

Asymptomatic testing in schools and colleges — Frequently asked questions

This document has been adapted from guidance issued by the DFE and irrelevant information has been removed 14/01/2021

Contents

Why is the Government implementing this programme of testing?	3
What are the objectives of the Government's asymptomatic testing strategy in education settings?	3
Why are you doing one-off testing in the beginning of January?	3
Why is asymptomatic rapid testing being introduced now?	3
When will schools and colleges be expected to deliver rapid asymptomatic testing to pupils, students, and staff?	3
Mass Testing.....	3
What is the Government's asymptomatic testing strategy in education settings?	3
Are schools and colleges still expected to deliver one-off testing, and when is this happening?	3
How will the one-off testing work?	3
How accurate is a lateral flow device test?	3
Who will be doing the testing in schools and colleges?	4
How many test kits will be delivered to schools and colleges and how often will further deliveries be made.	4
Will we have to opt in to receive the test kit supplies?	4
Getting Tested.....	4
Will the existing testing service remain open?	4
How will you avoid a stigma on those who choose not to take part or who test positive in school/college in front of their peers?	4
Can my family get tested too?	4
Why should I (the pupil/student/staff member) get tested if I (the pupil/student/staff member) have (has) no symptoms?	5
Why would I (the pupil/student/staff member) take the test? If positive, I will have to self-isolate. Why would I take the risk?	5
Consent	5
What happens if a school cannot get the consent and the child turns up to school?	5
Do you need consent to process the personal data required for testing?	5
Workforce	5
Will volunteers require a DBS check?	5
Can you say more about what military support will be available and how they will assist?	6

What further workforce support may be available to my school or college?	6
Will my school or college have costs reimbursed?.....	6
How are schools and colleges expected to deliver remote education alongside administering mass testing?	7
Training.....	7
How much time does a school or college require to plan the test area, set up the area, and undertake staff training?	7
Test Process.....	7
After LFD testing - the results take up to one hour to develop. Do we hold pupils and students until the result, or can they go back to class?	7
What happens if a pupil, student, or staff member's lateral flow test result is positive? ...	8
Why cannot staff and, students test themselves at home, rather than this having to happen in school?.....	8
Are secondary schools and colleges to receive supplies of PCR test kits for those who return a positive LFD test?	8
Test Area	8
What happens if a school or college does not have an appropriate space to do this?	8
SEND.....	8
What consideration is given to administering the test for SEND pupils and students or those with co-ordination issues who physically will not be able to manage this due to poor fine motor skills? Will the Test assistant be able to do the test for them?.....	8
What about student with SEND who will not be able to manage a self-swab who are in a mainstream school?	9
Is there to be priority testing for SEND pupils and students?	9
How are staff defined in special schools?.....	9
Equipment.....	9
How and when will test kits/PPE be provided — what will be provided and how will stocks be replenished?.....	9
What specific storage arrangements are required for the test kits?	10
What are the PPE requirements for staff?	10
Transport.....	10
What happens if, in exceptional circumstances, the parent is unable to collect a child who has tested positive?	10

Why is the Government implementing this programme of testing?

Mass Testing

What is the Government's asymptomatic testing strategy in education settings?

One in three people have the virus without symptoms (they are asymptomatic) so could be transmitting the virus unknowingly. That is why the testing of asymptomatic people can support education settings. Identifying positive cases will help break the chains of transmission. Testing programme will involve secondary school and FE pupils and students initially receiving two LFD tests.

Are schools and colleges still expected to deliver one-off testing, and when is this happening?

The expectation is that all secondary schools and colleges will use the week of the 4th of January to prepare for mass testing. From the 11th of January, two rapid tests will be available to all students to identify asymptomatic cases.

Rapidly identifying and containing any asymptomatic cases will prevent individuals from carrying the infection unknowingly and potentially spreading it in the local community. It will also support the effectiveness of the broader coronavirus testing programme that the government is putting in place.

How will the one-off testing work?

