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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 PCR test kits. It applies to all mainstream, special, alternative provision and FE providers.

Anyone who experiences any coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms can get a [PCR coronavirus \(COVID-19\) test](#) at a testing site or at home. This includes all pupils, 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 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 are not close contacts of confirmed cases, 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 [becomes symptomatic](#), or receives a positive LFD test and you believe they may have barriers to accessing testing elsewhere.

PCR test kits should not be used for regular asymptomatic testing, unless used to confirm a positive LFD result. For more information on asymptomatic testing in schools, please see the rapid, regular testing programme page [Asymptomatic testing: secondary schools and colleges](#).

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.

Access to these tests will also help symptomatic staff who test negative and are not close contacts of confirmed cases, to get back to work as soon as they feel well enough. 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.

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

Schools should use their discretion to provide a PCR test to pupils aged under 18 (if they already have written consent), unlike LFDs which are given out for twice weekly testing. [Tests will also be available here](#).

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 above, 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 in close contact with a confirmed case. 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, and all members of their household, 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 result from an PCR test, they should self-isolate immediately and continue to isolate for at least 10 days.

Everyone in their household or support bubble should also isolate for 10 days from the day after contact with the individual who tested positive.

Negative result

Where a member of staff or student has a negative result from an PCR test, it means the test did not find coronavirus (COVID-19). At that point, they no longer need to self-isolate and can return to work or education, as long as one or more of the bullet points below applies.

The mandatory requirement to self-isolate only applies if notified by NHS Test and Trace:

- everyone they live with who has symptoms tests negative
- everyone in their support bubble who has symptoms tests negative
- they were not told to self-isolate for 10 days from the day after contact with the individual who tested positive by NHS Test and Trace
- they 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 in [close contact with a confirmed positive case](#), or have been told to isolate by NHS Test and Trace
- a member of the household or support bubble is symptomatic

This is because they may still develop symptoms during the isolation period.

Staff, pupils or students (or the parent) should report positive, negative and void PCR results to the school/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.

Please note, this method is only for reordering PCR test kits. For reorders of asymptomatic LFD test kits, please see the rapid testing programme page [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) asymptomatic testing in schools and colleges](#).

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.

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

New ways to make accessing a PCR test as quick and easy as possible are being added continually by NHS Test and Trace.

Booking is essential for any testing routes and under 18s 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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