

COVID-19 National Testing Programme:

Schools & Colleges handbook



4th Jan 2021

This guidance has been developed with the Department for Education and currently applies to **England only**. Further guidance will be developed by the devolved governments.

About the Schools & Colleges Handbook

- This handbook provides a brief overview of how to begin rapid coronavirus testing of staff, pupils or students in secondary schools and colleges from January 2021.
- The appendix to this document contains printable materials to support schools, colleges, parents and carers.
- A range of materials are available to help you support your staff, parents and pupils with rapid testing, including a detailed step-by-step '[How To Guide](#)', Training Overview, Digital Guidebook, consent form templates and instructional videos. These are available on the Schools and Colleges document sharing platform for rapid testing.
- Your school or college will receive information and updates on testing in [the daily bulletin](#), along with access to the testing support materials.
- Guidance is available for [Schools](#) and [Colleges](#) on phased return to education and should be followed.
- In a small number of schools and colleges, in areas with the highest infection or transmission rates, we will be applying our contingency framework for education. More information on the contingency framework is available at the [Contingency framework](#) webpage.

Staff and pupil/student testing – quick, safe, easy

Staff, pupils and students will be tested using a validated Lateral Flow Device.

Up to **a third of individuals who test positive for COVID-19 have no symptoms** at all and can therefore spread the virus unknowingly. That is why the testing those without symptoms is vital. Identifying those individuals will save lives. This is what is known as **‘rapid testing’**.

Initially testing will be provided for **all secondary pupils, students and staff** as they return. After this, **staff will be tested once a week** on an ongoing basis. Any pupils and staff who have symptoms should not be attending school and should be self-isolating.

Pupils, students and staff will be tested if they come into contact with a positive case. This new approach, known as **‘daily contact testing’**, will allow those who are in close contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 to return to school or college if they agree to be tested for 7 days* following last contact with a positive case and that test is negative.

Quick

Swabbing and processing of these tests will be conducted at a dedicated testing site in the school or college with **results available in around 30 minutes**.

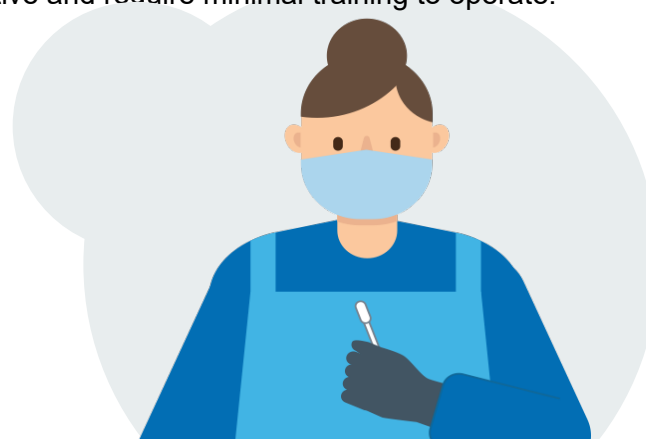
Safe

Lateral flow tests are very accurate, which means that only a very small proportion of people who do not have coronavirus will receive a positive result (false positive). The tests have lower sensitivity, but they are better at picking up cases when a person has higher viral load, and more contagious, hence the need to test frequently.

When used in combination with **other measures such as Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), washing hands regularly and social distancing**, these tests further reduce the risk of transmission. We must not relax any of these measures – this testing programme is in addition to them.

Easy

Lateral flow devices **do not require a laboratory** to process the test. The devices are designed to be intuitive and require minimal training to operate.



Lateral Flow Testing



Accessible and easy to use



No lab required, with fast results



Safe technology

* If staff, pupils or students cannot take a test (e.g. on the weekend) they should self-isolate for that day, and resume daily contact testing on their return to school / college. If they return after the 7 days are finished, then they should take one final test, and if it is negative they can return to school/college.

Who is being tested and why?