All pupils and students in secondary schools and FE colleges can be offered lateral flow testing from the 11th of January. Secondary school and FE college students and pupils will be able to take two LFD tests spaced between 3-5 days apart. The LFDs supplied do not require laboratory processing and can provide a quick result in up to an hour.

Individuals testing positive will need to self-isolate in line with the [stay-at-home guidance](#) for households for those with a possible or confirmed coronavirus (COVID19) infection. The student, pupil or staff member should then take a confirmatory PCR test to validate the positive result. Additional PCR tests will be sent to schools and colleges for issuing to any individual that receives a positive test, to support swift access to a confirmatory test.

Testing is not mandatory and any student or pupil who does not wish to take the two LFD tests at the start of spring term will not need to produce a negative test result, or provide proof of having taken a test, to return to face-to-face education. However, testing is strongly encouraged.

How accurate is a lateral flow device test?

Lateral flow 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).

If you test positive on a lateral flow test, it is likely that you are infectious at that moment. By using the lateral flow test we can identify people with a high viral load who are the most likely to spread the virus further.

Those who receive a negative test result from an LFD test must still follow social distancing guidance, wear face coverings when appropriate and wash their hands regularly.

Who will be doing the testing in schools and colleges?

In most cases, pupils will self-swab in order to provide a test sample. There are a number of related roles in the testing process, which are set out in published guidance.

Staff in schools and colleges will need to support the testing programme. The remaining testing workforce may need to be made up of volunteers and agency staff. If a school or college is experiencing difficulties putting testing arrangements in place, further support may be requested under exceptional circumstances to address logistical and planning issues. Schools and colleges will not be guaranteed this provision - educational settings will be assessed on a case-by-case basis. All secondary schools, colleges and independent special schools will be eligible for additional funding for workforce support. All other independent schools will not be eligible.

How many test kits will be delivered to schools and colleges and how often will further deliveries be made.

The number of test kits that each school will receive has been estimated based on the number of teachers and students and expectations around daily/serial testing based on prevalence. Schools and colleges will receive two deliveries in early January 2021. The first delivery will arrive by Royal Mail. These test kits and PPE are for the initial testing programme. In the second delivery, schools and colleges will receive test kits and PPE for the weekly testing of staff and contact daily/serial testing. You will be able to order additional test kits and PPE throughout the testing period as required and information on how to re-order will be shared shortly. You should receive sufficient test kits and PPE for a minimum of at least 2 weeks.

Will we have to opt in to receive the test kit supplies?

As part of its operational guidance, DHSC will set out a legal agreement with terms and conditions that schools and colleges will opt in to by simply choosing to participate in the testing programme. No specific steps need to be taken to sign-up to receive the first delivery of test kits. Further information will be provided about replenishment of these supplies.

Getting Tested

Will the existing testing service remain open?

The Government's normal testing service for symptomatic individuals will continue. This is the foundation of our testing strategy. It is the most effective way to know if you are positive and need to self-isolate. If you have symptoms, you should continue to book a test via the [NHS Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) service](#) or by calling 119 in England and Wales, or 0300 303 2713 in Scotland and Northern Ireland.

How will you avoid a stigma on those who choose not to take part or who test positive in school/college in front of their peers?

Test results should be communicated to students/pupils and staff in private wherever possible.

Can my family get tested too?

No, this testing is aimed at staff and pupils/students in schools and colleges with the goal of keeping schools and colleges open and students in face-face education. Family members of staff and pupils/students 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 119 (England and Wales).

[Why should I \(the pupil/student/staff member\) get tested if I \(the pupil/student/staff member\) have \(has\) no symptoms?](#)

Lateral flow tests are designed to detect the level of virus in individuals who do not experience and show any symptoms, but who could still be infectious and pass the virus to others. By taking a test, you will help to stop the spread of the virus, protect other people, and save lives.

