

Friday 8th January 2021

Dear Families,

RE: Roll-out of mass coronavirus testing in schools

I hope you have had a restful and enjoyable Christmas break.

You will no doubt be aware from our earlier correspondence and from media reports that the Department for Education had, prior to the decision to introduce a national lockdown, intended to stagger the return of learners to face-to-face teaching so that schools had the time to establish a mass coronavirus testing system for learners and staff.

Whilst the roll out of mass testing of all learners will be delayed until all learners return to face-to-face learning in school, vulnerable learners and the children of critical workers who are currently accessing provision in school will be offered coronavirus testing.

Learners accessing school will receive two tests, 3 to 5 days apart. They will receive their first test on Wednesday 13th January 2021 followed by a second test on Monday 18th January 2021. Learners will attend school as normal on these days and be brought to the onsite testing facility when it is their turn to be tested.

Roll-out of mass testing

We are working to keep Longdendale as safe as possible. In the coming days we will begin testing those learners and staff who are accessing provision in school without coronavirus symptoms using new, quicker COVID-19 tests known as 'lateral flow tests'.

Along with the other protective measures we are taking, these tests will help staff and learners 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 Longdendale open as safely as possible. The test is voluntary, but I would encourage everyone to take part in the testing programme.

I would be grateful if all families could complete the consent form for their child(ren)'s participation in the testing programme. Families who do not want their child to participate in the testing programme should still complete the consent form as there is an option to withdraw consent. Families only need to consent once for the testing programme. Should families wish to withdraw consent they can do this in writing at any time thereafter.

You can find the consent form by clicking [here](#).

I would be grateful if you could complete the consent form by no later than midday on Monday 11th January 2021 to give us time to schedule the testing. The families of participating learners will receive a text message to confirm when their child will be tested.



How does the test work?

When taking the test, learners will be supervised by trained staff. The 'lateral flow' tests are quick and easy, using a swab of your nose and throat. We expect all learners will swab themselves under supervision.

Results (which take around half an hour from testing) will be shared directly with participating learners and their families.

We know these tests work - in validation studies conducted by Oxford University and Public Health England, they were shown to be as accurate in identifying a case as a PCR test (99.68% specificity). The tests have lower sensitivity but they are better at picking up cases when a person has higher viral load, hence the need to test frequently.

Testing will be offered free of charge.

When will learners be tested?

Learners who participate in the testing programme will receive two tests, three to five days apart, from next week. Their current attendance at school is not conditional on them having been tested. We will contact families via text message to confirm when their child will be tested. Learners will receive two appointment to be tested.

Thereafter, learners will only be tested if they are identified as a close contact of a confirmed case of coronavirus. In this event, learners would not need to isolate, as has been the case previously, but could attend school as normal so long as they are tested every day for 7 days.

What if a learner tests positive?

Participating learners who test positive will be informed about their results individually and arrangements will be made for them to go home. Families will be notified. Guidance on safe travel and additional precautions will be provided along with test results.

Learners who test positive from a lateral flow test in school will need to take a further 'PCR test' (similar to those done in local and regional testing sites) on the same day (or as soon as possible). We will be able to provide these PCR test kits to perform at home or you can go to www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test or call 119 to book a follow-up test. If ordering a PCR test yourselves, you should choose to visit a drive-through test site if possible, as it is faster than requesting a home test.

During this time while learners wait for the PCR result (via text / email) they will need to self-isolate. If the PCR test returns a positive result you will need to self-isolate and notify school.

What happens if the test is negative?

Learners who test negative will be able to stay in school and resume their activities as normal. Families will be informed of negative test results.

A small number of learners may need to repeat the test if the first test was invalid or void for some reason.

What if a close contact at school/college tests positive?

A close contact of someone in school who has tested positive for COVID-19 will be able to return to school if they agree to be tested once a day for 7 days and the test is negative. If they do not want to take the test, they will need to self-isolate as per the national guidelines. This does not apply to household members or close contacts outside of school who will still need to self-isolate. Learners who consent to the testing programme will automatically be registered for the tests over the 7 day period. Learners who do not consent, will be expected to self-isolate.

What if my child develops symptoms?

This testing programme at Longdendale is for people with no symptoms. If your child develops symptoms at any time (such as a high temperature; a new, continuous cough; or a loss or change to their sense of smell or taste) they must immediately self-isolate, notify school and book a test by calling 119 or visiting <https://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test>.

Further information

You will find further information on testing on our school's website:

- Click [here](#) for the testing privacy notice
- Click [here](#) for data protection FAQs
- Click [here](#) for FAQs about the testing programme

Staff will be speaking with learners early next week about the testing programme and to discuss any issues or concerns learners may have.

If you require any further information prior to giving consent please do check the information on our website or contact Dr Potter at school or via email at m.potter@lhs.aspireplus.org.uk.

With much thanks for your continued support.

Yours faithfully,

Mrs A Jones
Headteacher

Dr Michael Potter
Education Welfare Manager