

Dear Parents /Carers

I hope you have had a lovely festive break and are keeping safe and well. We appreciate that this is a difficult time for our students and as always, we will pull together, ensure a high standard of on line learning and support and help to protect the NHS.

I'm sure many of you will have heard on 15th December the government statement that every secondary school and college in England, as well as special schools and alternative provision, will have access to rapid coronavirus testing. These tests provide a result in approximately 30 minutes.

As you know, at college we already have infection prevention and control measures in place such as wearing face coverings, staggered lunches and timetables, regular handwashing, hand sanitiser stations and class/group bubbles in place to keep staff and students as safe as possible when on site. This will not change and in addition, testing will be implemented. The test is designed to quickly identify whether a student or staff member has coronavirus, and therefore avoid any unnecessary periods of self-isolation and absence from college

Those taking the test will be supervised by trained staff and volunteers. The lateral flow devices are easy to use and are taken via a swab from your nose and throat. Results (which take around half an hour from testing) will be shared directly with the individual participant. The college will inform the student, and next of kin if under 18, of a positive test result.

Students aged 16 and above can independently give consent if they have the capacity to do so, therefore we will not require the significant majority of our parents or carers to provide consent. However, we will contact parents/carers for consent and to arrange support when taking the test when this is required. With all positive cases we shall aim to contact parents/carers by telephone as well as via e-mail and the student. Please note that the consent forms collected will cover the initial tests taken when students return to college and any future tests required; for example, for any 'close contacts' with a person who has tested positive. This information must be kept securely for a minimum of 14 days, and will then be destroyed within 1 month testing programme ending.

This testing programme in college is for people with no symptoms. If a student develops symptoms at any time (including 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>.

Please find attached generic information provided by the government and a copy of the consent form that we would like you to complete and return immediately so that our testing centre can become operational very promptly when we resume all or some activity at College. I also thought it would be useful to include some of the FAQ's from the government guidance documents which may be helpful; please see below

We will support our staff and students throughout, but please contact us if you have any questions.

You can contact the office by calling 01942 761111.

Yours faithfully,

Maxine Mealey
Assistant Principal

Can the students' 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.

What if my child tests positive?

If a pupil tests positive on a lateral flow device, they will need to take a further 'PCR test' to confirm the result. This should be on the same day or as soon as possible afterwards. [School/college] will be able to provide these PCR test kits to perform at home. During the time while waiting for the PCR result (via text/email) they will need to self-isolate. If the PCR test returns a positive result they will have to continue to self-isolate and follow the guidance from NHS Test and Trace.

What happens if the test is negative?

While a small number of pupils may need to repeat the test if the first test was invalid or void for some reason, pupils who test negative will be able to stay in [school/college] and resume their activities as normal. Pupils will be informed of negative test results via text/email. Where participants are under 16, parents or legal guardians will also be informed.

What if staff or students have been in close contact with someone in [school/college] who tests positive?

The staff member or student will be notified that they are a close contact by the [school/college]. If close contacts agree to be tested each day for a maximum period of 7 days, and they test negative every day, they will be allowed to remain in [school/college]. There may be instances where close contacts are also contacted by NHS Test and Trace. In this instance they should notify NHS Test and Trace that they are a close contact through school/college and are participating in daily contact testing.

If they do not want to take the tests, they will need to self-isolate as per the national guidelines. The option of daily testing does not apply to household members or close contacts of a positive case outside of [school/college], who will still need to self-isolate.