



Department
for Education

Coronavirus (COVID-19) National Testing Programme: School and Colleges

Testing activity from 4 January until February half term: Conditions of Grant Funding

February 2021

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Expiry or review date

This guidance will be kept under regular review.

Who is this publication for?

This guidance is for:

- Mainstream academies and maintained schools with secondary age pupils
- 16-19 academies and maintained schools
- Alternative Provision academies with secondary aged pupils, including hospital schools
- Pupil referral units with secondary aged pupils
- Special academies and special maintained schools with secondary age pupils
- Further education colleges and sixth form colleges
- Special post-16 institutions
- Non-maintained special schools
- Independent special schools

1. Introduction

Rapid coronavirus testing of staff, pupils and students in secondary schools and colleges began in January 2021. The purpose of this is to identify asymptomatic cases of COVID-19. Further information and guidance have been developed and can be accessed in the Covid-19 National Testing Programme [Secondary Schools and Colleges Document Sharing Platform](#).

Schools and colleges will receive funding to support them with costs they have incurred to conduct testing.

2. Scope

These grant conditions relate to the allocation schools and colleges will receive to support the costs associated with testing activity between 4 January 2021 and February half term. This includes:

- Rapid one-off testing on return of all vulnerable students/pupils and children of critical workers attending educational settings. This assumes that all pupils/students will receive 2 Lateral Flow Device (LFD) tests, 3-5 days apart; and
- Weekly testing of staff up to twice a week.

3. Eligibility

The following institution types will be eligible for this funding:

- Mainstream academies and maintained schools with secondary age pupils
- 16-19 academies and maintained schools
- Alternative Provision academies with secondary aged pupils, including hospital schools
- Pupil referral units with secondary aged pupils
- Special academies and special maintained schools with secondary age pupils
- Further education colleges and sixth form colleges
- Special post-16 institutions
- Non-maintained special schools
- Independent special schools

The Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) will only provide funding to institutions which are on a list of confirmed participants in the rapid testing programme provided by the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC). Each confirmed test site will have an agreed identifier to record test results. This will be used to identify participating institutions.

As set out above, independent institutions (with fee-paying pupils/students) are not eligible for this funding.

At eligible institutions, all pupils aged 11-18 are in scope as are any 19+ students currently attending college during this period.

We are providing this funding to support schools and colleges with the costs of testing. We expect that this will mainly be workforce costs. Other costs might include:

- Minor incidental expenses, such as printing, paper/stationery, cleaning materials/equipment, tissues and wipes.
- Additional waste disposal costs incurred given the additional waste volumes likely to be generated from the testing bays/desks, such as LFD kits, disposable PPE, tissues and paper bowls.

Institutions will have discretion on how they spend this funding in support of testing.

4. Allocations

We have provided a [Workforce Planning Tool](#) which illustrates workforce requirements and associated funding. This allows institutions to calculate an estimate of funding which they may receive.

Actual allocations will be based on the number of bays/desks calculated as needed to deliver the number of tests completed (measured by the number of test results recorded on the school or college's individual account on the Test & Trace Log Results Website).

To calculate funding, we will estimate the number of bays/desks a school/college would have required in order to complete the number of test results recorded based on an average testing volume. We will then apply an average cost per bay. We expect most of these costs to relate to workforce costs (using the roles set out in the Covid-19 National Testing Programme [Secondary Schools and Colleges Document Sharing Platform](#)) but we will also allow for waste disposal and minor incidental costs.

For rapid one-off testing on return of pupils/students who are attending school/college we have calculated:

- 1 role per 10 testing bays/desks for the following roles: Covid-19 Co-ordinator; Quality lead/Team leader; Registration Assistant; Results Recorder; Cleaner.
- 1 Processor per bay/desk.
- 1 Test Assistant per bay/desk in Special schools / Special post-16 institutions; or 1 per 5 bays/desks in mainstream settings.

For staff testing, we have assumed that the following roles are combined: 1) the Covid Coordinator and Quality Lead/Team Leader; and 2) the Results Recorder and the Processing Operative. We have also assumed that in all settings staff testing will require 1 testing assistant per 5 bays/desks.

Eligible institutions in London will be paid an additional weighting for workforce costs. This will be calculated in accordance with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government's general labour market rates.

