

5th January 2021

NHS Test and Trace: COVID-19 Testing for Staff and [Students/Pupils]

Dear Parent or Guardian,

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 we are required to follow from the Department for Education and NHS. This letter is provided by the DfE and NHS.

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. The Department for Education and NHS are strongly encouraging those returning to school to be tested.

We recognise that the self-swabbing part of the test may cause significant concerns for some children and young people with SEND and their families. Parents and carers may want to look at the Mass Testing Guidance for Specialist Settings 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>

Plan for testing

We have to test all staff and pupils that are aged 11-19 from 6th January 2021. This is only if you consent.

In addition, any staff member or student who has come into contact with positive cases in our school can be tested daily for seven days to allow them to remain in school. If they do not complete the testing they will need to self-isolate at home.

How the tests work

Those taking the test will be supervised by the School Business Manager Rima Blakaj who is trained on the process. The lateral flow devices are easy to undertake, using a swab of the nose and throat. For those who are unable to self-swab please refer to the Mass Testing Guidance for Specialist Settings for further information about options.

Results (which take around half an hour from testing) will be shared directly with the individual participant. We will inform you if your child has a positive test result. You should receive a notification of a positive or negative result from the online NHS system. Tests are free of charge and the following questions are provided and answered by the Department for Education and NHS.

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>.

What if my child tests positive?

If a pupil tests positive on a lateral flow device during the school testing, they 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. We have 10 PCR test kits provided by the DfE and can provide this to complete at home.

During the time while waiting for the PCR result (via text/email) your child 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. We are not able to use our school testing machine for this because it is required to be a DfE test kit.

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 stay in school.

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

The staff member or student will be notified that they are a close contact by the school. If close contacts agree to be tested each day for a maximum period of 7 days, and they test negative every day, they will be allowed to remain in school. There may be instances where close contacts are also contacted by NHS Test and Trace. In this instance they should notify NHS Test and Trace that they are a close contact through school/college and are participating in daily contact testing.

If they do not want to take the tests, they will need to self-isolate as per the national guidelines. The option of daily testing does not apply to household members or close contacts of a positive case outside of school who will still need to self-isolate.

We will support our staff and pupils throughout, but please contact us if you have any questions. You can contact the school on 02076818080.

Sincerely,

Swiss Cottage School on behalf of the Department for Education and NHS Testing Scheme