

Education & Learning

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Dear Parents and Carers

I am sure you will have heard on 15th December the government statement that from January 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 about 30 minutes.

The first thing to say is that the testing is optional and your consent would be needed before your child could receive the test.

As you know, schools already have infection prevention and control measures such as wearing face coverings, regular handwashing and bubbles in place to keep staff and students as safe as possible. These will not be changed with testing being implemented in schools. The test is designed to quickly identify whether a pupil or staff member has coronavirus, and therefore avoid any unnecessary periods of self-isolation and absence from school.

The DfE have stated that testing is optional for schools too and some may decide they are unable to do this because they do not have the facilities or staffing capacity. There is nothing to worry about if this is the case for your school.

The government is prioritising secondary schools and colleges for testing because a positive case very often results in more students being sent home and having their education disrupted. They also want to ensure pupils and students in crucial exam years can access as much face to face teaching as possible. They hope to roll out testing in primary schools in the spring.

The information below is therefore designed to help keep as many students in school as possible and is not a replacement for the protective measures in place. If your child shows any [symptoms of Covid 19](#) they should be kept at home and access a test through the national route.

What this means for your family for returning to school in the New Year

Primary aged pupils,

- If your child is of primary school age nothing will be different. Your child will return to school after Christmas as previously planned.

Pupils in Special Schools or Alternative Provision

- All pupils in special schools or alternative provision are expected to attend from the start of term.

- For SEN schools the logistics of mass testing pupils are complicated meaning individual headteachers will take decisions that are in the best interests of all its pupils and school community. Staff will be tested regularly and in line with government recommendations.

Secondary aged pupils,

- The government has announced that for the first week of term, secondary school and college students **will learn remotely for one week, except those in exam years, vulnerable young people and the children of critical workers who will return to school.** Your school or college will already have communicated their start of term dates.
- All pupils in special schools or alternative provision are expected to attend from the start of term.
- Your school will currently be deciding if they want to offer the testing at the start of term. If they do decide to take this option they will need time to plan how they will make this work, undertake training, receive delivery of the tests and other equipment and put in place the necessary testing space. Before testing can take place, your consent will be needed.
- To help them do this the Government has said secondary schools can put in place an additional non-pupil day. Most schools will decide to do this on Monday 4th January. We support this decision as testing offers the opportunity for fewer students having to self-isolate.
- As soon as they get further information your school will let you know the specific arrangements they will put in place, including their plans for prioritising the testing.
- School transport will run for each day the school is open. It is possible that schools could ask your child's year group to attend for one day during the first week (beginning the 4th Jan) to administer their year group tests. Therefore, please keep an eye on your school's website and check email or text information so you know if there is an additional day during the first week that your child should attend.
- On Monday 11th January the government expect that all children will return to school, even if they have not been tested, provided that they are not symptomatic.

I realise the delay in returning to school will cause further disruption for some families, especially as the government announcement was made just as many schools were closing for Christmas.

I would ask parents to have patience with their school and its staff as they take on these extra duties and familiarise themselves with what is required. Please recognise that it's being done to keep children, their families and the wider community safe.

Kind regards and my warmest wishes for Christmas and New Year.

Your sincerely



Dawn Stabb

Head of Education & Learning