Testing is important because staff, students and pupils without symptoms could be carrying the virus and may spread it to others. Testing staff and students will support schools and colleges to operate as safely as possible.

New, simple and quick tests, known as Lateral Flow Device (LFD) tests, enable us to rapidly test pupils, students and staff, without the need for a laboratory. Secondary schools and colleges will be provided with these test kits to conduct the testing.


We will keep schools and communities safer by working together to:


- 1 Test as many secondary pupils and students on their return to school and FE colleges as possible. This means two LFDs tests three to five days apart.**
- 2 Carry out weekly testing of school and college staff**
- 3 Carry out daily contact testing for seven days of pupils and students and staff who are close contacts of a positive case**

Note: Any students or staff with symptoms should not attend school or college and should immediately self-isolate in line with [current public health guidance](#)

Lateral Flow Testing



 Accessible and easy to use

 No lab required, with fast results

 Safe technology



The components of Rapid Testing

1

Test as many secondary pupils and students on their return to school and FE colleges as possible

When returning to their school or college, pupils and students will be offered two Lateral Flow Device (LFD) tests spaced three to five days apart (minimum three days).

A positive confirmatory PCR will be required for all positive cases.

2

Carry out weekly testing of school and college staff

Staff will be offered one LFD test starting from 4 January and on an on-going weekly basis thereafter.

A positive confirmatory PCR will be required for all positive cases.

3

Carry out daily contact testing of pupils, students and staff who are close contacts of a positive case

Those identified as a close contact of someone who has tested positive will be provided with daily testing for seven days.

If they test negative on a daily basis, they can continue to attend school without having to self-isolate.



This is an alternative to isolation

Quotes from schools & colleges

“Given staff have tested negative, it has **given them a lot of confidence** to know that social distancing makes a difference”

Clare Cassidy, Sedgehill Academy.

“Routine and repeat testing at Newcastle Sixth Form College has given all of our students and staff the **reassurance** that the college is a **safe environment for them to work and study**. The **testing process is smooth** and has **minimal impact** on teaching and learning. In addition to this, the daily testing of close contacts has enabled students who would normally have had to self-isolate to continue to **attend and enjoy the benefits of face-to-face teaching**.”

Gerard Garvey, Newcastle Sixth Form College

“This has been a **game-changer** and repeat testing has kept both staff and students in school.”

Michele Chilcott, South Wilts Grammar School

“The programme has been **enormously popular with parents** who are happy that we are keeping kids in school – I have received many thanks from parents. I have really enjoyed being involved in this programme as a **contribution to society and to science**. It has been a privilege to be a part of it.”

Amanda Smith, Poole Grammar School

Workforce planning

Schools and colleges participating in testing will need to determine how many staff they need and where those staff will come from, for example existing staff and/or volunteers or agency workers. Where schools or colleges ask existing staff to undertake a testing role, employers should make sure this is in line with agreed terms and conditions of employment.

There are seven roles/job types that will need to be filled to enable schools to deliver testing. These roles are set out in the [How To Guide](#). The number of roles is not the same as the number of staff you will need to deliver testing. The size of workforce a school or college will need to deliver testing will depend on the number of staff and pupils/students, the physical space available and the time available to complete all tests.

What help is available?

- **Webinars** are available which provide more detail on how a testing centre works in practice to help answer any questions schools or colleges may have. More details are provided during these sessions on how to access more support if required to help with planning.
- **Military** support will be made available and is designed to make sure that those schools and colleges that require additional help can access it.
- **An online training package** is available to enable testing staff to prepare to carry out their role. The training package is mandatory.

Funding

Schools and colleges will receive funding to support them with testing costs incurred. We have made £78m available to support schools and colleges with the initial roll-out of mass testing. This will be paid retrospectively.

- Independent schools and colleges will not be eligible for this funding, with the exception of non-maintained special schools and independent special schools
- The amount of funding available to a school or college will depend on its size as this will impact the number of additional staff required to conduct testing. Our workforce planning tool provides illustrative workforce requirements and associated funding.

