

28th January 2021

Dear Parents and Carers

RE: Update on the school testing programme – change to confirmatory PCR tests

I am writing to update you regarding the coronavirus testing programme.

The update from The Department for Education is below:

The secondary school and college testing programme is continuing to use lateral flow tests to identify cases of coronavirus (COVID-19) amongst staff and pupils who are asymptomatic.

Following new advice, NHS Test and Trace and Public Health England are temporarily pausing the need for a confirmatory PCR test following a positive result with a lateral flow test in secondary schools. Following a positive lateral flow test result, an individual will need to self-isolate in line with government guidance, and contact tracing will need to be undertaken.

Confirmatory PCR testing was introduced to minimise the chance of false positive results with lateral flow tests. When coronavirus (COVID-19) prevalence rates are high, however, Public Health England has advised that the performance of lateral flow devices and PCR tests are broadly comparable for infectivity and expected to be indistinguishable when used at test sites, significantly reducing the need for routine confirmatory testing.

Since the programme is now only being used to initially screen pupils returning to school and to routinely test staff, this update will have minimal impact on children already attending at this time.

However, it will need to be considered as and when pupils return fully, hence I am making you aware of this change: in summary, a lateral flow positive test will lead to self-isolation.

Yours sincerely



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