[School Letterhead]

[Date]

**Pertussis (Whooping Cough)**

Dear Parents/Guardians and Staff:

This letter is to inform you that your child may have been exposed to a case of pertussis (whooping cough) in their class at [insert school name]. Although the risk of exposure is low in this case, we would like to provide you with the following information.

**Background**

Pertussis is a bacterial infection of the respiratory tract. It is spread through the nose and throat secretions of someone with pertussis, especially when they cough or sneeze. Symptoms are long coughing spasms which may be followed by 1) a crowing sound (“whoop”) on breathing in, 2) vomiting or gagging, or 3) choking or turning blue. It often starts like a common cold, then a cough develops which gets worse over 1-2 weeks. People of all ages can be infected, whether they were vaccinated or not. Pertussis is common among adolescents and adults. They often have milder illnesses than children but can still spread the infection to others. Infants aged less than 1 year have the highest rates of reported disease. Pertussis can be a serious illness in infants, children, and persons who have a weakened immune system or other diseases such as chronic lung disease or cystic fibrosis.

A person typically develops symptoms of pertussis within 7-14 days after an exposure. Persons with pertussis are most infectious during the earliest period (when symptoms are similar to those of a minor cold) and the first 2 weeks after the onset of a cough if not already on appropriate antibiotic treatment.

**What should you do?**

Pertussis vaccine, Tdap, is available and recommended for all children less than 7 years of age. This vaccine also includes doses of tetanus and diphtheria. A booster vaccine is also available and recommended for adolescents and adults. Contact your healthcare provider or the San Luis Obispo Public Health Department at (805) 781-5500 to see if you and your child are up to date on their Tdap vaccine.

**Can my child return to childcare/school if they have Pertussis?**

If your child develops symptoms of pertussis, please:

* Take your child to their healthcare provider for an evaluation and take this letter with you. Notify the school nurse as soon as possible.
* Have your child stay home for the first 5 days of antibiotic treatment if being treated for possible pertussis.

If you have any further questions or concerns, please contact [insert school point of contact name] or call [insert contact phone number].

[School Signature]