Consent

- Participating in testing is voluntary. You will gain medical consent from a test subject (or from parent and guardians of those detailed below).
- Before giving consent, the person giving consent needs to read the privacy notice to understand what will happen with their data. A template is provided on the [Schools and Colleges document sharing platform](#)

Data security and handling

A template Privacy notice has been developed, in order to meet data protection guidance, please share this with staff, parents/legal guardians, students/pupils.

Processing personal data in support of COVID-19 testing

There is a small amount of processing of personal data which will be needed as part of the testing programme. To simplify this part of the process, DfE has provided some information and templates for you to use. This does not replace your own due diligence and assurance as Data Controllers but we hope this will make these discussions and decisions easier for you.

Lawful Basis for Processing

You will need to satisfy yourself that you have a lawful basis for processing the personal data. You might want to consider whether the duties prescribed in education legislation on schools and FE institutions within the statutory FE sector to make arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils/children provide sufficient legal basis without having to rely on consent.

Privacy Notice template and Frequently Asked Questions

We have put together a Privacy Notice which outlines how the personal data is to be used in the event of both positive and negative tests and the rights that individuals have. You are not obliged to use these templates but for ease we recommend you keep as much as the original wording as possible so that parents who have children at two or more schools or colleges are not receiving conflicting information.

We recommend that you send a copy of this with your initial correspondence about the testing so that when people are making a decision about whether to agree to a test, they are doing so with a full understanding of what happens to their personal data.

We also suggest that you place a copy on your website and have it displayed in a common area of the school or college. The Frequently Asked Questions have been designed as another format for privacy information and you may find that your community respond better to the question and answer style of Privacy Notice.

If you have questions about these please contact the Data Protection Officer for DfE via dp.enquiries@education.gov.uk and mark your email “COVID Testing in Schools/Colleges – Data Protection Issues”.

If you live in Wales, Scotland or Northern Ireland, there is [country-specific information on retention of records](#) in relation to COVID-19.



Please find the template privacy notice in the separate attachment on the Schools and colleges document sharing platform.

Suggested communication activities with parents, students and staff

Activity *	Audience	Link to resources
School head teacher or college principal review the testing engagement handbook and check if they have the latest guidance and templates	School/college leader	This pack
Send letter via most appropriate channel to inform testing activities taking place	Local stakeholders, governors	Sample letter in Schools and Colleges document sharing platform
Send letter via most appropriate channel to inform testing activities taking place, attach test result guidance, privacy notice and consent form	Parents Staff Pupils/Students	Sample letter, Consent form and privacy notice in Schools and Colleges document sharing platform
Educate and raise awareness of testing activities, provide reassurance (e.g. staff meetings, parental communications, assemblies, form group discussions) and use resources to support young people to explore, learn, discuss testing and the impact of COVID-19.	Parents Staff Pupils/Students	Posters, user guides, www.storicise.com
Host Q&A session to clarify/address concerns. A list of FAQs will be available to download from the Schools and colleges document sharing platform.	Parents Staff Pupils/Students	Sample FAQs in Schools and Colleges document sharing platform
Track and ensure consent forms are received Send reminder of testing activities	Parents Staff Pupils/Students	Sample letter and consent form in Schools and Colleges document sharing platform
Send out reminder, and testing instructions, test result guidance	Parents Staff Pupils/Students	Leaflet in digital platform
Provide advice on new approach to managing close contacts of positive cases and daily 'serial contact testing' arrangements	Parents Staff Pupils/Students	Advice on when student/pupils test positive in Schools and Colleges document sharing platform
Start testing, communicate test results to staff, students/ pupils and parents as appropriate	Parents Staff Pupils/Students	Advice on serial contact testing in Schools and Colleges document sharing platform

Important Contacts

Schools and colleges in England can raise questions, concerns or report issues, via **the DfE coronavirus helpline: 0800 046 8687**. **Opening hours** Monday to Friday from 8am to 6pm, Saturday and Sunday from 10am to 6pm. You can also use this [contact form](#) to report issues relating to delivery and supply of testing kits.

