

27th January 2021

NHS Test and Trace: COVID-19 testing for Students

Dear Parent or Guardian,

You may have heard that testing for those without coronavirus symptoms is beginning across the country using new, quicker COVID-19 tests known as 'lateral flow devices'. This letter is to help give you more information about the testing programme in our school.

Up to one third of people who have coronavirus are asymptomatic. By testing we will help to reduce the spread in school and college settings through asymptomatic transmission. I am therefore strongly encouraging those returning to school to be tested.

Plan for testing

We will be looking to test all staff and secondary school pupils who are in school in the coming days and weeks.

Whilst the lateral flow testing for staff and students will take place, the seven day serial testing for close contacts has been postponed whilst regulatory approval is sought.

How the tests work

Those taking the test will be supervised by trained staff and volunteers. The lateral flow tests are quick and easy to undertake, using a swab of the nose and throat. Results (which take around half an hour from testing) will be shared directly with the individual participant. The school will inform the pupil of a positive test result. Where participants are under 16, parents or legal guardians will also be informed. The pupil will also receive a [text/email] notification of a positive or negative result from the online NHS system. Tests are free of charge and I enclose a leaflet with further information.

Please be aware that whilst we will have trained members of staff in the test venue, we are asking that pupils administer the test themselves and that assistance in conducting the test will not be given. If there are any instances where pupils cannot conduct the test themselves, we can make arrangements, at a mutually convenient and safe time, for parents to come in to support their child with the test.

What if my child tests positive?

If a pupil tests positive on a lateral flow device, they will be informed immediately by [school/college] and will need to self isolate immediately. The school will contact you to make arrangements for your child to go home. **The Department for Education have today confirmed that from Wednesday 27th January, individuals who test positive using an LFD test at a school site, do not need to book a PCR test.**

What happens if the test is negative?

While a small number of pupils may need to repeat the test if the first test was invalid or void for some reason, pupils who test negative will be able to stay in [school/college] and resume their activities as normal. Pupil test results will be sent directly from NHS Test and Trace to the contact email and mobile telephone number that is held for you in the school system.

What if staff or students have been in close contact with someone in [school/college] who tests positive?

The staff member or student will be notified that they are a close contact by the [school/college] and will be instructed to self-isolate as per the national guidance. There may be instances where close contacts are also contacted by NHS Test and Trace. In this instance they should notify NHS Test and Trace that they are a close contact through [school/college] and are self isolating.

What if my child develops symptoms?

This testing programme at [school/college] is for people with no symptoms. If your child develops symptoms at any time (including a high temperature; a new, continuous cough; or a loss or change to their sense of smell or taste) they must immediately self-isolate, and book a test by calling 119 or visiting <https://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test>.

We will support our staff and pupils throughout, but please contact us if you have any questions. You can contact the office by [insert contact details].

The tests are completely voluntary, free of charge and will require parental consent for students. We hope as many students as possible will take the test to minimise the risk of infections spreading in school in January and that you will support us in this effort for everyone's safety.

We will, in addition to your consent, also ask the student again immediately prior to the test and no test will be performed on a student who does not at that stage give consent. Giving consent is also indicating that you are happy for your child to conduct the test themselves.

Can you please ensure that you complete the attached consent form indicating whether you consent or not to your son/daughter taking part in the lateral flow test scheme.

Yours faithfully,

Headteacher