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Guidance

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

Updated 2 March 2022

This guidance was withdrawn on 1 April 2022

This content is no longer current policy and you do not need to follow it.

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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. The ordering line for ordering 10 PCR test kits will remain in place for exceptional circumstances. 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.

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](#).

It is for schools and FE providers to determine how to prioritise the distribution of their test kits.

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. Staff who develop symptoms should stay at home and avoid contact with other people for at least 5 full days even if they need to collect a PCR test kit.

Schools and FE providers have discretion over how they deliver kits to symptomatic staff members.

For example, you 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 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 are advised to follow the guidance for [people with COVID-19 and their contacts](#).

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.

Schools and FE providers should not request evidence of negative test results or other medical evidence before admitting children, young people and staff back.

Making an order for additional PCR coronavirus tests

You can order additional PCR test kits if you have run out or are running out of test kits and need additional kits to enable symptomatic individuals, who are unable to access testing from alternative routes, to test.

You can [order additional tests kits online](#). PCR kits will be supplied in boxes of 10.

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. 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 30°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 explain 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 a:

- 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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