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Guidance

Rapid asymptomatic coronavirus (COVID-19) testing for staff in primary schools, school-based nurseries and maintained nursery schools

Updated 24 March 2021

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Who should be offered testing

Schools and nurseries should offer testing to all teaching and non-teaching staff members, which includes:

- trainee teachers on placement in school
- supply workforce
- contractors
- peripatetic staff
- clinical practitioners
- therapists
- other support staff
- caterers
- volunteers
- those supporting with wraparound childcare to children attending school

Some staff (particularly those employed through the NHS) may have separate arrangements for regular testing.

Introduction

Following the launch of rapid asymptomatic coronavirus (COVID-19) testing in secondary schools and colleges on 4 January 2021, staff in primary, school-based nurseries and maintained nursery schools have also been offered the opportunity to take part in regular asymptomatic testing.

It remains imperative that the [system of controls](#) continues to be rigorously applied to enable the safest possible environment. The testing programme is an important addition to supporting leaders to maintain the continuity of education through the pandemic.

All primary schools, school-based nurseries and maintained nursery schools received deliveries of home testing kits to offer to all their staff from the week commencing 18 January.

How the testing works

Primary, school-based nursery and maintained nursery staff will be supplied with lateral flow device (LFD) test kits to self-swab.

Staff will be asked to take their test kits home and carry out the test twice a week, preferably in the morning. The tests should be taken before going to the workplace to minimise the risk of introducing infection and be evenly spaced throughout the week. Staff returning to work after a period of leave should take an LFD test at the beginning of their shift. Part-time workers should still broadly space their 2 tests throughout the week.

The LFD test will give a result in around 30 minutes. Staff must report their result (whether void, positive or negative) to NHS Test and Trace as soon as the test is completed, either online or by telephone as per the instructions in the home test kit. Staff should also share their result with their school or nursery to help with contact tracing.

Testing is not mandatory for staff and staff do not need to provide proof of a negative test result to attend school or nursery in person, although participation in testing is strongly encouraged.

Staff with symptoms or a positive test result

Staff with a positive LFD test result will need to self-isolate in line with the [guidance for households with possible or confirmed coronavirus \(COVID-19\) infection](#). They will also need to [arrange a polymerase chain reaction \(PCR\) test](#) to confirm the result.

Staff with a negative LFD test result can continue to attend school or nursery and in line with the routine system of controls already in place in educational settings.

The asymptomatic testing programme does not replace the current testing policy for those with symptoms. Anyone with symptoms (even if they recently had a negative LFD test result), should still self-isolate immediately according to [guidance for households with possible or confirmed coronavirus \(COVID-19\) infection](#).

Those with symptoms are also expected to order a test online or visit a test site to take a polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test to check if they have the virus.

Testing pupils

Public Health England have advised there are currently limited public health benefits attached to testing primary pupils with lateral flow devices. Primary age pupils may find the LFD testing process invasive and unpleasant and are unable to self-swab. We will review this approach in light of any emerging evidence.

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Report test kit delivery and supply issues

Primary schools, school-based nurseries, and maintained nursery schools, can report problems relating to test kits and delivery issues using the [asymptomatic testing delivery and supply form](#). You can also use this form to reorder test kits when required.

Guidance on how to reorder test kits can be found on the document sharing platform.

Access further testing guidance and materials

A link has been shared with primary schools, school-based nurseries, and maintained nursery schools, to access guidance and support materials.

If you do not have access to this document sharing platform, contact the DfE coronavirus (COVID-19) helpline on 0800 046 8687.

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