

13th January 2021

NHS Test and Trace: COVID-19 testing for Staff and Pupils during the current National Lockdown.

Dear Parent or Guardian,

We have been given the opportunity to test for asymptomatic cases of COVID-19 using new, quicker COVID-19 tests known as 'lateral flow devices'. At the start of term testing equipment and training information was delivered to school. This has given us the ability to set up a testing site to allow us to pick up asymptomatic cases of COVID-19 amongst, initially, the limited number of staff and pupils currently attending our school during the lockdown and then to plan for testing when schools re-open to all year groups. 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. This will make attending school during the lockdown safer for our staff, the children of key workers and other pupils who are currently attending. I am therefore encouraging those attending school to be tested, although this is entirely voluntary and will not affect a child's right to attend during this time.

Initial plan during lockdown

We are planning to offer two tests, three to five days apart, for staff and pupils attending school during the lockdown. This will help us to identify any asymptomatic cases of COVID-19. By then isolating the positive cases and their contacts for 10 days we will make our school site safer for all those that attend. This process would be repeated at regular intervals to continue to identify positive cases in those attending school.

If your child isn't attending school during the lockdown they will not be part of the initial testing process. More information will follow about how we intend to include these pupils in the testing process once the school is reopened.

How the tests work

Those taking the test will be supervised by trained 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. The school will inform the pupil of a positive test result. Where participants are under 16, parents or legal guardians will also be informed. Parents will receive notification of a positive or negative result from the online NHS system. Tests are free of charge and I attach a leaflet with further information.

What if my child tests positive?

If a pupil tests positive on a lateral flow device, they will be informed immediately by 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. 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/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 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 school and resume their activities as normal. Parents will be informed of negative test results from the online NHS System.

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

Contacts of the confirmed case will be asked to isolate for 10 days following their last contact with the confirmed case. Although in some settings daily contact testing is being used to allow contacts to remain in school this is not something, at this stage, that we will be offering. Should this change we will inform parents.

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 pupils throughout, but please contact us if you have any questions. You can contact the office by [insert contact details].

How do I opt in/out of this testing program?

We aim to start the testing process from **Thursday 21st January 2021** for the pupils attending school during lockdown. In order for us to plan effectively **ALL** parents (including those pupils who aren't attending school) are expected to complete and return their consent form by **Monday 18th January 2021**.

Parents will need to give their consent for their child to be tested. You will have been sent a link to the form in a copy of this letter on EduLink. If you have any difficulties accessing this form or have any queries about the process email the school: enquiries@admin.saintpetershigh.wigan.sch.uk

Yours faithfully,

Mr. A. McGlown

Headteacher