[Why would I \(the pupil/student/staff member\) take the test? If positive, I will have to self-isolate. Why would I take the risk?](#)

Lateral flow tests are designed to detect the level of virus in individuals who do not experience and show any symptoms, but who could still be infectious and pass the virus to others. By taking a test, you will help to stop the spread of the virus, protect other people, and save lives. This will also mean that staff can continue going to work, schools and colleges can avoid unnecessary staff shortages, and pupils and students can continue in face-to-face education with their peers.

Consent

[What happens if a school cannot get the consent and the child turns up to school?](#)

Participation in the programme requires active consent from the person being tested, or, if they are under 16, their parent or /legal guardian. Any staff member, student, or pupil who does not take part in testing will still be able to attend school or college unless they develop symptoms or have been in close contact with a positive result. People who decline to participate in daily/serial contact testing will follow the usual national guidelines and must self-isolate for ten days

[Do you need consent to process the personal data required for testing?](#)

Secondary schools and colleges will need to satisfy themselves that they have a lawful basis for processing personal data. The duties prescribed in education legislation for secondary schools and FE institutions require them to plan for safeguarding needs and promote pupils, and students' welfare may provide sufficient legal basis without having to rely on consent. Schools and colleges will provide staff, pupils and parents with a privacy notice explaining what personal data is required to participate in the programme.

Workforce

[Will volunteers require a DBS check?](#)

Schools and colleges must comply with their legal duties regarding pre-appointment checks when utilising agency staff, contractors, and volunteers to support testing. Usually, if you are involved in the testing procedure, or if you are at any time with children unsupervised, then you will require a DBS check. If you are volunteering but not assisting with swabbing (for instance, if you are already trained to provide support for a child who cannot self-administer), and you will not be unsupervised with children/ young people at any time, then you will not need a DBS check.

It is essential that agency staff, contractors and volunteers are appropriately supported and given appropriate roles. The school or college should minimise the mixing of volunteers, agency staff and contractors across groups, and they should remain 2 metres from pupils and staff where possible.

[Can you say more about what military support will be available and how they will assist?](#)

The nature of support will depend on the requirements of individual secondary schools and colleges. 1,500 military personnel have been committed to supporting schools and colleges. They will remain on task, providing virtual training and advice on establishing the testing process, with teams on standby to provide in-person support if required by schools and colleges. Schools and colleges can request this additional help through the [DfE helpline](#).

Some military personnel will provide remote support to schools and colleges with strategic planning, assisting with practical elements of delivering mass testing. This support may include answering questions about setting up and running a mass testing site for a large school. In other cases, the Department intends to provide 'on the ground' military support to schools and colleges to assist with setting up testing sites where testing would otherwise not be able to go ahead. Schools and colleges can request this additional help through the DfE Helpline.

[What further workforce support may be available to my school or college?](#)

As well as accessing workforce funding and military support, there are other options available to schools and colleges to support their testing workforce.

Support for pupils who are unable to self-swab may be available to access via our DfE helpline. Clinical support would be for children and young people whose physical and health needs prevent them from administering their own test, and where parents and/or existing school staff cannot assist.

Leadership support will be made available via Ofsted HMIs or peer to peer support between schools.

Commercial routes for hiring external temporary and non-clinical routes can be accessed via a range of existing frameworks. More detail on 'How to Buy' from each of these frameworks will be published on the DfE Portal.

Accessing volunteers. Schools and colleges can use volunteers that are either already available to them (parent volunteers, school governors, those volunteering in other areas of the school/college) or by engaging with volunteers via one of the national networks such as Do.it.org or Reach Volunteering. Volunteer Centres can also be used as a way of engaging with volunteers, and schools and colleges can find their local centre by using the postcode search function on the National Centre for Voluntary Organisations website.

[Will my school or college have costs reimbursed?](#)

Schools and colleges will receive funding to support them with testing costs incurred. This will be paid retrospectively. The amount of funding available to a school or college will depend on its size as this will impact the number of additional staff required to conduct testing. The basis of your actual funding allocation will be on data returns provided through the 'School Census Autumn 2020' return and the Individualised Learner Record (ILR) R04

return for 2020 to 2021 . The Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) will automatically make these payments to those institutions that deliver the initial roll-out of rapid mass testing.

