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Department
for Education

Guidance

Coronavirus (COVID-19): test kits for schools and FE providers

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Overview

This guidance is intended to support schools and FE providers in distributing polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test kits for symptomatic staff, students or pupils to use at home. It applies to all mainstream, special, alternative provision and FE providers.

Anyone who experiences any COVID-19 symptoms can get a [PCR coronavirus \(COVID-19\) test](#) at a testing site or at home. This includes all pupils, students, teachers and staff. All schools and further education (FE) providers are also being provided with a small number of PCR test kits to complement these main access routes.

From 26 August 2020, all schools and FE providers were sent an initial supply of 10 PCR test kits and since 16 September 2020 have been able to order more. Having a test at a testing site will deliver the fastest results for symptomatic individuals.

These PCR kits distributed to schools and FE providers should only be used in the exceptional circumstance that a student, teacher, or staff member becomes symptomatic and you believe they may have barriers to accessing testing elsewhere. Access to these tests will help symptomatic staff who test negative, and have not been told to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace, UK Health and

Safety Agency (UKHSA) or a local authority contact tracer, to get back to work as soon as they feel well enough.

Any schools, or FE providers, who did not receive their initial supply of test kits (or any future orders) should call the NHS Test and Trace helpdesk at 119.

When to provide a PCR test kit

PCR coronavirus (COVID-19) test kits should only be offered to an individual who has [symptoms of COVID-19](#).

PCR test kits should not be used for regular asymptomatic testing, unless used to confirm a positive LFD result. For more information on regular asymptomatic testing in schools, see the [schools COVID-19 operational guidance](#).

The government is making it as easy as possible to get symptomatic testing through a wide range of routes that are locally accessible, fast and convenient.

The testing routes set out in this guidance should be used as the normal channels for accessing symptomatic testing. If a child, or staff member, in your education setting becomes symptomatic, you should advise them to access testing through the routes outlined in this guidance.

In exceptional circumstances, when you do not think a symptomatic child or staff member would be able to access testing by the usual routes, you should consider providing a PCR test kit to improve the chances that the individual will get tested.

It is for schools and FE providers to determine how to prioritise the distribution of their test kits in order to minimise the impact of the virus on the education of their pupils or students.

Providing PCR test kits to pupils and students

PCR test kits are suitable for people of all ages but parents and carers should administer the test to those age 11 and under.

If providing a PCR test to pupils aged 16 or under, schools must inform parents and guardians accordingly .

Full instructions on how to administer the test and what to do next are provided within each kit. Schools and colleges will not be expected to administer testing, and testing should not take place on site (with the exception of residential settings).

Providing PCR test kits to staff

As set out in the overview section, you may consider offering PCR kits to members of staff who become symptomatic on site if you do not think that they will be able to access testing by the usual routes.

In addition, if a symptomatic staff member, who is currently self-isolating, cannot access testing quickly, you may wish to consider offering them a PCR test kit in order to allow them to return to work as quickly as possible if they test negative and have not been told to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace, UKHSA or a local authority contact tracer. This approach should not be used for students, only for symptomatic staff members who are vital to the running of your educational setting.

Staff who develop symptoms should not enter the premises of their place of work under any circumstances, even to collect a PCR test kit. Nor should they come into close physical contact (within 2 metres) with anyone outside their household.

Schools and FE providers have discretion over how they deliver kits to symptomatic staff members, as long as this is done safely with due regard for the transmission risk. The symptomatic staff member must stay at least 2 metres away from other individuals at all times.

For example, schools and FE providers could:

- post the PCR kit to the symptomatic staff member
- ask a member of staff to drop the PCR kit through the letterbox of the symptomatic staff member's home address
- (for symptomatic staff with vehicle access) ask a member of staff to leave the PCR kit a safe distance from the symptomatic colleague's vehicle at an agreed time and location - that staff member should then withdraw to a safe distance (at least 2 metres away) whilst the symptomatic staff member exits their vehicle and retrieves the test kit

Test results

Positive result

If a member of staff or student has a positive test result, they should self-isolate immediately in line with [guidance for households with possible or confirmed coronavirus \(COVID-19\) infection](#).

