

2nd March 2021

NHS Test and Trace: COVID-19 Testing for Staff

Following the announcement that there will be a wider reopening of schools and colleges from 8 March, the government has confirmed its plans for regular testing for those without coronavirus symptoms. I write to you to provide more information about the testing programme that will be in place for our school.

We will be looking to test all staff as they return following this latest period of lockdown using Lateral Flow Device (LFD) tests. Along with the other protective measures we are taking, testing will allow us to help you and other staff members to work in as safe an environment as possible. Up to one third of people who have coronavirus are asymptomatic. By testing regularly we will help to reduce the spread in school and college settings through asymptomatic transmission. We are therefore strongly encouraging those returning to school to be tested.

Testing using lateral flow device (LFD) tests

LFD tests have been widely and successfully used to detect COVID-19 in asymptomatic individuals. No test is perfect, but the speed and convenience of LFD tests supports detection of the virus in asymptomatic individuals who would not otherwise be tested. They are clinically approved and are crucial in the fight against the virus. As the tests are more sensitive with higher viral loads, there is a risk of returning a negative result when viral loads are low (for example, in the early stages of infection). This is why Public Health England recommends two LFD tests 3 to 5 days apart (or 3 to 4 days for home testing), to enhance detection by picking up any cases which were not detected during the first test and to catch any new infections.

If you test positive using an LFD, it is likely that you are infectious at that moment, whereas people testing positive on a polymerase chain reaction (PCR) or lab-processed test could be in the less infectious early or late stages of disease. This means that by using the lateral flow test we can identify people with a high viral load who are the most likely to spread the virus further. A negative LFD result should not be read as a means to relax or ignore social distancing or other virus prevention measures intended to reduce transmission – LFD is an additional tool that contributes to reducing risk.

Testing of staff

All staff will now be able to conduct their tests at home and will be asked to continue testing every week.

You will be able to collect LFD test kits from school, which enables self-testing at home. You should conduct the test, before coming into work, on a Monday and Thursday each week. You may choose to complete the test the night before. The LFDs supplied do not require laboratory processing and can provide a quick result in around 30 minutes. Comprehensive guidance on self-testing is contained in the 'Instructions for Use' leaflet, which comes with the test kit. There is also a useful video to show you how to administer the test.

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLvaBZskxS7tzQYIVg7lwH5uxAD9UrSzGJ>

You will need to report your result to NHS Test and Trace as soon as the test is completed either online or by telephone as per the instructions in the home test kit. Please use this link: <https://www.gov.uk/report-covid19-result>

It is important that tests assigned to you are not used by anyone else.

Tests will be available for you to collect from the office from Friday 5th March.

Consent / Privacy

Once you have understood the testing process and have read the privacy notice, if you choose to participate, you are committing to self-administer the test and report your results (whether positive, negative or void) via the NHS Test & Trace digital platform and to school.

Testing is voluntary. Staff who decline to participate can still attend school if not symptomatic. If they begin to show symptoms, they should [get tested](#) and follow the usual national guidelines on self-isolation.

We will support our staff throughout this process but do let us know if you have any questions.

Yours faithfully,

Rob Dell