

Wednesday 17th February 2021

COVID-19 asymptomatic testing programme for school/ELC staff and senior phase pupils

Dear Parents/Carers,

I am writing to let you know about the new Schools/ELC Asymptomatic Testing Programme, which is being put in place as part of the package of COVID-19 risk reduction mitigations in schools across Scotland, and to give you more information about how the programme will operate in our school.

Why is our school/setting participating in the programme?

Along with the other protective measures we are implementing to keep our school community safe, regular testing of staff and senior phase pupils will help to further reduce risks for staff and children and young people in our school.

It will do so by helping to identify asymptomatic individuals in school environments at the earliest possible opportunity, and asking them and their close contacts to self-isolate, thus minimising the likelihood of them passing on the virus.

Who can take part?

The regular testing is open to all school staff who are regularly attending the school premises. The testing programme also includes school-aged childcare staff and early learning and childcare staff in settings that are attached to schools. References to 'school staff' within this letter include this wider group of childcare staff.

Does everyone have to take part?

Testing is voluntary. No-one who is otherwise permitted to come to school will be prevented from doing so just because they do not wish to participate. However, we are strongly encouraging all school staff who are attending school to participate wherever possible, in order to contribute to the wellbeing of our school community.

However, if staff or pupils are working or learning from home, they should not participate. This is because the programme is intended specifically to reduce risks in the school environment.

What will the testing involve?

Our school is being provided with a supply of Lateral Flow Device (LFD) test kits by the Scottish Government and the UK Department of Health and Social Care for use at home. We will give each participating staff member a supply of these test kits to take home, together with the 'Instructions for Use'. Each staff member will be asked to sign for these in a log at the point of handover. Completion of this test kit log is a regulatory requirement.

We will then ask individuals to test regularly at home, twice a week (every three to four days, ideally in the morning before school).

The tests supplied do not require laboratory processing and can provide a quick result in around 30 minutes. Comprehensive guidance on conducting self-testing is contained in the 'Instructions for Use' leaflet which will be provided with the test kit. There is a useful video showing participants how to administer the test here:

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLvaBZskxS7tzQYIVg7lwH5uxAD9UrSzGJ>.

Once the test has been conducted individuals must log the test result – whether positive, negative or void – online at www.gov.uk/report-covid19-result. Tests are free of charge and will be provided by the school.

NB: It is important to note that this regular testing is only for individuals without symptoms. Those with symptoms must continue to follow the usual guidance. They must self-isolate and book a PCR test at a test centre or via a home test kit at the earliest opportunity. People with symptoms must not rely on a negative LFD result to continue to attend school.

NB: A negative test result must not be taken as leave to relax or ignore physical distancing or other measures intended to reduce transmission – testing is an additional intervention that contributes to reducing risk.

What happens next?

Tests have been distributed to Staff from Thursday 11th February and testing will commence week beginning Monday 15th February for everyone involved.

We will continue to support and communicate with our staff and school communities as we implement this programme. Please let us know if you have any questions. In the meantime, some Frequently Asked Questions can be found in the annex to this letter.

Yours faithfully,

Mrs Karen MacKechnie

Annex – Frequently Asked Questions

Are the tests safe and accurate?

LFD tests have been widely and successfully used to detect COVID-19 in asymptomatic individuals. No test is perfect, but the speed and convenience of LFD tests supports detection of the virus in asymptomatic individuals who would not otherwise be tested. They are clinically approved and are crucial in the fight against the virus. The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) has approved the use of these at-home tests for these purposes.

LFD tests are very accurate, which means that only a very small proportion of people who do not have coronavirus will receive a positive result (false positive). The tests are better at picking up true positive cases when a person has a higher viral load and is more contagious. There is a risk of returning a false negative result when viral loads are low (e.g. in the early stages of infection). This is why Public Health Scotland recommend two LFD tests 3 to 4 days apart, or regular testing, to enhance detection by picking up any cases which were not detected during the first test and to catch any new infections.

If someone tests positive using an LFD, it is likely that they are infectious at that moment, whereas people testing positive on a 'Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR)' test could be in the less infectious early or late stages of disease. This means that by using the LFD, we can identify people with a high viral load who are the most likely to spread the virus further.

What happens if there is a problem with the tests?

Any incidents that could potentially impact the quality or safety of testing should be reported to the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA).

For incidents occurring in a home setting, please report any issues (for example: something damaged, or missing or difficult to use in the kit, you are unable to log a result) to **0300 303 2713**.

If there is a clinical incident which led to, or has the potential for, harm (e.g. swab breaks in the mouth, bleeding, allergic reaction on using the kit etc.) please report it on <https://coronavirussyellowcard.mhra.gov.uk>.

This is not for seeking immediate medical care. Medical care should be sought through the usual route of contacting 111 or 999.

What if my child has been in close contact with someone who tests positive?

If a pupil or member of staff has tested positive, they will have to self-isolate as per government guidelines. The pupil or member of staff should also inform the school of their absence, and are strongly encouraged to report a positive case to their school to support contact tracing activities.

Both Test and Protect and, once informed, the school will get in contact with staff members and pupils who were in close contact with a positive case to inform them that they need to self-isolate.

What if my child develops symptoms?

This testing programme at school 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 0800 028 2816 or visiting <https://www.nhsinform.scot/>.

Can staff/pupils' families get tested too?

No, this asymptomatic LFD testing is aimed at staff and senior phase pupils only. The tests will be handed to staff and senior phase pupils for personal use and should not be used for anyone else. Family members of staff or senior phase pupils taking part are not eligible.

If family members experience COVID-19 symptoms, they must follow standard Government guidance, including self-isolating immediately and booking a test through the NHS Coronavirus (COVID-19) service or by calling 0300 303 2713 in Scotland.