No increase in flu absences in Cape Breton schools

SYDNEY — Neither of the Cape Breton school boards are seeing an unusually high number of flu-related absences this year. Officials with both the Cape Breton-Victoria and the Strait regional school boards say the number of absences is on par with the same time last year. Both boards are being regularly briefed by principals on absences, to help track the effects of the H1N1 influenza pandemic.

"We have a daily report coming in from schools that deal with absences, some in great detail," said John Astleh, director of programs and student services with the Cape Breton-Victoria board. "I don't see a big trend, but if we see attendance going down 10 per cent, we dig a little deeper." said Astleh.

"We're trying to track any kind of changes. Perhaps, 10 per cent tends to be a bit of a flag point, so we see student attendance going above 10 per cent, we dig a bit deeper," said Astleh.

The other thing that we expect from principals and they will follow through with that is touching base with the public health nurse assigned to their school so that they will report absenteeism directly through public health," Astleh said.

He noted the board is also reporting the situation to the Department of Education.