For institutions receiving Medacs support for administered swabbing requirements, the cost of this Medacs support will be deducted from that institution's allocation/payment by recalculating the allocation with the Medacs funded post removed.

We have accounted for different staffing levels needed for rapid one-off testing on return of pupils/students in Special schools, Special post-16 institutions, Alternative Provision academies and pupil referral units. We have assumed that:

- These settings will need a higher number of Test Assistants to support pupils who cannot self-administer tests, and
- Test Assistants will be paid at a higher hourly rate to reflect the likelihood of additional qualifications or experience.

While the assumptions above will be used to determine funding allocations, decisions on specific requirements for staffing are for individual institutions to make.

5. Exceptional funding for additional premises and reasonable costs.

In exceptional circumstances we will consider claims for additional funding needed to cover other additional costs incurred by schools / colleges. This includes:

- Schools/colleges that have had to hire additional premises or make significant alterations to their existing premises to conduct testing. This will only be available in exceptional circumstances where the funding allocation is not sufficient and after every other alternative option has been exhausted. Claims will need to be supported by an invoice or other documentary evidence of the costs incurred.
- Reimbursement of excess costs incurred by schools/colleges acting on advice issued by the Department before the announcement on Monday 4 January that schools would only be open to vulnerable pupils and the children of critical workers attending school/college during this period. Exceptional funding will only be agreed where schools/colleges committed to expenditure, in excess of their funding allocations, to prepare for a level of testing activity that was no longer required as a result of the announcement to close schools on 4 January. We would expect schools/colleges to first re-use any resources they had already paid for to support the revised testing requirements. Where additional resources have been purchased that could not be re-used, in excess of allocations, we will consider claims to reimburse schools/colleges for reasonable costs. Claims will also need to be supported by an invoice or other documentary evidence of the costs incurred.

Further details on how to claim for exceptional funding costs will be made available shortly and will be covered by separate grant conditions.

6. Payments

A single payment will be made retrospectively based on information reported through Test and Trace. We will make this payment in the Spring 2021. This will relate to testing for the period of 4 January 2021 to February half term.

Payments will be made directly to colleges, academies and local authorities. Local authorities must pass payments onto maintained schools and non-maintained special schools.

The ESFA will make these payments automatically. There will be no requirement to make a claim in order to receive the funding for Test and Trace reported testing. Information on how to claim additional exceptional funding will be published in due course.

We have asked institutions to make the necessary payments to carry out testing from their existing budgets and record these in line with local finance policies.

Schools that are academies on 1 January 2021 will receive payment directly from ESFA. Local authorities should pass on funding to schools due to convert to academies after this date.

7. Variation

These conditions of grant may be altered at any time. Participating institutions will be notified of this through existing channels.

8. Recovery of funding

This funding is being provided under section 14 to 16 of the Education Act 2002 and we reserve the right to audit the expenditure. We will seek to recover funding that has been paid in error. This includes overpayment where an institution is also receiving Medacs support.

Recoveries will be made by invoice or by offsetting the amount against subsequent payments due from DfE.

The recipient must notify DfE immediately through the [ESFA enquiry form](#) where it becomes aware of any instance of error, suspected fraud or financial irregularity in the use of the funds.

9. Monitoring, assurance and data requirements

We have a responsibility to make sure that public funds are properly managed in line with these grant conditions.

We reserve the right to check each institution's Test and Trace data. We may adjust an institution's allocation if the recorded number of tests exceeds the Department's guidance on testing activity to be carried out this half term. We reserve the right to request assurance of this grant funding and will provide further details as necessary.

10. Further information

Books, other documents and records relating to the recipient's accounts shall be open to inspection by the Secretary of State and by the Comptroller and Auditor General.

The Comptroller and Auditor General may, under Section 6 of the National Audit Act 1983, carry out examinations into the economy, efficiency and effectiveness with which the recipient has used its resources in discharging its grant-aided activities.

Schools, colleges, and local authorities shall provide information as may be required by the Secretary of State to determine whether it has complied with these conditions.

11. Short-term support with costs

We recognise that a very small number of academies and colleges may be unable to make up-front payments to cover the additional costs due to coronavirus (COVID-19) because of cash flow issues. In these circumstances, academies and colleges should follow the normal process for seeking short-term advances to support their cash flow by contacting the ESFA.

Any maintained schools in similar circumstances should contact their local authority for support.



Department
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