

NHS Test and Trace: COVID-19 testing for students and staff

Dear Parent/Carer,

We are continuing to work to keep our school as safe as possible. Last Friday I wrote to you regarding the government's plans to introduce a scheme to test as many students as possible before their return to school using quicker COVID-19 tests known as 'lateral flow tests' and also our intention to use these tests in the future with any identified direct contacts of positive cases.

Along with the other protective measures we are already taking, these tests will help staff and students to remain in school. We are informed that up to one third of people who have coronavirus experience no symptoms. By testing we will help to reduce the virus spread and help to keep our school open as safely as possible. The test is voluntary, but we would encourage everyone to take it.

Currently we have very few details about how the testing will operate except the need for the school to start collecting consent for the tests to be undertaken. It has been announced that we will hopefully be testing as many staff and students as possible who consent from the week commencing 4th January 2021. As soon as we are able to confirm arrangements for these tests we will be in touch with parents.

A massive **thank you** to those parents and contacts that have already volunteered to help us with the testing - once we know more we will be in touch with you all.

Giving Consent – action required by 6pm on 29th December 2020

We need to know if you wish to have your child tested and ask that parents complete the form via MyHighcliffe at <https://my.highcliffe.school/cv19testing> to confirm if you wish your child to be tested or have decided not to give consent. If you do consent to the testing you will also be consenting to us sharing required information to register your child on to the testing scheme including student name, date of birth, postcode and contact details.

To access the form you will need to login using your parent MyHighcliffe account details or select to login as a student and ask your child to log you in using their school username and password. We require a response for each child you have at Highcliffe School meaning you may need to repeat this process for each child.

(Students over 16 can give their own consent but should discuss with their parent/guardian first)

Please note that we have made this form as easy as possible and it can be completed on a phone as well as tablets and laptops/computers.

Please accept our apologies now for us chasing those that have not completed the form later in the school holiday. We ask that parents complete this form by 6pm on the 29th of December as knowing how many students we are testing will be crucial to our planning.

Those taking the test will be supervised by trained staff or volunteers. The 'lateral flow' tests are quick and easy using a swab of your nose and throat. For under 18s, staff can oversee the swab process. An instructional leaflet detailing how the tests operate has been provided to us and can be viewed at <https://highcliffe.school/l/howtotestv1>

The Department for Education confirm these tests work – we have been informed that 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. The tests do however have lower sensitivity so are better at picking up cases when a person has higher viral load, hence the need to test frequently.

What if a student tests positive?

Participating students and staff who test positive will be informed about their results individually. Where participants are under 16, their parents or legal guardians will also be notified. Guidance on safe travel and additional precautions will be provided along with test results.

Students and staff will need to take a further 'PCR test' (similar to those done at local and regional testing sites) on the same day (or as soon as possible). We have been informed that the school 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 testing site if possible, as it is faster than requesting a home test.

During this time while the student or staff member wait for the PCR result (via text / email) they will need to self-isolate. If the PCR test returns a positive result you will have to self-isolate and follow the guidance from NHS Test and Trace.

What happens if the test is negative?

They will be able to resume their activities as normal. A student will only be told if they test positive on a 'lateral flow' test, so if you do not hear anything you can assume it was negative. A small number of pupils may need to repeat the test if the first test was invalid or void for some reason.

What if a close contact at school tests positive?

From the start of term, 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 tests remain negative. If they do not want to take the test, they will need to self-isolate as per the national guidance. This does not apply to household members or close contacts outside of school who will

still need to self-isolate. Further details will be provided at the time, but students will also have the option to self-isolate instead of being tested daily.

What if my child develops symptoms?

This initial testing programme at school 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 and book a test by calling 119 or visiting <https://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test>.

We will support our staff and students throughout, but please contact us if you have any questions by emailing the school office.

Yours sincerely



Patrick Earnshaw
Headteacher