Anyone with one or more of symptoms of coronavirus - a high temperature, a new continuous cough; or a loss or change in sense of smell or taste - should self-isolate and [book a test](#) or call 119 in England and Wales, or 0300 303 2713 in Scotland and Northern Ireland.

If you have an urgent media query or you or your school or college is approached by a member of the media, please [contact the Department of Health and Social Care press office](#) in the first instance.

The latest guidance and templates are available on the [DfE Portal](#).

Appendices

Useful resources to support
communication and engagement

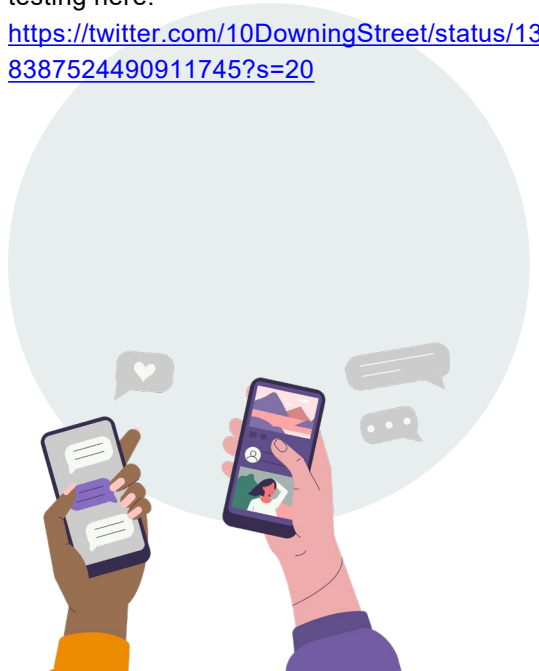
Communication

Consistent, accurate and positive communication about testing activity is essential.

We would advise communicating with parents and staff directly via existing school/college communication channels e.g. **letters/emails home using the templates provided.**

We would also encourage **proactive use of agreed materials** such as the instructional leaflets and the graphics / links on this slide, or other materials on Government social media feeds related to lateral flow / serial contact testing at schools / colleges.

There is an explainer video on lateral flow testing here:
<https://twitter.com/10DowningStreet/status/1328387524490911745?s=20>



A graphic video to mark the launch here:
<https://twitter.com/educationgovuk/status/1338819876798992387?s=20>

A video interview with Prof Tim Brooks / PHE:
<https://twitter.com/educationgovuk/status/1338909220197064705?s=20>

And with the Principal of Small Heath Leadership Academy:
<https://twitter.com/educationgovuk/status/1338907957547962369?s=20>

And please monitor our accounts for the latest information to share:
<https://twitter.com/10DowningStreet>
<https://twitter.com/DHSCgovuk>




<https://www.youtube.com/c/DepartmentofHealthandSocialCare>
<https://twitter.com/educationgovuk>

Teachers: There are also resources available for schools / colleges to talk to young people at www.storicise.com

And general materials on coronavirus including in different formats via Public Health England:
<https://coronavirusresources.phe.gov.uk/>

Lateral Flow Testing

COVID testing



- 🕒 Accessible and easy to use
- 🏠 No lab required, with fast results
- 🛡️ Safe technology

Media handling, site access and photography

A template Privacy notice has been developed to share with those participating in the tests, in order to meet data protection guidance, please share this with staff, parents/legal guardians, students/pupils.

Your support for the delivery of communication activity is welcomed and encouraged.

Please let the DHSC mass testing communications team know if you would like to invite media, distribute press releases or conduct photography and filming on site for external communications purposes.

Please give a minimum of seven days' notice for media communication about, including press notices or media visits.

All media enquiries about the mass testing programme should be directed to DHSC press office <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/depart-ment-of-health-and-social-care/about/media-enquiries>

Please share the following details:

What is the purpose of the press visit / photo shoot or filming? How is the footage going to be used?

