Reviewer's report

Title: Estimating the costs of school closure for mitigating an influenza pandemic

Version: 4 Date: 11 January 2008

Reviewer: Erik Buskens

Reviewer's report:

Overall the manuscript is stronger. However, some issues have not quite been adequately been addressed.

With regard to the balance of the paper, i.e., the focus on costs of school mitigation without adding anything on potential savings, this is still rather poor. Below I quote the last paragraph of the discussion.

â##Epidemiological [8] and modelling studies [5-7, 9-10] have suggested that school closure can help in mitigating the effects of a pandemic, - particularly by reducing illness rates in children. This is the first study that we are aware of that has attempted to estimate the cost of such a policy. The potential benefits of school closure need to be weighed against the possible costs, to determine the best course of action.â##

Particularly the last sentence should be stressed, i.e., one cannot judge whether the costs are high if a comparison with a non-mitigation strategy is not made and if savings are ignored. This problem is not resolved by stating that e full economic evaluation will follow.

The authors should explicitly state present their study as a simplistic attempt to estimate mitigation related absenteeism and upfront costs to society associated with such a policy. Any hint as to this being costly â## with specific connotation - should be refrained from.

Have the authors considered estimating the costs associated with extra teaching efforts required to bring the children up to level? Or the cost associated with later entry into the labour force?

This would be difficult to estimate. We have not found a reliable way to estimate this, and have therefore omitted it from our analysis.

I recognise the problem but the authors could at least acknowledge the problem in their discussion.

Presently the paper seems acceptable after minor compulsory revisions with
regard to the framing of the message.

As such the article may be of interest to those involved in this particular field of research.