

26th March 2021

NHS Test and Trace: COVID-19 Home Testing for Students

Dear Parents and Carers

The Department for Education has recently announced that it will roll out a programme of home testing for asymptomatic staff and students of secondary schools. Along with the other protective measures we are taking, testing will allow us to take further measures to help students learn in as safe an environment as possible. Up to one in three people who have Covid-19 have the virus without symptoms so could be transmitting the virus unknowingly. Tackling the pandemic requires identifying asymptomatic, infectious individuals. By testing, we will help to reduce the spread in schools. I am therefore strongly encouraging all students to take the tests.

Lateral Flow Device (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 (e.g. in the early stages of infection). This is why Public Health England recommend two LFD tests 3 to 4 days apart, or regular 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 a 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.

Home testing

Students will be able to take the tests every week from 26th March 2021. Students attending school will be conducting these tests, with support from family, at home. They will be given a box containing everything they need to take the tests themselves, including a detailed instruction leaflet. These will be distributed to each year group from Friday 26th March (on the same day that they had their in school tests).

Tests are free of charge and will be provided by the school.

How the tests work

Students will conduct the test, before coming into school, twice a week. 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.

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Once the test has been conducted, you must log the test result online at the website detailed in the accompanying guidance pack and you must also, separately, inform school of the test result using the Microsoft forms link that will be shared on a weekly basis. You will receive a text/email notification of a positive or negative result from NHS Test & Trace.

Consent / Privacy

We are only issuing testing kits to students who signed consent forms for the lateral flow tests which have been taken in school. That consent will also apply to the home testing.

Students who decline to participate can still attend school **if not symptomatic**.

People who decline to participate in this testing programme should follow the usual national guidelines on self-isolation and anyone should **get tested if they show symptoms**.

Thank you for your continued support in keeping school as safe as possible.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Alex Hughes', written in a cursive style.

Alex Hughes
Principal