November 16, 2017 Afternoon Update

Kate Sylvester
Principal

Phone: (215) 400-3010
Fax: (215) 400-3011

This is a follow-up to yesterday's notice sent home to parents about a first grade student here at Comly who was determined to have elevated levels of lead in their blood.

1. When it was determined that a first grade student here at the school had elevated levels of lead in his/her blood the Philadelphia Health Department and the School District of Philadelphia were immediately notified.
2. When a child has elevated levels of lead in his/her blood The Philadelphia Department of Health is the authority that deals with the situation.
3. The Department of Health is working to identify the source of the lead. The Department will determine and report the source to the student's family and the District.
4. As a precautionary measure, the first grade class has been relocated to another classroom.
5. Lead testing of surfaces in this first grade class will continue to take place and the class will remain closed until all results are received.
6. A comprehensive assessment is taking place throughout the school for lead.
7. Loose paint from several areas of the school has already been addressed and surfaces have been cleaned to ensure there is no dust or debris. For more information or questions you might have about lead levels you can consult your family physician and/or call the Lead Prevention Unit of the Philadelphia Department of Health at (215) 685-2788 or visit http://www.phila.gov/health/childhoodlead.

On the back is a series of frequently asked questions regarding situations revolving lead and children. I am here to answer any questions you might have and as more information becomes available, I will continue to update our school community.

Sincerely,

Kate Sylvester

Watson T. Comly Elementary School

November 21, 2017

Kate Sylvester
Principal

Phone: (215) 400-3010
Fax: (215) 400-3011

Dear Comly Families,

The purpose of this letter is to provide you with a final update on the actions taken by the School District of Philadelphia since learning a first grade student at Watson T. Comly School had elevated levels of lead in his/her blood. Upon receipt of this information, students were relocated from classroom 202 and the Philadelphia Department of Health was notified.

On Wednesday, November 15, all of the students in the classroom were relocated and testing began on that classroom. The classroom had some loose and flaking paint. As a matter of protocol, the Department of Health also tested the home of the student. Testing showed that both the child's home and the school were identified as having some sources of lead.

The School District maintenance staff removed the loose and flaking paint and resurfaced it. Then the classroom was tested again. The results concluded that the classroom is safe for students, so students returned to the classroom yesterday (Monday, November 20). We will continue to monitor building and make needed repairs to ensure safety.

A full report on this matter will be completed and will be available in the school's main office in the near future. For more information about lead you can call the Lead Prevention Unit of the Philadelphia Department of Health at (215) 685-2788 or visit http://www.phila.gov/health/childhoodlead.

Thank you for your attention on this matter. As always, I thank you for your commitment to our school. Your support is appreciated. Have a wonderful holiday weekend!

Sincerely,

Kate Sylvester, Principal