

Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2021

## **NHS Test and Trace: COVID-19 Testing for Pupils**

Dear Families,

Following the announcement that there will be a wider reopening of schools and colleges from 8 March 2021, 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 test all staff and, where possible, secondary age pupils using Lateral Flow Device (LFD) tests. Along with the other protective measures we are taking, testing will allow staff/students to work in as safe an environment as possible. Up to one third of people who have coronavirus are asymptomatic. By testing we will help to reduce the spread of the virus in school and college settings through asymptomatic transmission. LFD testing is how we identified our most recent case of corona and it significantly reduced the time spent in the community and the number of people affected.

The government has provided specific advice for rapid testing in specialist settings, see this link for further information: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-for-full-opening-special-schools-and-other-specialist-settings/mass-asymptomatic-testing-in-specialist-settings>.

### **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 apart 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 interpreted as an opportunity 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 pupils - age 11 and above**

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When returning to school, pupils aged 11 and above will be offered three Lateral Flow Device (LFD) tests spaced three to five days apart. Those taking the test will be supervised by trained staff. This is so students have undertaken some testing in a supervised setting, and have had the chance to familiarise themselves with self-swabbing. The lateral flow devices are easy to undertake, using a swab of your nose. 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.

Following the three initial tests, pupils will 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 school, twice a week. The LFDs supplied do not require laboratory processing and 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.

[Step by step guide to COVID-19 self-testing](#)

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. Tests are free of charge and will be provided by the school. It is important that tests assigned to you are not used by anyone else.

For all families who have consented to participate in this important process, home testing kits will be distributed to pupils from Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> March. Thereafter, tests will be available for you/your child to collect from the Reception office.

### **Testing for households, childcare or support bubbles**

From 1 March 2021, if you're a member of a household, childcare bubble or support bubble of staff or a pupil you can get a twice-weekly test:

- through your employer if they offer testing to employees
- at a local test site
- by collecting a home test kit from a test site
- by ordering a home test kit online

Primary school pupils will not be asked to test at this time.

The government has provided guidance, see this link for further information:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/rapid-lateral-flow-testing-for-households-and-bubbles-of-school-pupils-and-staff>

## **Consent/Privacy**

Consent is required for on-site testing. For home testing, once you have understood the testing process and have read the privacy notice, 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.

[Link to consent form for 8<sup>th</sup> march onward testing](#)

[Link to NHS Report a COVID-19 test result](#)

[Link to School COVID-19 test register MS Form - Home testing reporting.](#)

The link to the reporting results to both the NHS and the school will also be on our website and MyEd app.

## **What if my child tests positive?**

If a pupil tests positive on a lateral flow device, they will need to self-isolate for 10 days and follow the guidance from NHS Test and Trace.

## **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/attend school and resume their activities as normal. Pupils will be informed of negative test results via text/email. Where participants are under 16, parents or legal guardians will also be informed.

## **What if staff or students have been in close contact with someone in school who tests positive?**

The staff member or student will be notified that they are a close contact by the school and will need to self-isolate for 10 days in line with Government guidance.

## **What if my child develops symptoms?**

This testing programme 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 calling 0208 099 0640.

Yours sincerely,

**Helen Ralston**

**Head of The Rise School**