

In-school coronavirus testing: what we need to know and we are expected to do.

We are all working very hard to keep Northampton School for Girls as safe as possible. We will therefore be taking part in the Government's initiative for asymptomatic testing of staff and pupils. These tests will be conducted using new, quicker COVID-19 tests known as 'Lateral Flow Tests'.

These tests will help staff and pupils to remain in school safely. The test is completely voluntary and we require parental/carer consent before any child can be tested. We will begin testing staff and students, who wish to participate, as soon as we are able to.

This is a summary of what we know, so far, about the 3 government's asymptomatic COVID-19 mass-testing programme for staff and learners in secondary-age schools from January 2021.

Overview of the 3 streams of testing

The government has announced 3 'non-mandatory'* streams of coronavirus testing in schools with secondary-age learners, including special schools and alternative providers (AP), from January 2021:

1. **Mass testing:** Start-of-term (from 4 January) schools will begin planning and preparing for the mass-testing of as many learners and staff as possible
2. **Testing close contacts** (both staff and learners) of confirmed cases of coronavirus
3. **Weekly testing of staff members**

*The language surrounding the 'non-mandatory' element of the testing has changed considerably over recent weeks and the government has made clear that all schools are expected to engage in the testing.

How will schools carry out the testing? (This information is based on the most up to date guidance provided by the Department for Education and is correct as of Monday 11th January 2021)

Schools will use Lateral Flow Device tests; these produce results in 30 minutes and do not need to be processed in a lab. Students will be provided with training and guidance and most will administer the lateral flow test to themselves, supervised by a trained adult. However, if the individual needs of the child mean that it would not be appropriate for them to administer the test themselves, a trained adult will support them administer it.

What if my child develops symptoms?

This testing programme 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 or visiting <https://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test>.

Stream 1: Mass-testing

The DfE expects all secondary-age learners and staff to be offered lateral flow coronavirus tests in January.

Given the recent delay to our return students' return to school and the staggering of all learners' return to school, we will prioritise testing as follows:

1. Staff
2. Vulnerable children
3. Children of critical workers
4. Learners in years 11 and 13
5. All other students

What happens once the tests have been taken?

- **If the lateral flow test is positive**, the student will need to self-isolate immediately and confirm the result with a standard 'PCR' coronavirus test. 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 Polymerase Chain Reaction or 'PCR test'. You can go to www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test or call 119 to book a follow-up test. Students will be expected to self-isolate while they wait for the PCR result to be returned.
- If the PCR test returns a positive result, the student will have to self-isolate and follow the guidance from NHS Test and Trace. If the result is negative, the student can return to school as directed.

If the lateral flow test is negative, students will need to take another lateral flow test between 3 and 5 days later.

If the second test is positive, they will need to self-isolate immediately and take a standard PCR test to confirm the result.

Do staff and learners have to take a test to return to school after half-term or lockdown.

No. Testing is optional, and it is up to staff and learners/parents to decide if they want to take one. Students can return to school even if they have not taken a test. We do not need to test everyone before they return to school. The aim of the scheme is to catch as many potential cases as possible, but the Department for Education recognises that we may not be able to test everyone.

Stream 2: 'serial' testing for close contacts of confirmed coronavirus cases

Staff and learners in secondary schools identified as a close contact of someone who has tested positive will be offered daily lateral flow tests for 7 school days. Participation requires consent, so the member of staff or student can choose to self-isolate instead of taking a daily test.

If the member of staff/student decides to undertake daily testing and it is:

- **Positive:** they will need to self-isolate immediately and confirm the result with a standard PCR coronavirus test
- **Negative:** they will continue attending school and get tested every morning until the 7 school days have passed. If at any point, they test positive, they'll need to self-isolate immediately and take a standard PCR test to confirm the result

Stream 3: weekly testing for staff

All staff in secondary schools will be offered routine coronavirus testing once a week. They will be eligible for this even if they are also participating in 'serial' testing. Participation requires consent.