How are schools and colleges expected to deliver remote education alongside administering mass testing?

Guidance and resources on remote education can be found here — [Get Help with Remote Education — GOV-UK](#). Pupil and students who are classed vulnerable or have parents that are key workers will attend school or college in person from the start of term, as will all students in primary, special and alternative provision schools, and colleges.

To deliver testing at the required scale means schools and colleges need to provide staff members to support the programme. This support will cover the seven testing roles as set out in the [School and Colleges Handbook](#). The Department recognise that teachers' priority should be delivering education and confirms this does not necessarily need to include teaching staff. The testing workforce may be a mixture of volunteers and agency staff, identified by the school or college, such as nonteaching staff or exam invigilators. The Department will reimburse, state-funded schools and colleges, and independent and non-maintained special schools, reasonable workforce costs incurred.

The Department understands that school and college leaders are in the best position to secure the necessary resource for testing; which is from within their own school and local communities. The Department recognise that some schools and colleges may be unable to identify sufficient staff/volunteers to cover the seven testing roles. In such scenarios, the school/college should contact the Schools Helpline and have their case triaged. The Department will assess the specific needs of the school or college. Where additional support is required, the Department will agree on what appropriate assistance is needed on a case-by-case basis. It will reserve extra resources for those schools and colleges that are in greatest need.

Training

How much time does a school or college require to plan the test area, set up the area, and undertake staff training?

Secondary schools and colleges can find detailed information on the number of staff and estimated time and space needed for each asymptomatic testing site, and training needs in the following [Guidance for asymptomatic testing in schools and colleges and the Schools and Colleges Handbook](#). As an indication, a school or college can complete 11-13 tests, per bay, per hour.

Test Process

After LFD testing - the results take up to one hour to develop. Do we hold pupils and students until the result, or can they go back to class?

When the testing is part of routine weekly or mass testing, individuals can return to regular school or college activities. However, anyone tested as part of the daily/serial testing of contacts programme will need to wait somewhere before being allowed to begin normal school/college activities until they receive a negative test result. These holding spaces must be separated for each group of close contacts and cleaned after all individuals leave.

What happens if a pupil, student, or staff member's lateral flow test result is positive?

Individuals who return a positive lateral flow test result must self-isolate immediately and take a confirmatory PCR test. If the PCR test returns a positive result, the individual must continue to self-isolate and follow NHS Test and Trace guidance. They should also inform their school or college of the positive result. A confirmatory PCR test is crucial as it activates contact tracing, which reduces the spread of the disease. If an individual does not take a PCR confirmatory test, they must self-isolate for ten days and inform their contacts to self-isolate in line with public health advice.

Why cannot staff and, students test themselves at home, rather than this having to happen in school?

Work is ongoing to develop more testing options, including the use of LFDs at home for staff and students.

Are secondary schools and colleges to receive supplies of PCR test kits for those who return a positive LFD test?

PCR test kits will be supplied to secondary schools and colleges. Any individual who receives a positive LFD will be provided with a confirmatory PCR test kit to take at home. They will not be expected to take the PCR test in school/college and should return home to self-isolate immediately.

Test Area

What happens if a school or college does not have an appropriate space to do this?

Schools and colleges will receive funding to support them with testing costs incurred. The Department for Education anticipates the primary costs incurred by secondary schools and colleges will be additional staffing costs. However, they may also spend the funding on any relevant additional non-workforce costs incurred to set up to deliver testing (for example: mirrors, installing temporary hardcovers on carpets to facilitate cleaning; extra cleaning and waste disposal. Where a school or college is still having difficulties in finding suitable space, they should contact the helpline to discuss further options of support that might be available.

SEND

How will mass testing be administered in a SEND context and will there be any additional support or resources for special schools or those with a high number of SEND pupils and students?

