

COVID-19 Testing of Staff in Maintained Primary Schools and Maintained Nurseries

- 1. Which organisation is leading the strategy for testing staff in schools with primary age pupils including maintained nursery schools?**

The Department for education (DfE) is the lead organisation.

- 2. Should maintained primary phase schools and maintained nursery schools now start the staff testing programme if they have not already done so?**

We know that many maintained primary schools and maintained nursery schools have actively prepared to start the staff COVID-19 testing programme, whilst others will be working through many practical arrangements including staffing, training and risk assessment.

In our previous communication to headteachers, the council advised maintained schools to pause before commencing the testing process, whilst we explored further with DfE some issues relating to testing and whilst we had time to review the guidance supplied by the DfE. Issues which schools had asked us to clarify included questions around bubbles closing, insurance, GDPR etc. We have now been able to answer these, following advice from legal officers, public health or from the DfE.

We are now revising our previous advice and our current advice is that where maintained schools plan to deliver testing, they are advised to begin when they consider that they are ready.

- 3. Are maintained primary phase schools and maintained nursery schools covered by Derbyshire County Council's insurance to undertake this testing programme?**

Yes. Derbyshire's primary phase schools and maintained nursery schools are covered by Derbyshire County Council's insurance to undertake this testing programme.

- 4. Should we use the DfE privacy notices and consent forms?**

To assist you with your preparations, the council's Education Data Hub service has developed a testing consent pack. This includes a copy of the privacy notice provided by the DfE, a consent form developed for Derbyshire Schools and a checklist and other templates you can use to support your communications with staff regarding COVID-19 testing in schools. The COVID-19 School Testing Consent Pack and Checklist are attached to this communication.

If you need any assistance in your role as data controllers, then please contact the Education Data Hub.

We hope you find these materials helpful. If you have specific queries in relation to consent or data processing, please contact educationdatahub@derbyshire.gov.uk.

5. Who is eligible to be tested i.e. teaching, Admin/MDS/Site/TAs/First Aiders/Invigilators?

All members of staff (including relief) at your school can be tested. Tests cannot be used for members of your wider community, neighbouring early years private and voluntary settings or staff family members. The DfE's FAQs says that the government is looking into options for piloting tests of pupils, but no decisions have yet been made and, therefore, no tests should be offered to pupils to use at home.

6. Am I required to offer tests to any regular visitors to the school, i.e. Contractors/Peripatetic Services/HR staff?

Offering home testing of visitors is discretionary for the school and should be assessed as part of an update of your school risk assessment. e.g. a frequent visitor to the school may need to be included in the testing regime. Health and Safety may be able to provide further advice in specific circumstances.

7. Is testing compulsory and a requirement of their employment?

Testing is purely voluntary and is not a condition of employment. The DfE recommends that staff should take the test twice weekly at home 3-4 days apart and ideally in a morning before coming to work.

8. Will I be expected to include home tests for catering/cleaning & caretaking colleagues or regular volunteers who are not employed directly by the School?

Staff/volunteers who work on school sites to support in the running of the school such as catering, cleaning and caretaking colleagues are classed as part of the school community and, therefore, are included in the guidance regarding home testing.

9. Can pregnant staff be tested?

Yes, staff who are pregnant can be tested.

10. Who can I ask to be involved in supporting the testing process, i.e. Admin/volunteers?

The DfE guidance specifies that there are two roles which must be undertaken by individuals from the school. These are the COVID-19 Coordinator and the, Registration Assistant. The same person can be asked to do both jobs.

11. Will pregnant workers be excluded from co-ordinating home testing in schools?

It is unlikely that the use of pregnant workers to undertake this work would constitute too much of a risk. If any employee expresses concern about undertaking this role schools would need to conduct an individual risk assessment to identify any risk and put in place mitigating measures.

12. Is there additional funding available to support schools in managing the testing process?

The government has not announced any funding to recompense any additional costs which your school may incur. Local Authorities are not funded to meet any individual school costs and, therefore, schools should work with their finance officers if finance pressures become evident.

13. Is testing part of directed time and should my staff be tested even though their normal working hours are outside of the normal school day, e.g. site staff?

Testing is voluntary and designed to be undertaken at home. Therefore, it is not part of directed time since it is a voluntary activity. All school staff should be able to access regular testing if they wish.

14. What training should staff undertake before taking part in the testing programme?

All staff must access the government's support materials which are located on the DfE's document portal. They must follow the training, guidance and processes. Headteachers may decide to find time for staff to read these materials. The DfE's document portal can be found at the following link: [Primary Schools Document Sharing Platform - Google Drive](#)

15. If a member of staff is particularly anxious about COVID-19, could they ask to be tested daily and if so, do I have to agree to this?

You may want to review individual risk assessments in the light of the new testing regime. An individual should be reassured that twice weekly testing is sufficient, however, for a short period of time or in a specific instance you may want to agree to this to enable an employee to continue to attend.

16. Can a member of staff refuse to allow the Headteacher to see the result of their test?

When members of staff agree to undertake the test, they are consenting for the results to be shared. They must also share the information with track and trace. The information is required to be shared in accordance with the privacy notice and letter to staff.

17. Are there template letters and documents that I can use?

Please continue to regularly access the DfE's document platform to access any important DfE documents and resources.

18. Does this test take precedence over being contacted by test and trace?

No. Staff who are contacted by NHS Test and Trace as a contact of someone who has coronavirus, will need to self-isolate immediately following current public health guidance.

19. If a staff member tests positive, do we close their bubble down based on the LFD result? Do we wait for the PCR result?

Derbyshire County Council recommends that you trace people who have been in close contact with a staff member who has tested positive and those people should then isolate. However, if there are any doubts then you should ask the bubble to isolate and not wait for a confirmatory PCR test.

20. Two void LFD tests triggers a PCR test – does the bubble shut “just in case”?

In the very unlikely event staff get two void test results, they should book a PCR test. Staff should self-isolate pending the result of the PCR test and inform their school/nursery as it may indicate a faulty batch of test kits. Derbyshire County Council recommends that you should identify people who may have been in close contact with the staff member and ask that they self-isolate pending the result of the PCR test. If there are any doubts, then you may need to ask the bubble to isolate too.

21. If staff are in on alternate weeks or part time staff, do they need to be tested for the whole time or just the days they are in school?

Derbyshire County Council recommends that staff continue to have twice weekly tests.

22. Can staff opt out once they've opted in i.e., they have had a change of heart?

Asymptomatic testing is an important part of the strategy to identify people who may be carrying the virus. We would encourage staff to participate, but they can withdraw at any stage.

23. When will the model/generic risk assessment for Primary schools be ready?

Please continue to use your current risk assessment template and update it accordingly.

On 22 January 2021 the following were updated on the health and safety S4S pages.

- Coronavirus (Covid-19) Schools Full Opening RA - 2021.01 V08
- Revision Notes - Coronavirus (Covid-19) Schools Full Opening RA - 2021.01 V08
- COVID-19 Testing for Staff in Primary Schools, School-Based Nurseries and Maintained Nursery Schools - 2021.01 V01

24. Where do we go for further advice?

Please continue to regularly check the DfE document portal for updated information. Alternatively, please contact the DfE helpline on 0800 046 8687 (Monday to Friday from 8am to 6pm, Saturday and Sunday from 10am to 6pm). If the DfE is unable to answer your question, then please liaise with your usual HR, finance or health and safety links if your questions are in these areas or with your school's Senior Adviser. Given that this is a DfE led strategy, Derbyshire County Council cannot guarantee to be able to answer your question, but we meet with DfE officials on a regular basis and will continue to press DfE for answers.