- Who will be taking the picture, i.e. name of the agency?
- Do you need anything from the operational staff on site?



Please find below some guidance that we usually share with photographers/videographers attending the site.

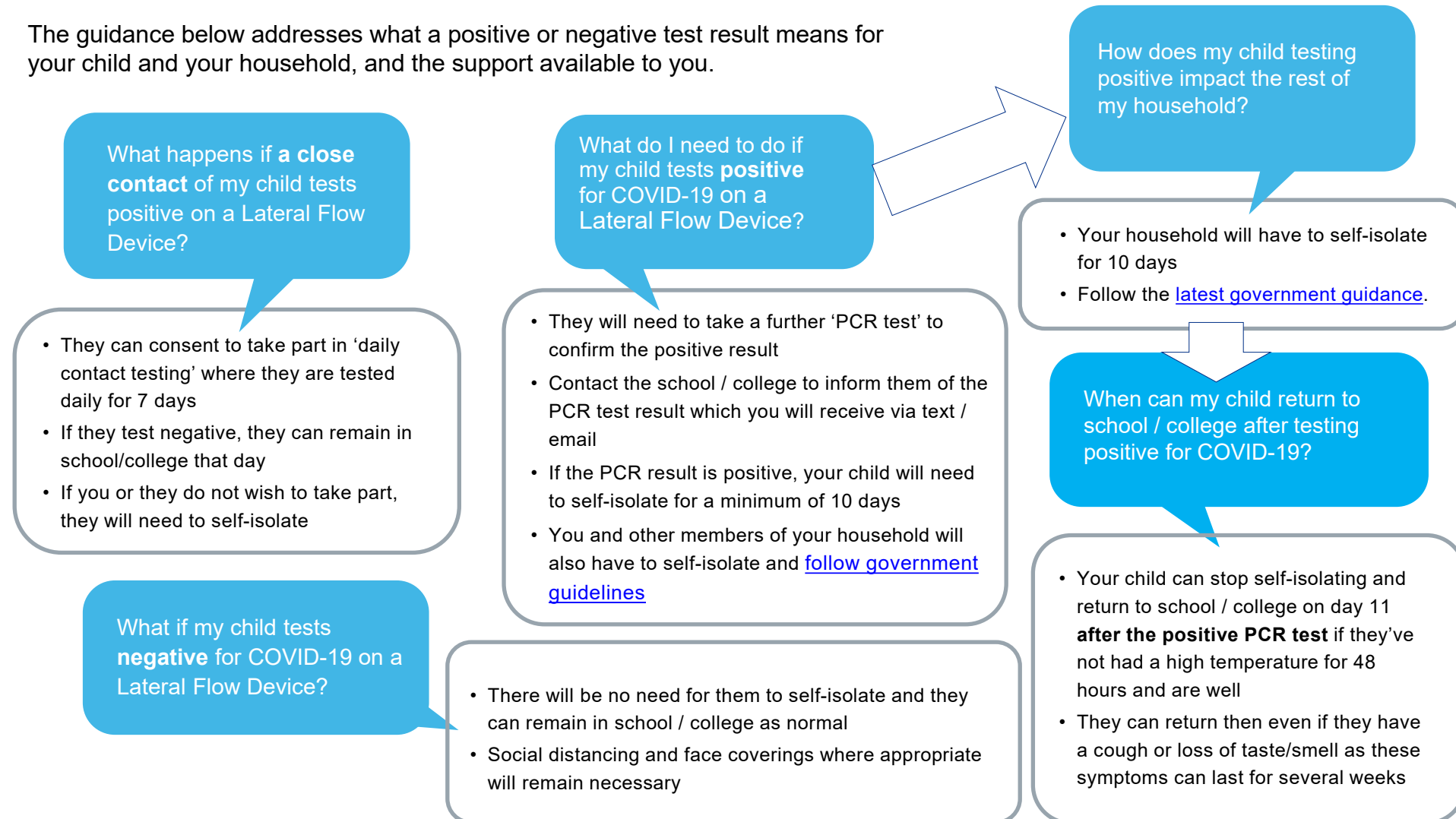
Those tested
Please protect those being tested and their identities if they have not granted permission for filming. Please avoid faces unless permission has been given.

