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26th January 2021

NHS Test and Trace: COVID-19 testing for Students

Dear Parent and Carers,

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 devices'. This letter is to help give you more information about the testing programme in our school.

Up to one third of people who have coronavirus are asymptomatic. By testing we will help to reduce the spread in school and college settings through asymptomatic transmission. I am therefore strongly encouraging those returning to school to be tested.

Plan for testing

We will be looking to test all staff and school students when they return to school once the current period of school closure ends. Priority will be given to the exam year groups.

We are still waiting for confirmation from the Government about when school will re-open fully. The plans outlined below will be rolled out with all year groups once we know the date that school will be fully reopening. Testing of students will not take place in school while school is closed, except for the small number of students currently attending from key worker families and vulnerable backgrounds.

Further to Gavin Williamson's letter 20th January 2021, all students will be tested on their return to school, however any student who comes into contact with positive cases in school will now be asked to isolate for ten days instead of still attending school and being tested daily for seven days, as per the original guidance.

How the tests work

Those taking the test will be supervised by trained staff and volunteers. The lateral flow tests are quick and easy to undertake, using a swab of the nose and throat. Results (which take around half an hour from testing) will be shared directly with the individual participant i.e. the student.

The school will inform the student of a positive test result. Where participants are under 16, parents or legal guardians will also be informed of a positive result. The student will also receive a text and email notification of a positive or negative result from the online NHS system. Tests are free of charge.

The school will not notify parents or legal guardians of negative results, the student will be notified by the school.

What if my child tests positive?

If a student tests positive on a lateral flow device, they will be informed immediately by the school and will need to take a further 'PCR test' to confirm the result. This should be on the same day or as soon as possible afterwards. The school will be able to provide these PCR test kits to perform at home.

During the time while waiting for the PCR result (via text and email) they will need to self-isolate.

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

What happens if the test is negative?

While a small number of students may need to repeat the test if the first test was invalid or void for some reason, students who test negative will be able to stay in school and resume their activities as normal.

The school will not notify parents or legal guardians of negative results, the student will be notified by the school.

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

The student and the student's parent or legal guardian will be notified that the student is a close contact by the school. Any student who has come into contact with positive cases in our school will be asked to isolate for ten days.

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 (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 students throughout, but please contact us if you have any questions. You can contact the office by email admin@ladymargaret.lbhf.sch.uk or by calling 020 7736 7138.

Yours faithfully,

Elisabeth Stevenson
Headteacher