NHS Test and Trace will contact the individual with instructions of how to share

details of other people in their household and any other people with whom they have had close, recent contact and places they have visited. Anyone else in their household, unless they are exempt, must also self-isolate and they should all follow [government guidance on self-isolation](#).

Close contacts outside the household will be traced by NHS Test and Trace and instructed to self-isolate or, if exempt, advised to take a PCR test and consider taking additional precautions.

Adults who are fully vaccinated (2 doses of an MHRA approved vaccine administered in the UK, with more than 14 days since the last dose at the time of last contact with the positive case) and children will not be required to self-isolate if they are identified as a close contact. They will instead be advised to take a PCR test as soon as possible (even if they do not have symptoms).

They will also be advised to consider:

- limiting close contact with other people outside their household, especially in enclosed spaces
- wearing a face covering in enclosed spaces and where they are unable to maintain social distancing
- limiting contact with anyone who is clinically extremely vulnerable
- taking part in twice weekly LFD testing

Children and young people aged under 18 years 6 months who usually attend an education or childcare setting and who have been identified as a close contact should continue to attend the setting as normal. They do not need to wear a face covering within the setting, but it is expected and recommended that these are worn when travelling on public or dedicated transport.

Negative result

Where a member of staff or student has a negative result from a PCR test, it means the test did not find COVID-19. At that point, they no longer need to self-isolate and can return to work or education, as long as they:

- were not told to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace, UK Health and UKHSA or a local authority contact tracer
- feel well - if they feel unwell, stay at home until they're feeling better, if they have diarrhoea or are being sick, they should stay at home until 48 hours after they've stopped

Regardless of any test result, members of staff and students should continue to isolate if they have been told to isolate by NHS Test and Trace, UKHSA or a local authority contact tracer. They and their household and contacts should follow [government guidance on self-isolation](#).

Staff, pupils or students (or the parent or guardian) should report positive PCR results to the school or college.

Schools should not request evidence of negative test results or other medical evidence before admitting children or welcoming them back after a period of self-isolation.

Making an order for additional PCR coronavirus tests

Schools and FE providers should order additional PCR test kits if they have run out or are running out of test kits.

You can [order additional tests kits online](#). PCR kits will be supplied in boxes of 10, with one box provided per 1,000 pupils or students.

You will be able to make a new order for test kits 21 days after you receive a delivery confirmation email telling you that your previous supply of PCR kits has been sent.

Schools and FE providers will need a unique organisation number (UON) to place orders for PCR kits. This was emailed to you by the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) on 16 September 2020.

You can look up your unique organisation reference number (UON) using your DfE unique reference number (URN) or UK provider reference number (UKPRN), or call the Test and Trace helpdesk on 119.

Storage of test kits

Kits should be stored securely at ambient room temperature (5 to 22°C).

Usual symptomatic testing options

When advising symptomatic FE students or members of staff to get tested, or advising parents or carers to get a symptomatic school pupil tested, you should advise them of the range of testing options. You cannot require a child, young person or member of staff to get a test. Testing remains voluntary but is strongly encouraged. The child, young person or member of staff still needs to follow [government guidance on self-isolation](#).

Individuals should visit the get a [PCR coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#) test page to book a visit. This will give you a range of symptomatic testing options available in your local area.

These will usually be:

- PCR test centre – booking a test at a drive-in test centre is likely to be the fastest way to get a test result - you should be aware of the location of local test centres in order to advise staff, students, parents or carers
- PCR home test kit – staff, parents or carers, and FE students can order a home test kit for themselves and up to 3 symptomatic members of their household

Booking is essential for any testing routes and under 16s will not receive a test at any of the testing sites without a parent or guardian present.

Where these, or other symptomatic testing options, are available in the local area, the portal will provide those options.

If a parent or carer, staff member or FE student does not have internet access, PCR kits can also be ordered by calling 119. 119 can also be contacted for support at any point throughout the testing journey. 119 are able to provide support in up to 650 languages, including British Sign Language (BSL).

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