Operational staff
Please be respectful of the teams on the site and their time. They are working extremely hard and their focus is on completing tests safely and quickly.

Visitors info
Please send your full name in advance of the visit and bring photo ID with you.

COVID-related pupil/student absence – Printable Guidance for Parents and Pupils/Students (1/2)

The guidance below addresses what a positive or negative test result means for your child and your household, and the support available to you.



What happens if a **close contact** of my child tests positive on a Lateral Flow Device?

- They can consent to take part in 'daily contact testing' where they are tested daily for 7 days
- If they test negative, they can remain in school/college that day
- If you or they do not wish to take part, they will need to self-isolate

What do I need to do if my child tests **positive** for COVID-19 on a Lateral Flow Device?

- They will need to take a further 'PCR test' to confirm the positive result
- Contact the school / college to inform them of the PCR test result which you will receive via text / email
- If the PCR result is positive, your child will need to self-isolate for a minimum of 10 days
- You and other members of your household will also have to self-isolate and [follow government guidelines](#)

How does my child testing positive impact the rest of my household?

- Your household will have to self-isolate for 10 days
- Follow the [latest government guidance](#).

When can my child return to school / college after testing positive for COVID-19?

- Your child can stop self-isolating and return to school / college on day 11 **after the positive PCR test** if they've not had a high temperature for 48 hours and are well
- They can return then even if they have a cough or loss of taste/smell as these symptoms can last for several weeks

What if my child tests **negative** for COVID-19 on a Lateral Flow Device?

- There will be no need for them to self-isolate and they can remain in school / college as normal
- Social distancing and face coverings where appropriate will remain necessary

COVID-related pupil/student absence – Printable Guidance for Parents and Pupils/Students (2/2)

The guidance below addresses what a positive or negative test result means for your child and your household, and the support available to you.

What does a positive result mean for my child's education?

We have a strong commitment to ensuring all pupils/students can access a wide range of learning resources remotely and will continue to support their education whilst they are self-isolating.

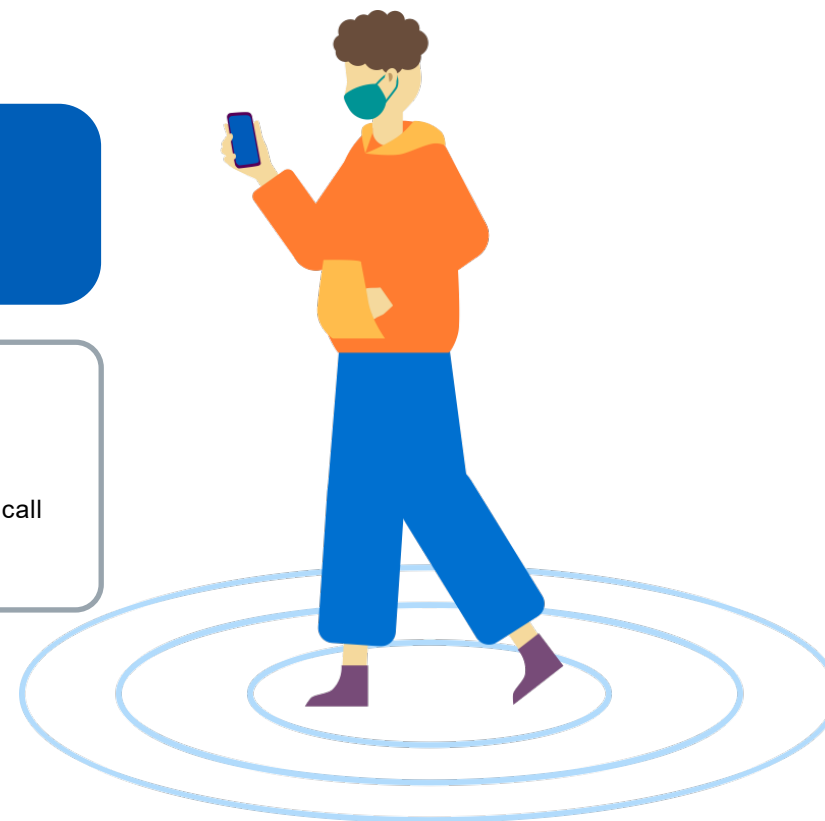
Additional information can be found <https://bit.ly/covidhomelearning>



