



→ [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#) | Guidance and support

→ [Brexit transition](#) | Take action now for new rules in 2021

Home > [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#) > [Education and childcare during coronavirus](#)
 > [Closures, exams and managing a school or early years setting during coronavirus](#)
 > [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): test kits for schools and FE providers](#)

Part of [Education and childcare during coronavirus](#)



Department for Education

Guidance

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

Updated 14 December 2020

Contents

- [Overview](#)
- [When to provide a test kit](#)
- [Providing test kits to staff](#)
- [Test results](#)
- [Making an order for additional coronavirus tests](#)
- [Storage of test kits](#)
- [Usual testing options](#)

Print this page

Overview

Anyone who experiences any coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms can [get a 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 being provided with a small number of testing kits to complement these main access routes.

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

This guidance is intended to support schools and FE providers in distributing test kits. It applies to all mainstream, special, alternative provision and FE providers. It should be read alongside the [full school opening guide](#) and the [further education \(FE\) autumn term guidance](#), which provides more detailed guidance, including what to do if a child or staff member:

- becomes symptomatic on site
- tests positive for coronavirus (COVID-19)

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

When to provide a test kit

Coronavirus (COVID-19) test kits should only be offered in the exceptional circumstance an individual becomes symptomatic and you believe they may have barriers to accessing testing elsewhere.

Anyone who displays symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19) can and should get a test. These symptoms are:

- a high temperature
- a new, continuous cough
- a loss or change to your sense of smell or taste

! It is vital that educational settings only recommend children or staff to get a test if they develop these symptoms - the capacity of the NHS Test and Trace system must be protected for those with symptoms of the virus.

Asymptomatic testing is provided only in specific circumstances and on the recommendation of public health experts, for instance, in areas of high prevalence or high risk or where there is a local outbreak. People without symptoms should not order tests except where instructed to do so through being enrolled in a pilot scheme or at the direct request of their local public health team or director of public health.

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

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

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 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.

Kits are suitable for people of all ages. Kits should not be given directly to children - only to adults over the age of 18 or a child's parent or carer. Parents and carers will be required to administer the test to those under 11.

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 test kits to staff

As with students, you may consider offering 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 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 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 kit to the symptomatic staff member
- ask another member of staff to drop the kit through the letterbox of the symptomatic staff member's home address
- (for symptomatic staff with vehicle access) ask another member of staff to leave the test 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, they must self-isolate immediately and continue to isolate for at least 10 days from when their symptoms started.

Everyone in their household or support bubble must 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, 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:

- 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.

Further information about [what test results mean](#) is available on the NHS website.

You should ask parents and carers, FE students and staff members to inform you immediately of the results of a test. 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 coronavirus tests

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

You can [order additional tests kits online](#). 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 test kits has been sent.

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

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.

Schools and FE providers in particularly high risk areas may be eligible for an additional delivery of test kits. These will be allocated to schools and FE providers by the DHSC based on the local prevalence of coronavirus (COVID-19). You will be emailed directly if you are eligible to receive these additional test kits.

Any additional kits allocated and provided in this way should be used in line with this guidance at your discretion to minimise the impact of the virus on the education of your pupils or students. This includes ensuring access to testing for symptomatic staff who are vital to the running of your education setting.

Storage of test kits

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

Usual testing options

When advising FE students or members of staff to get tested, or advising parents to get a 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 coronavirus \(COVID-19\) test](#) page to book a visit. This will give you a range of testing options available in your local area. These will usually be:

- 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
- 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 test as quick and easy as possible are being added continually by NHS Test and Trace. Recently, 'walk in' local testing centres have opened in a number of locations. This network is continuing to expand to make it easier for people without cars to get a test.

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 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, 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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