

Covid-19 Schools Queries Weekly Summary

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Week Commencing 9th August 2021

For non-health related queries, schools can contact their Education Communication Lead:

- Tyldesley and Atherton/Leigh/Lowton and Golborne – Emlyn Wright: (emlyn.wright@wigan.gov.uk)
- Hindley, Abram, Platt Bridge, Ince/South Wigan and Ashton North and Wigan North: Charmaine Tarring: (C.Tarring@wigan.gov.uk)
- Wigan South – Rachel Clemow R.Clemow@wigan.gov.uk
- Cath Pealing – Secondary & Colleges (c.pealing@wigan.gov.uk)
- Matt Lowe – Special Schools (Mathew.Lowe@wigan.gov.uk)
- Jayne Challiner – Early Years & Childcare (j.challiner@wigan.gov.uk)

Note: The information in this summary was correct as of 12pm, 9th August 2021

Q. What is the latest with local Health Protection preparation for September?

As school leaders will be aware, further and more detailed guidance for schools is expected from DfE over the summer. Once this has been released, we will provide updated comms and support to schools around the guidance and preparations for September. This will include more information about the Health Protection offer to schools where there is a rise in cases in their setting. This is not likely to be before the week commencing 23rd August.

This will also include information about how schools can keep Wigan Health Protection informed about cases in their schools, which is likely to be in addition to DfE guidance advising schools to report cases to the DfE helpline.

Q. What is the latest on preparations for testing in September?

We have received the below information from the DfE via the Regional Schools Commissioner, and share with you in case it is useful to your preparations for September.

Bulk uploading of test results

This is proving to be problematic for many schools in GM, with some just reporting the positive cases, which is skewing the infection rate.

Testing leads requested that the bulk uploading of results from schools be improved ahead of the return to school in September as this is a significant barrier for many schools.

Therefore, what plans are there to improve the bulk uploading of school covid test results?

DHSC have responsibility for the reporting / bulk uploading of test results service. However, if schools could provide feedback on what works and more specifically on what doesn't including what they would like improving, we could raise this issue with DHSC to see if they can make any improvements. Just to note, schools should be reporting both positive and negative results, so if the infection rate is getting skewed because they are uploading positive results only, they should refer to the guidance [here](#) and the need to report both positive and negative results should be reiterated.

Clarification needed on the Funding of tests, Clinical insurance and liability of schools testing programme

Testing leads would like to understand what arrangements are in place by DfE regarding the funding of tests as well as clinical insurance and liability.

We have made funding available to secondary schools, colleges and specialist settings to support them with the costs associated with delivering testing of staff, pupils and students in schools and colleges since January 2021 in line with departmental policy. The purpose of this is to identify asymptomatic cases of coronavirus (COVID-19), and help to break the chains of transmission of coronavirus in education settings. We will continue to make funding available to support schools and colleges with the costs associated with on-site testing during the initial return of pupils and students in September 2021. If there is a change in policy and schools and colleges are asked to stand down their ATS, we will ensure that schools and colleges are able to recover costs that have been incurred prior to the policy change, where the costs cannot be either refunded or re-used in subsequent testing and were committed in line with the original policy.

We appreciate running an ATS when students return does require a workforce. We will continue to make funding available to support schools and colleges with the costs associated with on-site testing during the initial return of students. To help you plan for on-site ATS testing on return in the autumn, we have published an updated workforce planning tool on the secondary schools and colleges document sharing platform. There are no major changes to the tool, however it has been updated to reflect that secondary schools and colleges are now expected to conduct two tests on return rather than three.

Schools are expected to undertake their own risk assessments. Our publicly available RPA COVID-19 FAQ's are available here for your perusal: [TopMark Claims Management \(rpoclaimforms.co.uk\)](http://TopMark Claims Management (rpoclaimforms.co.uk))

Orient Gene test kits

GM are currently working with schools to facilitate in class testing. One of the localities was given a box of the new Orient Gene test kits that the schools will be using from September.

It was noticed that inside the box that there are only two bottles of reagents. This for mass testing in an ATS is fine but in class it adds issues such as contamination to samples, wastage and time to the process. If these are the tests that will be used for the in class testing there needs to be either enough bottles for each of the pupils, sachets as per the home test kits or setting up of ATS's for September which as discussed before is a cost and time implication.

The Orient Gene ATS test kits (nasal swab only) that have been delivered before the summer holidays are for use only with ATS testing.

This will not be conducted in the classroom using self-test kits, as has been trialled during the supervised self-test initiative, which has been piloted in some schools over the last 6 weeks (for which the orient gene ATS test kits supplied and shown here will be unsuitable). A decision on whether to roll out supervised self-test (in classroom using self-test kits) has not yet been made. If the supervised self-test initiative is rolled out further in autumn, then schools will be supplied with self-test kits which will have the appropriate amount of solution for pack of test kits (which come in packs of 7).

Schools are/have finished now. So in order to give them guidance as to how to test in September for the new academic year, we need details on how the kits are to be used as soon as possible please.

Twice weekly home testing will continue to be offered over the summer break in settings that remain open (e.g., nurseries, summer schools and

colleges). On return in the autumn, asymptomatic testing is expected to resume for staff and for students of secondary age and above. Schools and colleges should prepare to offer students two LFD tests at an on-site Asymptomatic Test Site (ATS), 3-5 days apart. Following the first two on-site tests, students should then prepare to resume twice weekly at home. For further guidance please refer to the orange guide on document sharing platform [here](#).