Addressing your concerns

For more information you can visit: <https://bit.ly/covidhomelearning>
If you're worried about your child medically, visit <https://www.nhs.uk/> or call 111.

IMPORTANT: If, at any point, a student, pupil or staff member begins displaying symptoms they must [follow government guidelines](#), [order a PCR test](#) and self-isolate.



COVID-related pupil/student absence

Printable Guidance for Staff (1/2)

The guidance below addresses what a positive or negative test result means for you and your household, and the support available to you.

What do I need to do if I test **positive** for COVID-19 on a Lateral Flow Device?

- You will need to take a further 'PCR test' to confirm the positive result
- Contact the school / college to inform us of the PCR test result which you will receive via text / email
- If positive, you will need to self-isolate for a minimum of 10 days.

When can I return to school / college if I tested **positive** on a Lateral Flow Device for COVID-19?

- You can stop self-isolating and return to school / college on day 11 **after the PCR test** if you've not had a high temperature for 48 hours and are well
- You can return then even if you have a cough or loss of taste/smell as these symptoms can last for several weeks

How does testing **positive** impact the rest of my household?

- Your household will have to self-isolate for 10 days
- Follow the [latest government guidance](#).

What happens if a **close contact** of mine in school / college tests positive on a Lateral Flow Device?

- You can consent to take part in 'daily contact testing' where you are tested daily for 7 days
- If you test negative, you can remain in school/college that day
- If you do not wish to take part, you will need to self-isolate

COVID-related pupil/student absence

Printable Guidance for Staff (2/2)

The guidance below addresses what a positive or negative test result means for you and your household, and the support available to you.

What if I test **negative** for COVID-19 on a Lateral Flow Device?

- There will be no need for you to self-isolate and you can resume activities as normal.
- Social distancing and face coverings where appropriate will remain necessary and frequent hand washing is recommended.
- You may not be informed if your lateral flow test result is negative.



Addressing your concerns

If you're worried about your health, visit <https://www.nhs.uk/> or call 111.

IMPORTANT: If, at any point, a student/pupil or staff member begins displaying symptoms they must [follow government guidelines](#), [order a PCR test](#) and self-isolate.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) considerations

We have a responsibility to ensure materials and processes are accessible to all and to be mindful of potential barriers to participation.

Some guiding principles are outlined below. General materials from Public Health England in different formats / languages are available at <https://coronavirusresources.phe.gov.uk/> and we will provide further materials relating to school / college testing in due course.

Communication: Are you communicating through formats accessible to everybody including those who have disabilities, those who are digitally excluded or face language barriers? E.g. size 14 font, left aligned, clearly visible text on paper.

Engagement: Are you engaging with local communities and faith leaders whose co-operation and support can mitigate the concerns of those who have limited trust or confidence in the government?

Representation and language appropriateness: Are the visual images and language you use in your communications and across your campaign locations representative and inclusive?

Site accessibility/User guidance: Do your testing sites and guidance include reasonable provisions for those with both visible and non-visible disabilities?

Data: Do you use clear languages across your campaigns to explain what data is collected, why it is being collected and how it will be used?


