

90% fit for school after TB outbreak

Nearly 90 percent of students infected in a tuberculosis outbreak at a middle school in August had returned to school or were able to do so by Wednesday, the government of Taojiang county, Hunan province, said on Thursday.

The outbreak occurred at Taojiang No 4 Middle School on Aug 19, prompting the Taojiang government to take emergency measures. It also immediately reported the outbreak to the Hunan provincial center for disease control and prevention, the statement said.

The government invited experts from the Hunan Center for Disease Control and the Hunan Tuberculosis Control Institute, to help with treatment. It organized four rounds of screening tests covering all staff and students at the school, as well as tests for other high-risk groups, including those who had close contact with the confirmed cases, the statement said.

The county's health authority also sterilized the school, the statement said.

In addition, the government provided computers and internet access to infected students who had to stay at home, allowing them to study online alongside their peers.

The government has also covered all medical expenses beyond those reimbursed by health insurance programs, for all infected students, the statement said.

The county government will continue to provide treatment for infected students and watch closely those who had close contact with them to prevent new cases. It will also intensify education on preventing the spread of TB among residents, it said.

The statement did not give the number of confirmed cases or the cause of the outbreak.

Neither the county's publicity department nor the school answered phone calls on Thursday.

A staff member at the Taojiang CDC said more than 30 suspected TB cases were found at the school in tests conducted in August and September. More than 20 cases have been confirmed, Beijing Youth Daily reported on Wednesday.

TB, which can spread from person to person through the air, is curable. An infected person may not show symptoms for many months, which can result in transmission of the disease to others, according to the World Health Organization.

Although the incidence of TB is declining in China, about 900,000 new cases are confirmed every year in the country, which ranks third in the world, according to the National Health and Family Planning Commission.