The Department for Education has provided [guidance on delivering mass testing in specialist settings](#).

What consideration is given to administering the test for SEND pupils and students or those with co-ordination issues who physically will not be able to manage this due to poor fine motor skills? Will the Test assistant be able to do the test for them?

Special schools and specialist colleges have a range of staff to meet pupils and students' health needs. These staff already have undertaken various training to support health needs and could provide support taking swabs for those who cannot self-administer. "Support for pupils who are unable to self-swab may be available. Clinical support would be for children

and young people whose physical and health needs prevent them from administering their own test, and where parents and/or existing school staff cannot assist."

[What about student with SEND who will not be able to manage a self-swab who are in a mainstream school?](#)

Support for pupils who are unable to self-swab may be available if there are no suitable staff to administer tests. Clinical support would be for children and young people whose physical and health needs prevent them from administering their own test, and parents or existing school staff cannot assist.

In some cases, the individual may wish to have a trusted adult from the setting to supervise the self-swab of the test. The setting may also wish to consider whether it would agree in exceptional circumstances to a parent coming into the setting to support their child to self-swab or to swab their child. This might be a reasonable adjustment for the testing of a child or young person with a disability, for example.

[Is there to be priority testing for SEND pupils and students?](#)

The asymptomatic testing programme will help to keep education settings open and ensure as many pupils as possible receive a high-quality face to face education by helping break the virus' transmission chains. The Department expects schools and colleges to prioritise testing the most vulnerable pupils and students, including those with additional needs.

[How are staff defined in special schools?](#)

The teaching workforce includes all staff who are school/college-based. Schools and colleges should also offer testing to other staff members, such as clinical practitioners, therapists, or other support staff. Some staff (particularly those employed through the NHS) may have separate arrangements for regular testing.

Equipment

What equipment or resources will a secondary school or college need to provide?

Detailed information on the materials schools and colleges will need to source and organise to support asymptomatic testing sites is provided in the operational [Guidance for asymptomatic testing in schools and colleges](#) and the [Schools and Colleges Handbook](#).

[How and when will test kits/PPE be provided — what will be provided and how will stocks be replenished?](#)

Schools and colleges will initially receive two deliveries of PPE and test kits. The first delivery will arrive by Royal Mail on 4 January. These test kits and PPE are for the mass testing programme. In the second delivery, schools and colleges will receive test kits and PPE for the weekly testing of staff. You will be able to order additional test kits and PPE throughout the testing period as required, and the Department for education will issue further guidance this shortly. You should receive enough test kits and PPE for a minimum of at least two weeks. The number of test kits that each school will receive has been estimated based on the number of teachers and students and, in line with the daily/serial testing to be carried out from January. The calculation will also consider the prevalence of the virus in the local community.

What specific storage arrangements are required for the test kits?

The temperature for storing LFD devices and reagents is between 2^o C and 30^oC. The LFD devices and reagents must be between 15^o C and 30^o C during use.

What are the PPE requirements for staff?

The PPE requirements for staff vary depending on the role. All staff must wear a fluid-resistant (Type 11 R) surgical mask. Processors must also wear disposable gloves (which will require changing after each session), a disposable plastic apron, and eye protection (goggles or a visor). The test assistant and results recorder will both need disposable gloves. The cleaner will need disposable gloves and disposable apron (to be changed in cleaning a spillage) and eye protection (goggles or a visor). PPE should be changed whenever staff members leave and re-enter the test site area (including during a session) or if protective properties are compromised or contaminated.

Transport

What happens if, in exceptional circumstances, the parent is unable to collect a child who has tested positive?

Parents or carers should arrange for their child to be collected as quickly as possible following a positive test. The pupil or student should wear a face covering and keep a safe distance from others in a designated waiting area within the education setting. If possible, the child should walk, cycle or scoot home. Pupils and students who have tested positive must not travel home using public transport. Exceptionally the local authority may be able to help source a suitable vehicle which would provide appropriate protection.