



# BISHOP CHALLONER CATHOLIC COLLEGE

2<sup>nd</sup> January 2021

Dear Parent or guardian,

## COVID-19 mass asymptomatic testing for staff and students

Happy New Year to our entire Bishop Challoner community.

We very much look forward to welcoming our students back to school in the coming weeks through a phased return and my letter dated 31<sup>st</sup> December gives updated details on new start dates for students.

### Mass asymptomatic testing programme

I am writing to you today to provide further information on our intentions around the mass asymptomatic testing programme that secondary schools across the country have been invited to initiate from January.

Every secondary school and college in England will have access to rapid coronavirus testing (known as 'lateral flow tests') from January to help keep staff and students as safe as possible and in education. The press release available via the link below gives a further overview of the planned testing programme in schools

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/secondary-schools-and-colleges-to-get-weekly-coronavirus-testing>

We are positive about the potential for the mass asymptomatic testing of students and staff in schools as a way of reducing the spread of the virus and enabling fewer students and staff to have to self-isolate.

### The components of mass asymptomatic testing

There are three main components of the rapid coronavirus asymptomatic testing programme in schools:

- 1) **Test as many secondary students on their return to school as possible:** When returning to their school students will be offered two 'lateral flow tests' spaced three to five days apart.
- 2) **Carry out weekly testing of school staff:** Staff will be offered one 'lateral flow test' starting in January and on an on-going weekly basis.

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- 3) **Carry out daily contact testing of 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.

### **Further information and guidance**

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 open as safely as possible. The test is voluntary, but I would encourage everyone to take it.

This BBC news article provides a summary of how mass asymptomatic testing works:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/explainers-54872039>

The following leaflet provides a brief summary of 'lateral flow testing'.

#### **Lateral flow testing information**

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. The leaflet below gives a summary of how the test is conducted.

#### **How to do your test - instructions**

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

The following leaflet provides information on what to do if a student tests positive for COVID-19 on a lateral flow device test and also some information on serial contact testing of close contacts.

#### **What to do if a student tests positive**

Further information from the DfE on results of 'lateral flow tests' can be accessed via this link

#### **DfE additional information**

In validation studies conducted by Oxford University and Public Health England, these 'lateral flow tests' were shown to be as accurate in identifying a case as a PCR test.

Testing will be offered free of charge.

Students will not be required to have had a 'lateral flow test' as a condition of being allowed to return to school.

## **Consent form and privacy statement**

We hope that the majority, if not all families, will engage with the mass asymptomatic testing programme. In order for your son/daughter to take part, we require consent; no tests will be administered without consent.

To provide consent for lateral flow testing, please follow the link below. There is further information on this registration form and a detailed explanation of exactly who can consent and what you are consenting to. **Please note that you will need to complete a separate consent form for each of your children.**

**Consent Form**

Please also read our privacy statement which explains how personal data will be processed and stored.

**COVID-19 Testing Privacy Statement**

The link below provides some answers to frequently asked questions on data protection in relation to COVID testing in schools.

**Data Protection FAQs**

## **Timescale and next steps**

We are actively working on a testing schedule which supports the phased return as outlined by the Government. Our current aim is to begin testing all staff and students who want to participate towards the end of the week commencing 4 January 2021.

Once we have received consent we will be in touch again with precise details on when tests will take place.

Setting up this rapid testing programme, is an exceptionally complex and challenging operation; we thank you for your ongoing patience and understanding.

## **Further questions**

If there are further questions that you want to ask not covered in the information already shared, please email us at [enquiry@bishopchalloner.bham.sch.uk](mailto:enquiry@bishopchalloner.bham.sch.uk) with the subject line TESTING QUESTION.

We remain resolute to offer mass asymptomatic testing to our school community. Our mission statement speaks of how we give glory to God in our service to others. We continue to live out this mission by recognising the individual and collective social responsibility we have to protect all within our communities by stopping the wider transmission of this virus. We continue to hold in our thoughts and prayers all those affected by this pandemic.

Yours faithfully,

**J Coughlan**

**Principal**