



Friday, 22nd January 2021

Dear Parents,

Testing Programme Clarification Letter

On Monday we began the process of daily lateral flow tests (LFTs) in our schools for asymptomatic students and staff. This process is running really smoothly across the six schools in our family of schools (four secondary schools and two primaries).

On the first day (Monday) two members of staff in one of our schools reported a positive LFT test, despite having no symptoms. These have subsequently been confirmed as positive cases through a follow up PCR test. On this occasion, the staff members had gone straight for the test on arrival at school and had not been in close contact with any other students or staff. On this basis alone we believe the LFTs, whilst manageable with our current numbers in school, are a positive step forward

Yesterday the Department for Education notified all schools and colleges across the country to pause **daily contact testing**.

There does seem to be some confusion about what this means. This is not talking about pausing the LFT altogether. 'Daily contact testing' is what the DfE had recommended we do with identified close contacts in school if there was a LFT positive test. They had suggested close contacts stay in school and are tested daily (hence the 'daily contact testing') until a subsequent test of the person who tested positive on the LFT also tested positive on the PCR. This is acknowledging that the LFT are not 100% accurate and need double checking. We had already decided in our processes that we would be taking the additional precautionary measure of sending close contacts home while we waited for the subsequent PCR test outcome.

As such, our LFT testing programme for asymptomatic individuals **did not involve contact testing**.

Were these tests not been carried out in school then in the cases where it could have been picked up by a LFT, staff and students carrying the virus have the potential to remain untraced.

Another concern of the LFT programme has been that if a member of staff or student returned a negative test of the LFT, they might assume they don't have the virus. We are already taking steps to strongly reinforce the message to students that a negative test result in school is not be taken as a free pass to relax on social distancing and hygiene measures. We should all behave 'as if' we have the virus, whether we have reported a negative on the LFT or not.

The government have stated 'there is no change to the main rollout of regular testing using rapid lateral flow tests in schools and colleges which is already proving beneficial in finding teachers and students with coronavirus who do not have symptoms'.

Outstanding education at the heart of the community

Therefore, and for the reasons outlined above, we will be continuing with our current daily testing programme. The LFT supplies in our schools are in good supply and we will continue to utilise their benefits, which we believe will go some way to help break chains of transmission across our schools.

If you **do not** wish for your child (for whom you have already given consent) to continue with our testing programme, please inform us directly of this so that we can ensure they are withdrawn from testing in their school.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Cunniffe', written in a cursive style.

Mr M Cunniffe
Head of School