

8 January 2021

COVID Testing for Staff and Pupils at London South East Academies Trust

Dear Colleague,

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 in schools within London South East Academies Trust.

Along with the other protective measures we are taking, testing will allow us to take further measures to help you and other staff members to remain in school/college. 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. I am therefore strongly encouraging those returning to school to be tested.

It is recognised that delivering tests in specialist settings will be different than that for mainstream, and you 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>

Initial return to term testing

We will be looking to test all staff and secondary school and college age pupils as they return to school.

Further testing

In addition, school staff will be tested weekly for the remainder of spring term. Any staff member or pupil 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.

How the tests work

Those taking the test will be supervised by trained staff and volunteers. The lateral flow device tests are quick and easy to undertake, using a swab of your 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. The school will inform the pupil of a positive test result.

Where participants are under 16, parents or legal guardians will also be informed. The pupil will also receive a [text/email] notification of a positive or negative result from the online NHS system. Tests are free of charge.

What if someone tests positive?

If someone tests positive on a lateral flow device test, 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. During this time while they wait 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 participants may need to repeat the test if the first test was invalid or void for some reason, participants who test negative will be able to stay in school and resume their activities as normal. Participants will be informed of negative test results via text/email. Where participants are under 16, parents or legal guardians will also be informed.

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

The staff member or pupil 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 time, they will be allowed to remain in school that day. 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.

What if they develop symptoms?

This testing programme at school is for people with no symptoms. If anyone 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 pupils throughout, but please contact us if you have any questions by emailing covidtesting@lsec.ac.uk.

Yours faithfully,



Dr Sam Parrett OBE