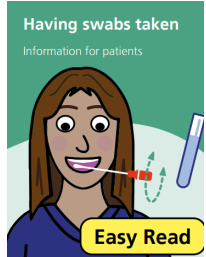
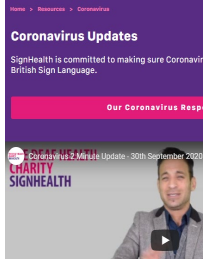
Isolation support: Have you considered the barriers vulnerable groups face to isolating and adequately communicated what resources are available from the Government and their local communities?



Additional resources 1

Resource	Access
<p>Campaign Materials from Public Health England on Test and Trace</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Posters • Signages • Social media content <p>Please note: there are a range of technologies and processes being used by NHS Test and Trace, so please check before using any of these materials.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • https://coronavirusresources.phe.gov.uk/ • https://coronavirusresources.phe.gov.uk/Test-and-Trace/
<p>Guidance for teachers, school / college leaders, carers, parents and students</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support learning during coronavirus • Pupil / student wellbeing and safety • School/college operations, exams and managing a school / college or early years setting • Funding and support for education and childcare • Student accommodation, travel and financial support • Further and higher education and vocational training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus/education-and-childcare • There are also resources available for schools/colleges to talk to young people about COVID and mass testing at www.storicise.com with more planned to be ready for schools/colleges, parents and young people to access from Jan. • DHSC have co-created a similar set of materials with the Scouts who have a set of activities for young people along similar lines which are freely available for any organisation to deliver and can be white-labelled too: https://www.scouts.org.uk/coronavirus/covid-19-the-facts/
<p>Remote learning resources and support</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak/guidance-for-full-opening-schools#section-5-contingency-planning-for-remote-education • https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/what-parents-and-carers-need-to-know-about-early-years-providers-schools-and-colleges-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak/what-parents-and-carers-need-to-know-about-early-years-providers-schools-and-colleges-in-the-autumn-term
<p>Printable action list on what to do if a pupil / student is displaying symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/928841/Symptomatic_children_action_list_SCHOOLS_FINAL_22-10.pdf

Additional resources 2

Resource		Access
<p>Test and Trace resources in alternative formats including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audio • BSL and BSL (with voiceover) • Easy read and large print formats 	 <p>Alternative Formats NHS Test and Trace</p> <p>Downloadable</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PHE coronavirus resource hub: https://coronavirusresources.phe.gov.uk/ • Most folders accessible to all; some folders restricted to .gov or .nhs email users, register here and then email partnerships@phe.gov.uk requesting superuser access
<p>Easy read guidance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gov.uk stay at home guidance and staying well during coronavirus information • Achieve together easy read guidance on what is coronavirus and getting tested • Rdash easy read information on coronavirus, face coverings, self-isolation, swab testing 	 <p>Having swabs taken Information for patients</p> <p>Easy Read</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance • https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/876996/Easy_read_looking_after_your_feelings_and_body.pdf • https://www.achievetogether.co.uk/easy-read/covid-19-easy-reads/ • https://www.rdash.nhs.uk/support-and-advice/coronavirus-information/coronavirus-british-sign-language/
<p>Coronavirus news summaries and information from various charities in various formats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signhealth news summaries in BSL • RNIB coronavirus updates e.g. on sighted guiding and wearing face coverings and helpline • SCOPE information on care, education, work, housing and more during coronavirus • Rdash BSL videos on staying alert and coronavirus FAQs • Royal National Institute for Deaf People coronavirus information and support 	 <p>Coronavirus Updates</p> <p>SignHealth is committed to making sure Coronavirus British Sign Language.</p> <p>Our Coronavirus Resp</p> <p>CHARITY SIGNHEALTH</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • https://signhealth.org.uk/resources/coronavirus/ • https://www.rnib.org.uk/coronavirus-updates • https://www.scope.org.uk/coronavirus-information/ • https://www.rdash.nhs.uk/support-and-advice/coronavirus-information/coronavirus-british-sign-language/ • https://rnid.org.uk/coronavirus-response/

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