

Thursday 31st December 2020

NHS Test and Trace: COVID-19 testing for staff and students and providing consent

Dear Parent or guardian,

We are working to keep our school as safe as possible. 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 tests'.

Along with the other protective measures we are taking, these tests will help staff and students to remain in school safely. Up to one third of people who have coronavirus experience no symptoms. By testing we will help to stop the virus spread and help to keep our [school/college] open as safely as possible. The test is voluntary, but I would encourage everyone to take it.

We will be testing all staff and secondary school and college age students who want to participate from week commencing 4 January 2021.

Consent

If you are happy for your child to be tested, please fill in the form sent to you via text as an indication of your consent to your child being tested. In completing this online form, you consent to the following;

1. I have had the opportunity to consider the information provided by the school/college about the testing, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily, based on the information presented in the letter dated 31/12/2020
2. In the case of under 16s, I have discussed the testing with my child and my child is happy to participate. If on the day of testing they do not wish to take part, then they will not be made to do so and consent can be withdrawn at any time ahead of the test.
3. I consent to my child having a nose and throat swab for a lateral flow test.
4. I consent that my child's sample(s) will be tested for the presence of COVID-19.
5. I understand that if my child's results are negative on the lateral flow test I will not be contacted by the school/college except where they/you are a close contact of a confirmed positive.
6. If the lateral flow test indicates the presence of COVID-19, I consent to my child having a nose and throat swab for confirmatory PCR testing, which shall be sent the same day to an NHS Test & Trace laboratory.
7. I consent that they will need to self-isolate following a positive lateral flow test result, until the results of the confirmatory PCR have been received.

8. I agree that if my child's test results are confirmed to be positive from this PCR test, I will report this to the school / college and I understand that my child will be required to self-isolate following public health advice.

9. I consent that if a close contact of my child tests positive but my child has tested negative, they will continue to attend school / college but will be tested every day at school / college for 7 days.

Who will be carrying out the tests?

Those taking the test will be supervised by trained staff. The 'lateral flow' tests are quick and easy using a swab of your nose and throat. For under 18s, staff can oversee the swab process.

Results (which take around half an hour from testing) will be shared directly with staff and pupils participating. Where participants are under 16, parents or legal guardians will also be informed.

In studies conducted by Oxford University and Public Health England, they were shown to be as accurate in identifying a case as a PCR test (99.68% specificity). The tests have lower sensitivity but they are better at picking up cases when a person has higher viral load, hence the need to test frequently.

Testing will be offered free of charge.

What if a pupil tests positive?

Participating staff and pupils who test positive will be informed about their results individually. Where participants are under 16, parents or legal guardians will also be notified. Guidance on safe travel and additional precautions will be provided along with test results.

Pupils will need to take a further 'PCR test' (similar to those done in local and regional testing sites) on the same day (or as soon as possible). School will be able to provide these PCR test kits to perform at home or you can go to www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test or call 119 to book a follow-up test. If ordering a PCR test yourselves, they should choose to visit a drive-through test site if possible, as it is faster than requesting a home test.

During this time while they wait for the PCR result via text / email they will need to self-isolate.

If the PCR test returns a positive result you will have to self-isolate and follow the guidance from NHS Test and Trace.

What happens if the lateral flow test is negative?

Students will be able to stay in school and resume their activities as normal. A small number of pupils may need to repeat the test if the first test was invalid or void for some reason.

What if a close contact at school tests positive?

A close contact of someone in school who has tested positive for COVID-19 will be able to return to school if they agree to be tested once a day for 7 days and the test is negative. If they do not want to take the test, they will need to self-isolate as per the national guidelines. This does not apply to household members or close contacts outside of school. Further details will be provided at the time, but if you would prefer to self-isolate instead of doing daily testing, you can.

What if my child develops symptoms?

This testing programme at school is for people with no symptoms. If your child develops symptoms at any time (such as 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 call the office on 01325 300328 or email info@woodham.org.uk.

Yours faithfully,

Andrew Bell