



21st December 2021

Dear Parent or Carer,

NHS Test and Trace: COVID-19 testing for students

Further to my letter of 18th December, we have now received more information regarding the Covid-19 tests the Government would like all students and school staff to take in January.

This testing is for those **without** coronavirus symptoms and uses the quicker COVID-19 tests known as 'lateral flow tests'. Up to one third of people who have coronavirus experience no symptoms. The Government hopes mass testing will help to stop the virus spread and help to keep our schools open as safely as possible. The test is voluntary, but I would encourage everyone to take it.

We are still waiting for further information on exactly how the testing programme will operate but it is the Government's aim to test all staff and secondary school students who want to participate from week commencing 4th January 2021. This may involve asking parents to bring in students for a test who are studying at home during the first week of term.

I enclose the Government instructional leaflet with some more information. If this quick test is positive then your child will need to take the PCR test which has been used in the test centres in recent months.

Please complete the form attached to the link below to tell us whether or not you would like your child/children to be tested. **To help us with our planning please complete the form by 12 noon on Wednesday 23rd December.**

<https://forms.gle/kN7SDBE8UqcBbpYv6>

Those taking the test will be supervised by trained staff. The 'lateral flow' tests are quick and easy using a swab of your nose and throat. Testing will be offered free of charge.

Results (which take around half an hour from testing) will be shared directly with the parents of the students participating. The Government are confident these tests work and state - in validation studies conducted by Oxford University and Public Health England, they were shown to be as accurate in identifying a case as a PCR test (99.68% specificity). The tests have lower sensitivity but they are better at picking up cases when a person has higher viral load, hence the need to test frequently.

As has been covered in the media, schools have been asked to make these arrangements during the Christmas Holiday and we do not yet have all the information we need. However we are keen to support our students through this process to help keep everyone's family safe. We find ourselves in a rapidly changing situation and we will endeavour to keep you updated as further information becomes available. As I am sure you appreciate this process is quite difficult to manage during a school holiday but if you do have any questions please contact us on office@stclementshigh.org.uk we will do our best to provide the answers.

Yours sincerely,

Mr N. K. Willingham
Headteacher

[Government Leaflet on the Mass Testing Process in Schools](#)

What if a pupil tests positive?

Participating staff and pupils who test positive will be informed about their results individually. Where participants are under 16, parents or legal guardians will also be notified. Guidance on safe travel and additional precautions will be provided along with test results.

Pupils will need to take a further 'PCR test' (similar to those done in local and regional testing sites) on the same day (or as soon as possible). Schools will be able to provide these PCR test kits to perform at home or you can go to www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test or call 119 to book a follow-up test. If ordering a PCR test yourselves, you should choose to visit a drive-through test site if possible, as it is faster than requesting a home test.

During this time while they wait for the PCR result (via text/email) pupils will need to self-isolate.

If the PCR test returns a positive result you will have to self-isolate and follow the guidance from NHS Test and Trace.

What happens if the test is negative?

They will be able to stay in school and resume their activities as normal. A pupil will only be told if they test positive on a 'lateral flow' test, so if you do not hear you can assume it was negative. A small number of pupils may need to repeat the test if the first test was invalid or void for some reason.

What if a close contact at school tests positive?

A close contact of someone in school who has tested positive for COVID-19 will be able to return to school if they agree to be tested once a day for 7 days and the test is negative each time. If they do not want to take the test, they will need to self-isolate as per the national guidelines. This does not apply to household members or close contacts outside of school who will still need to self-isolate. Further details will be provided at the time, but if you would prefer to self-isolate instead of doing daily testing, you can.

What if my child develops symptoms?

This testing programme at schools is for people with no symptoms. If your child develops symptoms at any time (such as a high temperature; a new, continuous cough; or a loss or change to their sense of smell or taste) they must immediately self-isolate, and book a test by calling 119 (England, Wales and Northern Ireland) or visiting <https://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test>.

[Further information you may find useful](#)

What is Lateral flow testing?

These tests are designed to identify asymptomatic people. A swab is inserted into the nose or throat, and then the sample is inserted into a tube of liquid for a short time which extracts the molecule that determines if COVID-19 is present.

No laboratory equipment is needed as a few drops of liquid are then dropped onto a small strip.

Within 15 minutes, the strip of paper will show up with two lines if it is positive, one line on the top if it is negative or one line on the bottom if the test is invalid.

This is the test to be used in the mass testing programme, if this test is positive then you are referred for a PCR test.

What is PCR Testing?

Polymerase chain reaction (PCR) testing is currently the most common form of testing in the UK and is seen as fairly reliable.

These types of tests have been used by the NHS in their testing centres around the country for the past few months and are the tests sent out by the NHS to people who have symptoms.

For PCR tests, a swab is used to collect an RNA sample (the nucleic acid that converts DNA into proteins) from the patient's tonsils and inside their nose. RNA is collected as it carries the genetic information of this specific virus.

This is then sent to a laboratory where the sample is heated and cooled so it multiplies into larger quantities of DNA. Bioscientists can then see whether the SARS-CoV-2 virus (the virus that causes COVID-19) is present. Because of the process, PCR test results take about two days.

[Source - Sky News]