



19 January 2021

Dear Parent/Carer

NHS TEST AND TRACE : COVID-19 TESTING FOR STAFF AND STUDENTS

As I am sure you are aware, testing for those without coronavirus symptoms is beginning across the country using new, quicker COVID-19 tests known as 'lateral flow devices'. This communication is to help give you more information about the testing programme at South Dartmoor Community College and the Atrium.

Up to one third of people who have coronavirus are asymptomatic. Testing will help to reduce the spread in school and college settings through asymptomatic transmission. Therefore, following Department for Education advice, we are strongly encouraging those returning to school to be tested.

Before any student and/or staff can be included in the testing programme, consent must be received to enable this to happen. Thank you to those parents/carers who have already completed the online consent form.

It is recognised that the self-swabbing part of the test may cause significant concerns for some young people and their families. Some of these concerns may be alleviated by discussing them with us and agreeing strategies to help reduce anxiety and putting in place any reasonable adjustments (if the individual has a disability). Parents and carers may want to look at the Mass Testing Guidance for Specialist Settings for further information - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-for-full-opening-special-schools-and-other-specialist-settings/mass-asymptomatic-testing-in-specialist-settings>.

We will start testing all staff and students who are currently attending the site for supervised remote learning from **Monday 25 January**, with a view to testing all staff and students when they return to school, hopefully after the February half term.

In addition, any staff member or student who has come into contact with positive cases on our site can be tested daily for seven days to allow them to remain in school.

In order to ready ourselves for this process, we need to continue to collect consent from all parents/carers for children under 16 and from the individuals themselves if they are over 16. Therefore, could I please remind parents/carers to complete the online consent form by **Friday 22 January** [here](#).

Frequently asked Questions:

How do the tests work?

Those taking the test will be supervised by trained staff and volunteers. The lateral flow devices are easy to undertake, using a swab of your nose and throat. For those who are unable to self-swab please refer to the Mass Testing Guidance for Specialist Settings for further information about options. Results (which will be available about half an hour from testing) will be shared directly with the individual participant. The testing team will inform the student of a positive test result. Where participants are under 16, parents/carers or legal guardians will also be informed. The student will also receive a text/email notification of a positive or negative result from the online NHS system.

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What if my child tests positive?

If a student 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.

During the time while waiting for the PCR result (via text/email) the student 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 students may need to repeat the test if the first test was invalid or void for some reason, students who test negative will be able to stay in school and resume their activities as normal. Students will be informed of negative test results via the testing team. Where participants are under 16, parents/carers or legal guardians will also be informed.

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

The staff member or student will be notified that have been in close contact by the schools. If close contacts agree to be tested each day for a maximum period of 7 days, and they test negative every day, they may be allowed to remain in 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 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, who will still need to self-isolate.

What if my child develops symptoms?

This testing programme at South Dartmoor and Atrium is for people with no symptoms. If your child 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>.

We fully understand this is a difficult time for everyone and we will support our staff and students throughout this process, but please contact us, by replying to this email, if you have any questions.

Best wishes

Dan Vile

Assistant Head teacher

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