

Testing in school – why it's so important!

We want to thank all of the parents and carers in our school for supporting us to keep our pupils and staff safe over the last 18 months. Now that we have started back in the new school year, there have been some changes to the guidance around COVID-19 for schools, and we wanted to share with you a bit more information about what this means and why it's crucial to keep our school open and safe.

Guidance for children that are close contacts to someone that has tested positive

From Monday 16 August, guidance for close contacts of a positive case changed, which also applies to schools. If your child has been in close contact with a positive case and the NHS Test and Trace scheme have told you about this, your child is no longer required to isolate if they don't have symptoms. Instead, you are advised to get your child a PCR test. Take a look at our flow chart below to help explain this better.

Should I send my child to school if the NHS Test and Trace has told me they're a close contact of a positive case?

Do they have symptoms of COVID-19?

Yes

If they have:

- a new cough that won't stop
- a high temperature
- change to their taste or smell

Isolate them immediately at home and book a COVID-19 PCR test.

No

Because your child is under 18 and doesn't have symptoms, they don't need to isolate. However, you are advised to book them a COVID-19 PCR test. (Your child can go to school while waiting for their results.)

If their test result is positive:

- Your child must stay at home to self-isolate
- They should not leave home to go to school, after school clubs, or meet with family and friends.

If their test result is negative:

- Your child does not need to self-isolate.
- If they develop symptoms after getting their results, you should then isolate your child at home and get them tested again. Your child will need to isolate this time as they have symptoms of COVID-19.



Why is it important that I get my child a PCR test if I've been told they are a close contact?

PCR COVID-19 tests will help us find people who have the virus early and isolate them, which will help stop the spread. Around 1 in 3 people with the virus don't show symptoms but can still pass the virus on to others.

With your children mixing with their friends and teachers in school, the virus can be passed on quickly and easily to a lot of people. By getting a PCR COVID-19 test when advised, you will be helping to reduce the spread in school if your child has got COVID-19, helping us continue learning and protect each other.

PCR COVID-19 tests can be booked online at [gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test](https://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test) or by calling 119.

Twice-weekly lateral flow testing

Everyone in our communities can now take up regular lateral flow testing. These tests are to be taken at home twice a week and are designed to find cases of COVID-19 in people that aren't showing symptoms. Secondary school children and families are encouraged to take up this testing, as it will help to find cases of COVID-19 as early as possible, helping to stop the spread in school and into the community.

How to access lateral flow tests:

- by collecting home test kits from a participating pharmacy - [find a participating pharmacy on NHS.UK](https://maps.test-and-trace.nhs.uk) (<https://maps.test-and-trace.nhs.uk>)
- [by ordering home test kits online from gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk/order-coronavirus-rapid-lateral-flow-tests) ([gov.uk/order-coronavirus-rapid-lateral-flow-tests](https://www.gov.uk/order-coronavirus-rapid-lateral-flow-tests))

If you haven't already, please start taking twice-weekly tests to protect both staff and students in our school and help us continue learning.

More information around regular, rapid testing is available at [barnsley.gov.uk/coronavirus-rapid-test](https://www.barnsley.gov.uk/coronavirus-rapid-test)

We understand that positive COVID-19 tests could cause families some disruption to their daily routines. However, it is so important that we can reduce the spread of the virus to our loved ones. There is financial support for parents and carers who need to look after a young person who is isolating, cannot do their job from home, and would lose income. You can find out more about this at [barnsley.gov.uk/covid-19-test-and-trace-support-payment](https://www.barnsley.gov.uk/covid-19-test-and-trace-support-payment)